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**SCREEN ADAPTATIONS OF DAPHNE DU  
MAURIER'S NOVEL "REBECCA" AND SHORT  
STORY "THE BIRDS"**

**DAFNES DI MORJĒ ROMĀNA "REBEKA" UN  
STĀSTA "PUTNI" EKSPANIZĀCIJAS**

MASTER THESIS

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## ANOTĀCIJA

Šis maģistra darbs ir veltīts literāra darba adaptācijai kino. Tēmas nosaukums – “Dafnes di Morjē romāna “Rebeka” un stāsta “Putni” ekranizācijas”.

Pētījumā ir salīdzināts 1938. gadā publicētais gotiskais noslēpumu romāns “Rebeka”, un 1952. gadā publicētais šausmu stāsts “Putni” ar šo literāro darbu kino ekranizācijām, kuras attiecīgi 1940. un 1963. gadā uzņēma režisors Alfrēds Hičkoks.

Pētījuma mērķis ir analizēt kā šo literāro darbu pamatidejas ir attēlotas filmās, interpretējot veiktās sižeta izmaiņas un personāžu atainojumu. Pētījuma metodes ietver kā teksta analīzi, tā arī literāro darbu un filmu salīdzinošo analīzi.

Teorētiskā daļa ir veltīta ekranizācijas atbilstībai oriģinālajiem literārajiem darbiem, izpētot dažādas pieejas literāru darbu ekranizācijai, savukārt empīriskā daļa sniedz “Rebekas” un “Putnu” sižetu, personāžu un tematu attēlojuma salīdzinājumu ar ekranizācijām.

**Atslēgvārdi:** literāra darba ekranizācija, romāns, filma, gotika, detektīvs, trilleris, Dafne di Morjē, Rebeka, Putni

## ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the adaptation of a literary work in a film. The title of the theme is *Screen Adaptations of Daphne du Maurier's Novel "Rebecca" and Short Story "The Birds"*. The research is focused on the comparison of both the gothic mystery novel *Rebecca*, published in 1938, and the horror short story *The Birds*, published in 1952, with their screen adaptations of 1940 and 1963, directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

The purpose of the research is to analyze how the storylines of these literary works are represented in the films by interpreting both changes in the storyline and the portrayal of the characters. The methods used during of the research include textual analysis and comparative analysis of the literary works and the films.

The theoretical part deals with the issue of fidelity towards the original literary works, exploring different approaches towards adapting literary sources, while the empirical part provides comparison of the representation of the storyline, characterization and themes in *Rebecca* and *The Birds* with their screen adaptations.

**Key words:** literary adaptation, novel, film, gothic, mystery, horror, thriller, Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*, *The Birds*

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## INTRODUCTION

At the present day, the process of adapting literary works for the screen has become a topic of interest, consistently causing a debate in the areas of both literary and film studies on whether certain screen adaptations are accurate and do justice to the originals or should be evaluated as independent pieces of art. In such a way, a research on to what extent a certain screen adaptation of a literary work is altered and for what purpose those alterations are implemented can be considered highly topical in both literary and cinematic fields.

This paper is focused on a comparative analysis of Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* and short story *The Birds* and their screen adaptations, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. The paper explores the change of the storyline and characters, providing an interpretation of the reasons why a number of changes have been made.

The **aim** of the research is to analyze how the storyline of the novel is represented in the film and how does the portrayal of the characters differ from the novel.

The **research questions** are the following:

1. How can adaptations be defined and categorized?
2. Which are the basic approaches of adapting a literary work?
3. What kind of criticism do adaptations usually attract?
4. How does the novel *Rebecca* can be interpreted?
5. Which are the main themes and symbols presented in the novel *Rebecca*?
6. Which parts of the storyline are altered in the screen adaptations of *Rebecca*?
7. How does the characterization in the screen adaptation of *Rebecca* differ from the novel?
8. Which themes of the novel *Rebecca* are represented differently in the film?
9. How does the short story *The Birds* can be interpreted?
10. Which are the main themes and symbols presented in the short story *The Birds*?
11. Which parts of the storyline are altered in the screen adaptations of *The Birds*?
12. Which themes of the short story *The Birds* are represented differently in the film?

The **enabling objectives** are the following:

1. to get acquainted with the film theory studies and to classify the types of screen adaptations;
2. to analyze the representation of the storyline and the characters in the films *Rebecca* and *The Birds* and compare it with the literary works;
3. to draw the relevant conclusions.

The **research methods** of the given paper are textual analysis and comparative analysis.

The first chapter contains the theoretical part of the research. It consists of three subchapters, in the first of which the notion and types of adaptations are described, while in the second different approaches towards adapting literary works are discussed, and in the third the main aspects of criticism towards adaptations are reviewed.

The second chapter is devoted to the interpretation of the novel *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier. Divided into two subchapters, it examines the structure of the novel, as well as its main themes and symbols.

The third chapter provides the analysis of the screen adaptation of *Rebecca*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Consisting of three subchapters, the analysis includes the changes of the plot, the changes of characterization, as well as the examination of the themes present in the film.

The fourth chapter deals with the short story *The Birds* by Daphne du Maurier, exploring its structure, interpretation and main themes and symbols.

The fifth chapter presents the analysis of the screen adaptation of *The Birds*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Featuring two subchapters, the analysis includes the changes of the plot and the interpretation of the themes introduced in the film.

In general, the paper consists of introduction, table of contents, five chapters, conclusions, theses and references.

# 1. ADAPTATION THEORY

## 1.1 The notion and types of adaptations

In the Oxford Dictionaries, “adaptation” is given the following definition: “an altered or amended version of a text, musical composition, etc., (now *esp.*) one adapted for filming, broadcasting, or production on the stage from a novel or similar literary source” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014). In the context of the given paper, adaptation will be regarded as a transfer of a literary work, such as a novel and a short story, to a film, creating a screen adaptation on the basis of the original story.

For the purpose of investigating the term and notion of adaptation in more detail, it is useful to get acquainted with the classification of different adaptation types. Since the films *Rebecca* and *The Birds*, which are put under analysis in the present paper, were made in the middle of the twentieth century, the theoretical framework on the adaptation theory was also chosen from the same time period. In such a way, while various classifications of adaptation types were provided in the course of the years of film studies, the most basic and essential were presented above.

In 1975, Geoffrey Wagner in his work *The novel and the Cinema* has explored the process of adapting literary works into films, proposing that adaptations can be divided into three categories: transposition, commentary, and analogy. From Wagner’s perspective, the transposition is the most precise way of adapting the literary work into film, a case in which “a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference” (Wagner, 1975:222). As an example of such method, Wagner (*ibid.*) mentions such adaptations as *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *Jane Eyre* (1944), *Madame Bovary* (1949), and *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961).

The second type of adaptations, the commentary, can be viewed as a method in which “an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect” (Wagner, 1975:222), and “it could also be called a re-emphasis or re-structure” (*ibid.*). Wagner’s examples (*ibid.*) of commentary are *The Heiress* (1949), *The Stranger* (1967), *Catch-22* (1970), and *A Clockwork Orange* (1972).

The analogy, the third and the most remote type of adaptation, can be defined as “a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art” (Wagner, 1975:227) and it includes movies “that shift a fiction forward into the present, and make a duplicate story” (Wagner, 1975:226). Wagner (*ibid.*) gives as examples *The Trial* (1962), *Contempt* (1963), and *Death in Venice* (1971).

According to another classification, proposed by an American film theorist Dudley Andrew in 1984, adaptations can also be divided into another three categories: borrowing, intersecting and transforming.

The first category, borrowing, is the most frequently used method of adaptation, in which “the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful text” (Andrew, 1984:98). Otherwise speaking, the basis of the original source, its essential idea, is still recognizable in the screen adaptation, but the setting and all the details are significantly different. In such a manner, this description roughly corresponds to the analogy from Wagner’s classification.

In the second category, intersecting, “the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation” (Andrew, 1984:99). To put it simply, fidelity to the original work is kept only in a small degree, as there are a number of alterations and modifications featured in the film which were not present in the original literary work. In general, Andrew’s intersecting resembles Wagner’s commentary, as in the both adaptation types only the main idea of the original remains unchanged.

In transforming, the third category, the closest to the original work, “the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text” (Andrew, 1984:100). In other words, it is the most thorough and loyal to the original type of adaptation, which is similar to Wagner’s transposition.

Another adaptation classification is proposed by a film theorist André Bazin in his essay *Pour un cinéma impur: Défense de l’adaptation*, written in 1952. Bazin suggests dividing film adaptations into the following three categories: “pure”, which means that the adaptation is “cinematically specific” (Bazin, 1952; cited in Brown, 2009:2), “impure” and “mixed” (ibid.). In other words, the concept of “purity” in Bazin’s classification refers to the fidelity to the original, as the more “pure” is the adaptation, the more it is faithful to the source text. Concerning the comparing with previous classifications by Wagner and Andrew, “pure” corresponds with transforming and transposition, as it can be also viewed as the most faithful to the original type of adaptation. In such a manner, “impure” is similar to intersecting and commentary, while “mixed” resembles borrowing and analogy, as these categories are only partially faithful to the original as well.

In another classification, proposed by Michael Klein and Gillian Parker in 1981, adaptations were also divided into three categories depending on their fidelity to the original. In the first case, there is taken an “attempt to give the impression of being faithful” (Klein and Parker, 1981:10) and, as a result, the adaptation can be viewed as a “literal translation of the text into the language of cinema” (ibid.). The second approach “retains the core of the

structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting or, in some cases, deconstructing the source text” (Klein and Parker, 1981:10). The third category “regards the source merely as raw material, as simply the occasion for an original work” (ibid.).

The titles and descriptions of three different adaptations types featured in Wagner’s, Andrew’s, Bazin’s, Klein and Parker’s classifications are not entirely identical, however, they resemble each other in many ways. Basically they express the same idea, dividing adaptations into three categories, the first of which is the closest and loyal to the original literary work, the second is remotely close with a more significant number of alterations, and the third is the most distant and different from the original.

It is important to note that not all adaptations can be easily categorized into a specific type, since a film version can represent the original novel following no particular pattern. However, in many cases such classification can simplify the process of analyzing the adaptation, especially in the case of comparing it to the original story and exploring which changes to the plot were made and for what purpose.

## 1.2 Approaches towards adapting literary works

In the process of adapting a novel onto the screen, a variety of nuances and details exist which should be considered by filmmakers. According to a screenwriter Barry Sandler, the main challenge of adapting a literary work is “to retain the elements of story, character, and tone that make the novel work while creating a filmic structure of protagonist, antagonist, obstacles, and resolution that succeed as a cinematic experience” (Sandler, 2013, cited in Pugh and Johnson, 2013:179). In order to create a successful adaptation, such process may require “compressing, combining, or even eliminating elements in the novel to create visual dramatic action and narrative flow that lead from one scene into the next with a constantly building momentum” (ibid.)

Different filmmakers have different attitudes and approaches towards the process of adapting a literary work into a film. In general, it is considered important to treat the original literary source carefully and attentively for a number of reasons. First of all, it is the matter of paying general respect to the original literary source and its author by preserving at least the essential features of the original story in the film. Secondly, if the original novel already has a commercial success and recognition, it is a way to ensure that its screen adaptation would also be commercially successful among the audience who is familiar with the original work.

However, not all filmmakers share this opinion and tend to make a screen adaptation close to the original. Peter Bogdanovich, film director and critic, has regarded his work on *Daisy Miller*, a novella by Henry James, with the following words: “I don't think it's a great classic story. I don't treat it with that kind of reverence” (Dawson, 1974:14) and “whether or not I put in the movie what James meant to say with the story doesn't really concern me” (Dawson, 1974:15). Despite such careless attitude towards the original novel, the film still became commercially successful and, though it has received mixed reviews, nowadays it is considered as classic.

At the same time, there are both filmmakers and adaptation scholars who express an opposing opinion on the issue of fidelity, stating that it should be preserved to the fullest extent possible. For example, according to Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, “a ‘faithful’ film is seen as uncreative, but an ‘unfaithful’ film is a shameful betrayal of the original” (Stam and Raengo, 2004:8). In such a way, the inevitable conclusion is that “the adapter [...] can never win” (ibid.). From such point of view, the mere process of adapting literary works is seen as useless, since both faithful and unfaithful adaptation types are considered ineffective.

It is safe to state that most of the filmmakers do not pass such categorical judgment on the original literary works, but still it is considered reasonable and justified to implement a number of changes while adapting a story. DeWitt Bodeen, a film screenwriter and co-author of the screenplay for *Billy Budd* (1962) by Peter Ustinov, based on the stage play version of a novel by Herman Melville, has noted that “adapting literary works to film is, without a doubt, a creative undertaking, but the task requires a kind of selective interpretation, along with the ability to recreate and sustain an established mood” (Bodeen, 1963: 349). There might be several reasons to interpret the original in a different way, starting from an attempt to make the story more modern and commercially relevant and ending with a necessity to comply with various social norms and conventions. Furthermore, another reason is that most filmmakers have a desire to create, not only to produce, and therefore they tend to alter and reshape the original storyline in order to express themselves.

Such alterations in screen adaptations are not always viewed in a positive light, as there is also a highly common opinion that in some cases films can be harmful to great novels, since if their adaptations are not proper and faithful enough, they might even destroy the original favorable impression of the novel. As has a film critic Christopher Orr stated in his work *The Discourse on Adaptation*, “the concern with the fidelity of the adapted film in letter and spirit to its literary source has unquestionably dominated the discourse on adaptation” (Orr, 1984:72). A question of whether certain film adaptations provide a required level of fidelity to the original literary work has raised a great number of discussions over the years. Mostly such fidelity criticism concentrates on a question whether the creators of a screen adaptation have managed to convey the original meaning properly or have they violated it or tampered with it in some sense.

As Thomas Leitch has noted, “fidelity is primarily driven by the fallacy of the begged question: our modern notion of adaptation actually enters the culture via fidelity criticism” (Leitch, 2017:44) and in such a way “our cultural definition of adaptation is shaped by and emerges out of a central notion of and desire for fidelity, making it difficult to conceive of adaptation criticism without it” (ibid.). In his work *Film and Literature*, Morris Beja has listed a large number of questions concerning the fidelity to the original in the process of adapting it onto the screen, such as:

“How should a film-maker go about the process of adapting a work of written literature? Are there guiding principles that we can discover or devise? What relationship should a film have to the original source? Should it be faithful? Can it be? To what? Which should be uppermost in a film-maker's mind: the integrity of the original work, or the integrity of the film to be based on that work? Is there a

necessary conflict? What types of changes are permissible? Desirable? Inevitable? Are some types of work more adaptable than others?" (Beja, 1979:80)

It appears impossible to come up with definitive answers to those questions, as film adaptation scholars carry a variety of different opinions on that matter, and at some cases they might even seem contradictory. As Thomas Leitch has stated in *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory*, "fidelity is the most appropriate criterion to use in analyzing adaptations" (Leitch, 2003:161). However, at the same time Leitch has noted that "fidelity to its source text—whether it is conceived as success in re-creating specific textual details or the effect of the whole—is a hopelessly fallacious measure" (ibid.), due to the reason that such fidelity is "unattainable, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense" (Leitch, 2003:161). Expanding this thought, Leitch has compared cinematic adaptations to translations into a different language, saying they "will always reveal their sources' superiority because whatever their faults, the source texts will always be better at being themselves" (ibid.). However, it is important to note that if the filmmakers will share this assumption and consider the source texts to be superior to their adaptations, they will not be able to produce a successful adaptation in the first place, treating their work as a second-rate quality product.

From Christopher Orr's perspective, the main issue with the fidelity to the original literary source "is not whether the adapted film is faithful to its source, but rather how the choice of a specific source and how the approach to that source serve the film's ideology" (Orr, 1984:72). To put it in more simple words, the main idea is that at some point the changes, which are applied to the original plot, might not obligatorily do harm to the storyline, but on the contrary, such changes might even show the storyline from a new perspective and appear more powerful, impressive and intense on the screen. This is proved by numerous highly altered adaptations which are as successful as their source texts, moreover, at some cases they turn out to be even more successful than the original.

According to Irwin Blacker in *Elements of Screenwriting: A Guide for Film and Television Writing*, there is always some amount of alteration which should be made for a successful adaptation, as "a film has different requirements and possibilities than a written text" (Blacker, 1996: 89), and in the process of adapting "the script writer rarely uses a novelist's original dialogue, even if that novelist is Hemingway: lines that sound fine on a page of a novel often seem dull and flat when played on screen" (ibid.). In such a way, there are cases when a certain amount of negligence towards the original is necessary for the purpose of making a film which would look good from a visual perspective and would not appear dull and monotonous because of the great amount of dialogs and long lines.

In his work *Screen Adaptation: A Scriptwriting Handbook*, Kenneth Portnoy has observed that “when stories are too long, it becomes necessary to reduce the number of subplots and characters to fit the two-hour storytelling length” (Portnoy, 2012:1). By way of example, Portnoy has mentioned the screen adaptation of *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck. As Portnoy has noted, “although it had several plot and subplot lines, the adapter concentrated on only one plot line—the story of the Trask family. Why was this plot line chosen? Because the Trask family's story had the most conflict—a key element of any successful screenplay” (ibid.). In such a way, it is highly important to determine the most essential, the most major part of the storyline and adapt it onto screen as precisely as possible, with a purpose to preserve the so-called “key element” of the novel.

As Orr has noted, “fidelity to the letter, in contrast to fidelity to the spirit, can after all be verified” (Orr, 1984:72). Without doubt, the case of accessing the level of film’s fidelity to the spirit of the original literary work it is a highly ambiguous and complex issue, since the notion of “spirit” is completely abstract. As a result, there is no objective way to determine whether a certain film captures the mood of a novel and is able to represent it properly even after a number of significant alterations. The reason of such ambiguity lies in the fact that though it is possible to establish whether a film follows the original plotline and the original portrayal of characters, opinions of whether a film grasps the essential idea, mood and spirit of the original and expresses them correctly can widely differ.

In his work *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, Brian McFarlane has also commented on the same issue of fidelity to “letter” and to “spirit”. From McFarlane’s point of view, “there will often be a distinction between being faithful to the ‘letter’, [...] and to the ‘spirit’ or ‘essence’ of the work (McFarlane, 1996:8-9). According to McFarlane, the first approach has its faults, since “the more sophisticated writer may suggest [there] is no way to ensure a ‘successful’ adaptation” (McFarlane, 1996:9), while the second approach is “very much more difficult to determine since it involves not merely a parallelism between novel and film but between two or more readings of a novel” (ibid.). In such a way, “any given film version is able only to aim at reproducing the film-maker’s reading of the original and to hope that it will coincide with that of many other readers/viewers” (ibid.).

Returning to Dudley Andrew, he has also stated that “the letter would appear to be within the reach of cinema for it can be emulated in mechanical fashion” (Andrew, 1984:100) and that such fashion “includes aspects of fiction generally elaborated in any film script” (ibid.). Among such aspects of fiction Andrew has named “the characters and their interrelation; the geographical, sociological, and cultural information providing the fiction’s context; and the basic narrational aspects that determine the point of view of the narrator

(tense, degree of participation and knowledge of the storyteller, and so on)” (Andrew, 1984:100).

Expressing his thoughts further, Andrew has added that “fidelity of adaptation is conventionally treated in relation to the “letter” and to the “spirit” of the text, as though adaptation were the rendering of an interpretation of a legal precedent” (Andrew, 1984:100). In further words, too much focus on the subject of fidelity to the original literary work might also not be beneficial for the adaptation, since it establishes too strict boundaries. The main problem with such approach is that the adaptation is perceived from an entirely technical perspective, which leaves no place for creativeness and imagination. Different alterations of the plotline might ruin the story, as well as complement the original text or add a new twist to it. In such a way, the negative attitude towards all possible alterations could also deprive the adaptation of novelty, originality and distinctiveness, which are very important goals since the middle of the twentieth century

Discussing the necessity of changes and alterations to the plotline and characters further, William Charles Miller has stated that “a novel will usually have to be condensed in many ways, with some subplots and events and perhaps some characters eliminated” (Miller, 1980:210). At the same time, Miller has also added that “what is important is that the writers doing the adaptation retain the key elements from the original and catch its flavour — the ‘personality’ or feeling-tone of the original” (Miller, 1980:210), once again noting that this essential abstract element, which is called a novel’s “spirit” or “flavour” in different cases must be obligatory preserved.

In her essay *The Movies and Reality*, Virginia Woolf has also commented on the issue of correspondence of a “spirit” and a “brain” in the process of perceiving an adaptation. From Woolf’s perspective, such “alliance is unnatural” (Woolf, 1926:86), since “eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples” (ibid.). Woolf has also provided an example of such ambiguity from an adaptation of the classical novel:

“The eye says: “Here is Anna Karenina.” A voluptuous lady in black velvet wearing pearls comes before us. But the brain says: “That is no more Anna Karenina than it is Queen Victoria.” For the brain knows Anna almost entirely by the inside of her mind—her charm, her passion, her despair. All the emphasis is laid by the cinema upon her teeth, her pearls, and her velvet” (Woolf, 1926:86).

Returning to Geoffrey Wagner, he has noted that “cinema is at its most convincing when it declines to be a dramatic mode and leans, rather, on its immediate antecedents in the aesthetic representation of reality (or unreality) — namely the novel” (Wagner 1975:26). Speaking about the representation of reality in adaptations, Virginia Woolf has noted, “the

picture-makers seem dissatisfied with such obvious sources of interest as the passage of time and the suggestiveness of reality” (Woolf, 1926:86) and has claimed that the main problem is that “they want to be improving, altering, making an art of their own” (ibid.).

In his film reviews of *Psycho* and *Sons and Lovers*, written in 1960, Stanley Kauffmann has shared a viewpoint that “adaptation must occur in an almost biological sense” (Kauffmann, 1960:21), explaining that “the book must be anatomized and reassembled so as to produce the same effect in a different medium; to the degree that this second life is achieved, the adaptation is successful” (ibid.). In his other review, Kauffmann has discussed the issue of fidelity in adaptations, noting that “in film-making there are no absolutes about fidelity to originals, but the better the source is—one might even say the better known it is—the more specific the expectations are in the audience” (Kauffmann, 1966:231). In the end, Kauffmann has come to a conclusion that “two questions are pertinent” (ibid.) in the process of assessing an adaptation: “Has his [the director’s] picture achieved, through its medium, the same substantive effect as the novel? Or, if not (and this is a big concession when the adaptation is from a novel of high stature), has it achieved a cogent effect of its own?” (Kauffmann, 1966:231). However, it should be noted that it is almost impossible to provide definitive answers to these questions, as any opinion on which effect the director has achieved would be highly subjective.

There are various criteria according to which the faithfulness of adaptation is evaluated, and mainly they are entirely subjective. In his work *Novel into Film*, George Bluestone has mentioned different kinds of statements which evaluate the faithfulness of adaptation, such as ““The film is true to the spirit of the book”; “It’s incredible how they butchered the novel”; “It cuts out key passages, but it’s still a good film”; “Thank God they changed the ending”” (Bluestone, 1968:5) and has noted that statements of such kind “are predicated on certain assumptions which blur the mutational process” (ibid.). Though it is possible to assess objectively whether the film is loyal to the novel, there is no way to categorically determine whether it is “true to the spirit of the book” or is “still a good film”.

According to Bluestone, “these standard expletives and judgments assume, among other things, a separable content which may be detached and reproduced” (Bluestone, 1968:5), as well as assume “that incidents and characters in fiction are interchangeable; that incidents and characters in fiction are interchangeable with incidents and characters in the film; that the novel is a norm and the film deviates at its peril; that deviations are permissible for vaguely defined reasons [...]; that taking liberties does not necessarily impair the quality of the film” (ibid.). All the above considered, in the end Bluestone has come to conclusion that “such liberties are somehow a trick which must be concealed from the public”

(Bluestone, 1968:5) and, most importantly, that “the extent of the deviation will vary directly with the “respect” one has for the original” (ibid.). However, it is open to question whether the amount of alterations caused to the original corresponds with the level of respect from film makers, since it is possible they simply tend to put the story in a new light.

Bluestone has summed up his views on adapting the literary works onto screen with the statement that “changes are inevitable the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium” (Bluestone, 1968:5). Bluestone has also pointed out the difficulty and even futility of all attempts of comparing the novel to its screen adaptation, claiming that “the film becomes a different thing in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event which it illustrates” (ibid.). As a result, after a filmmaking process there are two different pieces of art, literary and audiovisual, and though both of them are imaginative and artistic, they derive from separate fields and therefore are too diverse to compare them directly.

Apart from the issue of fidelity, there is a common opinion that mostly film makers tend to think about commercial success of an adaptation in the first place, not giving much attention to whether a film treats the original novel respectfully enough. Such approach has attracted a large amount of criticism as from regular film viewers, as from film critics, both of them getting discontent with an adaptation in cases when it does not do justice to the novel. However, it rarely influences the film makers’ actions and approach in accessing the novel. As George Bluestone has noted, “the film-makers still talk about ‘faithful’ and ‘unfaithful’ adaptations without ever realizing that they are really talking about successful and unsuccessful films” (Bluestone, 1968:114) and “whenever a film becomes a financial or even a critical success the question of ‘faithfulness’ is given hardly any thought” (ibid.). In further words, from the filmmakers’ viewpoint the main criteria of “faithfulness” is the commercial success of an adaptation, and in case if the film turns out profitable, accusation of unfaithfulness is no longer regarded as relevant.

The fact that adaptations are usually made for the financial reasons in the first place was repeatedly criticized by many film critics and scholars. As Bela Balazs has stated in his work *Theory of the Film*, “we know that nowadays, especially when it is a question of adapting novels or plays for the films, this is mostly done for financial reasons” (Balazs, 2012:265), noting that “a successful novel can be adapted first as a play and then as a film, and thus make money for its author several times over” (ibid.). Bluestone has claimed that in a case that the adaptation has in fact become successful “the film-makers are content with the assumption that they have mysteriously captured the “spirit” of the book” (Bluestone, 1968:114), concluding that in that case “the issue goes no farther” (ibid.).

As George Linden has added, “no doubt the film companies pay enormous funds for famous novels; whether they happen to be fine novels is irrelevant” (Linden, 1977:163). Moreover, Linden has named a commercial motive essential in the process of making a screen adaptation, stating that “it is the fame, after all, that is important, for the motive behind such purchases is not artistic but commercial” (ibid.). Linden has even referred to a novel which is adapted as a “property”, stating that “it is the producer who usually “buys” the novel, and, once bought, it ceases to be a novel and becomes a property” (Linden, 1977:163). Apart from that, Linden has also commented on an issue that even low-quality novels are commonly chosen for adaptations with purpose, as “it may well be that those films based on novels with reputations, notorious or otherwise, do in fact make money” (ibid.). In such a way, the quality of the novel and even its critical acclaim are irrelevant, as long as the novel has attracted much attention and therefore its adaptation is ensured to acquire a wide audience.

At the same time, concerning the issue of making profit, Beja has also noted that “often it is clear, a book is written not for its own sake, or even necessarily with its becoming a best-seller as the primary goal, but rather with the intention that it be sold to movies” (Beja, 1979:87), even adding that “in those cases where there was no book to begin with, publishers and film makers (who may be under the same huge corporate conglomerate) will commission a writer to come up with one” (ibid.). George Bluestone has summarized such effect with the observation that “the moment the film went from the animation of stills to telling a story, it was inevitable that fiction would become the ore to be minted by story departments” (Bluestone, 1977:138). In such a way, the financial matter becomes essential in the filmmaking process, highly influencing to which extent the storyline is altered in order to make the adaptation profitable.

Discussing the same issue in her work *Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas*, Imelda Whelehan has noted that “the question is left open, however, as to how successful films are determined” (Whelehan, 2013:8) and that it “raises the issues of the relationship of box office success, target audience, and how, in particular, ‘high’ literature becomes popular culture with a corresponding effect on book sales and the perception of literary value and ‘high’ cultural tastes in the eyes of the mass viewing audience” (ibid.). Without doubt, the concerns about film’s good performance in the box office and necessity to fulfill expectations of the target audience are essential in the process of adapting any novel, as they are strongly linked together, one depending on another.

According to Horton Foote, a playwright and screenwriter, the author of the screenplay for the 1962 adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, “to be really successful adapting one must like the original work” (Foote, 1988:7). Elaborating further,

Foote has described his approach to adapting with words “I don’t have to always understand it, but I have to like it and be willing to try to understand it and go through the painful process of entering someone else’s creative world” (ibid.). In general, those words may serve as a main principle of adapting literary works, as appreciation of the original work and a will to understand it would be highly important for creating a successful adaptation.

To sum up, there is variety of different opinions on how the process of adapting the literary work onto the screen should take place. In most approaches, fidelity to the original literary source is viewed as an essential element, however in a few approaches, though fidelity is still regarded as important, it is advised not to concentrate on it too much. As Christopher Orr has observed, in some cases such strong focus on a film’s correspondence to the original literary work might not be good for the adaptation, since “the danger of fidelity criticism, even when it is dealing with the most ‘faithful’ of film adaptations, is that it impoverishes the film’s intertextuality” (Orr, 1984:72).

Among the others, Dudley Andrew has also supported the idea that at some point accuracy and fidelity to the original is obligatory for the process of adapting it for the screen, stating that “it is assumed that the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text” (Andrew, 1984:100). In such a way, despite all the discourse that adaptations might benefit from the alterations and that the issue of fidelity should not always attract such amount of attention, at the same time most film critics and scholars strongly insist that preserving the essential part of the literary work is the number one priority of the adaptation. However, the filmmakers mostly tend to do it in a manner that does not prevent them from expressing their own creativity and, of course, earning a lot of money by creating a successful product, as it is expected that a major part of the potential customers will require loyalty in order to buy the final product, the film.

### 1.3 Criticism of adaptations

As Anthony Burgess has claimed in his essay *On the Hopelessness of Turning Good Books into Films*, “every best-selling novel has to be turned into a film, the assumption being that the book itself whets an appetite for the true fulfillment—the verbal shadow turned into light, the word made flesh” (Burgess, 1975:15). This statement remains true over the years, as there always appear to be high demand and interest in the film adaptation of almost every notable and successful novel: the readers wish to see visualizations of well-known literary works, both accurate and, in some cases, interpreted completely differently.

In the process of discussion adaptations, Kamilla Denman has used the term “performative criticism”, stating that “performative criticism in any mode—oral, visual, theatrical, musical, balletic, or filmic—provides a multi-faceted fictional response to a work of fiction” (Denman, 1996; cited in Dovey, 2002:55). Furthermore, Denman has added that “the film adaptation opens issues for analysis that might not be noticed through other methodologies” (ibid.), such as textual variations of the same story. In further words, from Denman’s view a screen adaptation is perceived not only as an entraining product, but also as “an appropriate medium for critical discourse” (Dovey, 2002:55), since it can be perceived and evaluated from various perspectives, interpreting different aspects of the story.

As Imelda Whelehan has claimed, “cultural assumptions about the relative worth of the literary versus the film medium are still deeply entrenched enough to be likely to influence our approach to adaptation” (Whelehan, 2013:17), concluding that “it might be worth considering as an intrinsic part of our study of the adaptation process what may seem on face value to be the most naive and obvious of preconceptions” (ibid.). It is a quite highly common presumption that “the film medium could ‘steal’ the constituency of readers of literature” (Whelehan, 2013:18), however, Whelehan has stated that this fear “has long proved unfounded” (ibid.), as the increase of demand for adaptations does not lead to decrease of demand for novels. On the contrary, mostly novels only benefit from being adapted, gaining both popularity in the press and a flow of new readers.

Exploring those thoughts further, Whelehan has also noted that “indeed there is enough research on the consumption of film and TV tie-in titles to demonstrate that a successful film or TV interpretation of a literary text can bolster the sales of a novel substantially” (Whelehan, 2013:18). However, according to Whelehan, though it has been determined that after enjoying a novel’s adaptation its viewers might wish to get acquainted with the original, there has been no substantial research on a subject if this new group of readers will fully appreciate it or even actually finish the novel.

Pursuing a subject of a target audience in criticism of adaptations, Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo have also stated that “the cinema, perhaps unconsciously, is seen as degraded by the company it keeps” (Stam and Raengo, 2004:7), and they describe such company as “the great unwashed popular mass audience, with its lower-class origins in “vulgar” spectacles like sideshows and carnivals” (ibid.). Further on, Stam and Raengo have come to conclusion that in such a way, from that kind of audience, adaptations are “inevitably ‘dumbed down’ versions of their source novels, designed to gratify an audience lacking in what Bourdieu calls ‘cultural capital’ (Stam and Raengo, 2004:7). In such a manner, the issue is not only that the audience cannot fully appreciate qualitative adaptations, but moreover, adaptations are downgraded the level of the audience.

Adding to this criticism, there is also a widely spread assumption that “film-goers seek out the authenticity of the original, recognizing that the visual interpretation cannot do justice to the depth and substance of the novel” (Whelehan, 2013:18). But at the same time it should not be forgotten that the visual interpretation brings new light onto a written text, regardless of whether it corresponds with the viewers desire to compare it with a novel in terms of fidelity and assurance. It is undoubtable that there is always a positive aspect in adaptation making, as it allows the readers to see the picture which might appear similar to the one they have only visualized in their brain before. However, as Jonathan Miller has pointed out, “the experience of visualizing something as the result of reading a description of it is altogether different from seeing it in the form of an actual picture” (Miller, 1986:214), therefore the picture in adaptations might seem partially or even completely different from what the readers have imagined.

The advantage of adaptation making is that even if a certain interpretation does not do justice to the novel, there can be made as many different adaptations of one novel as possible, in a variety of different forms and ways. In her work *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel*, Sarah Cardwell has referred to a certain “distinction” between “the work of art” and “the mode of appearance of the work, the concrete form in which the work itself is apprehended” (Thompson, 1996:15; cited in Cardwell, 2002:26). As Cardwell has noted, “the ‘work’ is comparable to the ur-text, which is expressed within concrete texts” (Cardwell, 2002:26), and in such a way “adaptations can be regarded as many concretisations of one work” (ibid.). In further words, there is a point in any case of adaptation, as “the first ‘telling’ of a story might be a source of inspiration for other retellings (adaptations)” (Cardwell, 2002:26), and in each of these adaptations the storyline might be represented in a different light.

In her work *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon simplifies notions of the novel and the adaptation by reducing them to two modes, a “telling mode” and a “showing mode”. According to Hutcheon, altogether there are “three modes of engagement—telling, showing and interacting with stories” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn, 2012:27), and adaptations most commonly “move from the telling to the showing mode, usually from print to performance” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn, 2012:38). From Hutcheon’s perspective, this happens due to the reason that literature is limited to telling, while cinema is able to explore the story, thus allowing to show and visualize what has been written. Furthermore, Hutcheon has labelled as a cliché such critical statements as “only telling (in language) can do justice to such elements as ambiguity, irony, symbols, metaphors, silences, and absences” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn, 2012:68), stating that all these aspects can be also successfully transformed onto a screen.

Stanley Kauffmann has pointed out another problem with adapting novels, which is that there is “a double standard for criticising films made from novels: that reviewers should treat such films as complete in themselves because most people haven’t read the originals and a review that points out divergences is only spoiling their fun” (Kauffmann, 1966:306). In such a way, where there is a problem of defying target audience, as at some cases it would not seem possible to create a film which would seem satisfactory both to the viewers who are acquainted with the original novel and to those who will only get to know the storyline from watching the film. At the same time, speaking about adapting novels onto the screen in general, Kauffmann has described the situation as “a stirring little crusade for the sacredness of ignorance” (Kauffmann, 1966:306) and has concluded that “if only our culture can keep most people from reading books, it may prevail” (ibid.).

As Kauffmann has stated in another review, “those who care for the novel can rarely be fully satisfied” (Kauffmann, 1960:21). According to Kauffmann, this is due to the fact that “the primary matter of time prevents it” (ibid.), as “it would take many hours to get on the screen the full range of even an average-length novel” (Kauffmann, 1960:21). However, at the same time it can be noted that if these viewers truly love the book, they will still want to see the film and therefore pay for it. As for another group of viewers who are not acquainted with the novel or simply do not value it, from Kauffmann’s perspective they would find the adaptation “frequently unsatisfactory” (ibid.) for different reasons, such as “for the screenwriters are to some degree hobbled by the book and cannot follow their best cinematic instincts” (Kauffmann, 1960:21). In such a manner, according to Kauffmann, even appreciation of the original novel might disrupt the process of creating a worthy adaptation, as such attitude could interfere with the filmmakers’ objectivity towards the story.

Elaborating further on the issue of meeting expectations of the target audience, in his review on the film of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Kauffmann has quoted Jerry Wald, the film producer, who has said "mass audiences are hep now. There are 25 million college graduates" (Kauffmann, 1960:21), and has argued with Wald, saying that "he must be banking on a belief—possibly well founded—that few of them have read one of the most highly regarded of all American novels and that those few won't care about its perversion" (ibid.). Moreover, Kauffmann has referred to Jerry Wald's words further, as he has claimed "I'm gonna do Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* next [...] and I just bought Winesburg" (Kauffmann, 1960:21), finishing with the final statement, in which Wald "adds that he also has an option on *Ulysses*" (ibid.). Providing such example of a film producer's way of thinking, Kauffmann has illustrated the attitude of filmmakers to adapting literary works, in which an amount of publicity of a novel is taken into consideration in the first place, and the novel in general might not be treated very accurately.

At the same time, Linda Hutcheon has also mentioned such notion as the issue of "adaptability". According to Hutcheon, "the linear story line and character development of the realist novel have come to form the models for the narrative of cinema" (Hutcheon, 2003:42), and therefore the twentieth-century film becomes "the heir of the nineteenth-century novel" (ibid.). In order to adapt a novel for the screen in a way to make it more likeable and understandable for the audience, the filmmakers tend to implement a number of changes, which mostly have a purpose of embellishing, romanticizing and glamourizing the story. As Lester Asheim has noted upon such issue, "the audience that knows only the film and not the book is presented with a 'falsified' interpretation which leaves no clues that would permit it to reconstruct the original truth" (Asheim, 1952:68). In such a manner, those changes will remain unnoticeable for a viewer who is unfamiliar with the original literary work, while another category of viewers, the ones who has read the novel, might become displeased and even outraged with the alterations of the story.

As Thomas Leitch has once again noted in *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory*, the films "remain notoriously a mass medium that seeks as broad an audience as possible" (Leitch, 2003:155). As an example of such a film, which was directed to "as broad an audience as possible", Leitch has mentioned *Titanic*, stating that "it tries to provide something for everyone—historical re-creation, epic sweep, class warfare, adolescent romance, hissable villains, state-of-the-art visual effects, broken china" (Leitch, 2003:155-156). In other cases, the filmmakers do not try to include as much as possible themes that appeal to the audience into one film, but only reform the original story, treating it only as a

source text. In general, such source text needs to be altered in order to make its adaptation appreciated by the audience and gain commercial success.

In *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, Brian McFarlane has discussed the same matter referring to the adaptation of *Random Harvest*, filmed in 1942 and based on the novel by James Hilton. According to McFarlane, in the film, distributed by a major American media company Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, “images of an unchanging England had as much to do with Hollywood antiisolationism with regard to World War II as with finding visual equivalents for anything in Hilton” (McFarlane, 1996:10). In such a way, “Hilton’s popular but, in truth, undistinguished romance” (ibid.) has become nothing much “but one element of the film's intertextuality” (ibid.). As McFarlane has noted further, the film “belongs to a rich context created by notions of Hollywood's England, by MGM's [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's] reputation for prestigious literary adaptation and for a glossy ‘house style’, by the genre of romantic melodrama” (ibid.). As another example of such romantic melodrama, McFarlane has also mentioned the screen adaptation of *Rebecca*, made in 1940.

The nature of changes implemented in the adaptation might be based on a variety of different reasons, and one of the most common reasons is the filmmakers’ wish to comply with the set of conventions which are usually favoured by the audience. According to Thomas Schatz, “the filmmaker’s inventive impulse is tempered by his or her practical recognition of certain conventions and audience expectations” (Schatz, 1981:6), and “audience demands creativity or variation but only within the context of a familiar narrative experience” (ibid.). For example, if the original novel was published a while ago and some aspects of its genre and storyline are not popular anymore, the time and setting of the events might altered in the adaptation. In the same manner, portrayal of characters, representation of different themes and even resolution of the story might be altered, in order to make the adaptation more appealing to the audience and therefore commercially successful. As Schatz has noted, “it is important to remember that roughly 400 to 700 movies were released per year during Hollywood's classic era” (Schatz, 1981:6), and therefore “the studio depended increasingly upon established story formulas and techniques” (ibid.). Taking this into consideration, “thus any theory of Hollywood filmmaking must take into account this essential process of production, feedback, and conventionalization” (ibid.), and the filmmaking studios have relied on these aspects in the process of as creating original screenplays, as well as adapting literary works.

Concerning the screen adaptations made in the United States, as Douglas Kellner has noted, “Hollywood genre films thus tended to promote the American dream and dominant American myths and ideologies” (Kellner, 2008:2012), which mostly stated that “money and success were important values; that heterosexual romance, marriage, and family were the

proper social forms” (ibid.). This is rather common, since the target audience of these films is first of all the home audience in the United States, these are the values the audience share and thus wants to see on the screen. Even if the original literary work is set in other country, like *The Birds*, in which the action takes place in Britain, it is still commercially reasonable to move the action in the film to the United States, since the cultural aspect is important, as viewers have different set of beliefs and values because they come from different sociocultural background.

At the same time, Kellner has admitted that in some cases “the Hollywood system was flexible enough to allow individual cinematic statements and social critique within the genre system”. As an example, Kellner has mentioned such “filmmakers like John Ford, Frank Capra, Sam Fuller, and Alfred Hitchcock” (Kellner, 2008:2012), who have “used the genre system to articulate their own specific artistic concerns and visions, finding in the genre and studio system a congenial framework to produce their work” (ibid.). In such a way, it can be concluded that there was a set of norms and standards in the Hollywood system of filmmakers, which most of the filmmakers have followed to a greater or lesser extent. At the same time, there were also a number of filmmakers which have used such system to provide their own vision of the story, adding something unique to it in the process of adapting the plotline.

Concerning the opinion of the novelists themselves on adapting their works, it is worth to remember Gustave Flaubert, who has said “never, as long as I live, shall I allow anyone to illustrate me, because: the most beautiful literary description is eaten up by the most wretched drawing” (Flaubert, 1862, cited in Selby, Giddings, and Wensley, 2016:18). Expressing his point of view further, Flaubert has stated that “as soon as a figure [type] is fixed by the pencil, it loses that character of generality, that harmony with a thousand known objects which make the reader say: “I’ve seen that” or “That must be so.” (ibid.) and has provided the following example: “a woman in a drawing looks like one woman, that’s all. The idea is closed, complete, and every sentence becomes useless, whereas a written woman makes one dream of a thousand women” (Flaubert, 1862, cited in Selby, Giddings, and Wensley, 2016:18). Though it is highly debatable whether “the idea is closed”, as the screen adaptation might be able to throw a new light upon the original story, each author has a right to object adaptations and not let their work be treated as a product. Such issue is especially relevant regarding those literary works, authors of which have passed decades ago and therefore the authorship rights have expired.

In his essay *Beyond Fidelity*, Stam has characterized the whole subject of adaptation criticism as “profoundly moralistic” (Stam, 2000:54), as it uses such terms as “infidelity,

betrayal, deformation, violation, vulgarization and desecration” (ibid.), and has stated that “each accusation [is] carrying its specific charge of outraged negativity” (Stam, 2000:54). According to Stam, the whole notion of fidelity “gains its persuasive force from our sense that some adaptations are indeed better than others” (ibid.). In such a way, the main issue with adaptation criticism is that “some adaptations fail to “realize” or substantiate what we most appreciated in the source novels” (Stam, 2000:54). Therefore such words as “infidelity” and “betrayal” come to mind, since they “translate our feeling, when we have loved a book, that an adaptation has not been worthy of that love” (ibid.), and eventually such feeling leads to disappointment and frustration regarding an “unworthy” adaptation.

The whole issue of providing criticism on adaptations can be summarized with John Harrington’s conclusion from *Film and/as Literature*: “Much work remains to be done on the problem of adaptations. Each director or screenwriter seriously attempting to adapt a work from one medium to another faces a set of critical and interpretative problems, and critical procedures are needed to illuminate this process” (Harrington, 1977:4). Robert Richardson has claimed that “literary criticism and film criticism can each benefit from each other” (Richardson, 1969:3), therefore it seems like the most reasonable approach would be exploring both the novel and the film, in such a way having more means to experience the story. At last, as George Linden has noted, “a successful adaptation of a novel should not be the book. Nor should it be a substitute for the book. If it is truly successful, it should be a work of art” (Linden, 1977:10). In such a way, as long as the adaptation is considered worthy by the audience, it might not only be perceived separately from the original literary work, but also be regarded as a different form of art.

## **2. REBECCA BY DAPHNE DU MAURIER**

### **2.1 Structure and interpretation of the novel “Rebecca”**

*Rebecca*, published in 1938, is du Maurier’s fifth novel, and it tells a story of a nameless female narrator who marries a wealthy widower, Maxim de Winter, and becomes the new Mrs. de Winter. As the narrator moves with Maxim to his family mansion, Manderley, she starts to feel suppressed and overwhelmed by an illusive presence of Rebecca, Maxim’s first wife, the memory of whom powerfully influences their lives and threatens to destroy their marriage.

The main protagonist of the novel is the narrator, Mrs. de Winter, and her main goal through the plot is to become a proper mistress of the Manderley mansion and a good wife for Maxim. The main antagonist is so-called “ghost of Rebecca”, which is not Rebecca herself, as she was murdered before the beginning of the narration, but the fears and self-doubts of the narrator, which are represented through her being “haunted” by the ghost of her husband’s first wife. The additional antagonist is Mrs. Danvers, as she tries to destroy the narrator and Maxim’s marriage, and additional antagonists also are Jack Favell and Colonel Julyan, as they serve as the means of putting the narrator and Maxim apart, in case they solve Rebecca’s death and detect that Maxim is the murderer.

From the perspective of dramatic action, exposition is in the episodes in which the narrator meets Maxim, agrees to marry him, and the married couple arrives at Manderley. After the honeymoon in Italy, du Maurier introduces the main setting of the novel, where the narrator is introduced to the society to which she is completely unaccustomed. Most of the minor characters who du Maurier includes in the story, such as Maxim’s sister Beatrice and his agent Frank Crawley, serve as a means of letting the narrator know that Rebecca was an extremely beautiful woman and Maxim has completely adored her. However, though everyone constantly praises Rebecca, it is emphasized several times Maxim barely mentions her himself and especially does not want to speak about Rebecca’s death. In such a way, du Maurier creates a subtle and at the same time intense suspense, as the narrator is only able to find out from Frank Crawley that Rebecca has drowned in a boating accident, two months later her body was found and Maxim has identified her.

As a means of providing further tension to exposition, the narrator struggles to find her place at Manderley, as she is not used to a luxurious lifestyle and feels out of place. Moreover, du Maurier makes the minor characters constantly compare the narrator to Rebecca, and such comparison is considered not in the narrator’s favour, both by her

appearance and her manner of acting in society. Apart from that, regarding the development of a romantic plotline, the narrator doubts their marriage brings Maxim happiness, as he grows rather cold towards her. Finally, du Maurier implements the character of Mrs. Danvers, the main housekeeper of Manderley, making the narrator feel frightened of Mrs. Danvers and completely empowered by her attitude. An extremely disturbing and horrifying episode is introduced, as the narrator discovers Rebecca's room, which is left untouched, as if Rebecca is still alive. In order to add more horror and mystery elements, du Maurier lets Mrs. Danvers follow the narrator there and speak about Rebecca with great admiration, saying the narrator and Maxims are haunted by Rebecca's ghost.

“If he [Maxim] suffers then he deserves to suffer, marrying a young girl like you not ten months afterwards. Well, he's paying for it now, isn't he? I've seen his face, I've seen his eyes. He's made his own hell and there's no one but himself to thank for it. He knows she sees him, he knows she comes by night and watches him. And she doesn't come kindly, not she, not my lady. She was never one to stand mute and still and be wronged. “I'll see them in hell, Danny,” she'd say, “I'll see them in hell first.” “That's right, my dear,” I'd tell her, “no one will put upon you.” (Du Maurier, 2006:197)

Rising action starts with the scene of the ball, in which a conflict with Maxim is inflicted. As a significant event, an annual Manderley dress ball is held in the narrator's honour, and the whole fashionable society is planning to attend. When the narrator cannot decide what to wear, Mrs. Danvers suggests that she could copy the costume from a painting. Seeing the narrator in that costume at the ball, Maxim turns pale and with “eyes blazed in anger” (Du Maurier, 2006:174) and “still and quiet, icy cold” voice (ibid.) demands that she would change. As it turns out, it is almost the same outfit that Rebecca has worn last year. The narrator changes and returns to the ball after a while, but Maxim does not say a single word to her the entire evening and she starts to fear that their marriage might be over. In such a manner, du Maurier not only increases tension, keeping the main characters apart, but once again hints that there is a certain mystery behind Maxim's and Rebecca's relationship, making Maxim respond with coldness and anger on his second wife's resemblance to Rebecca.

Climax is most likely at the scene of Maxim's confession, as it is the most intense moment of the story, serving as its turning point. At first, the narrator suddenly learns that Rebecca's sailing boat was found with a body inside it. As Maxim is completely terrified with that news, he Maxim admits he has murdered Rebecca and this body is hers, while the body he has identified before belongs to some unknown woman. In such a manner, du Maurier presents Maxim, the main positive male character, as a murderer, who has killed his first wife, marrying the narrator shortly afterwards. However, when the truth of Maxim's relationship

with Rebecca and her death is revealed, du Maurier creates another turn of events, as Maxim reveals that his marriage to Rebecca was a pretense from its very beginning and Rebecca was a cruel and vicious person who was constantly cheating on Maxim.

“You thought I loved Rebecca?” he said. “You thought I killed her, loving her? I hated her, I tell you. Our marriage was a farce from the very first. She was vicious, damnable, rotten through and through. We never loved each other, never had one moment of happiness together. Rebecca was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency. She was not even normal.” (Du Maurier, 2006:219)

All few months of their marriage the narrator has believed that Maxim has acted so cold and distant towards her because he still loves Rebecca and cannot get over her loss. After his confession, du Maurier makes the narrator feel relieved, as this means that Maxim loves her, not Rebecca. Due to this, the narrator not only does not blame her husband, moreover, she tries to comfort him and even finds in herself firmness and courage to confront Mrs. Danvers, as she finally feels confident about their marriage.

Another possible scene for climax might be the inquest of Rebecca’s death, also highly intense. It becomes known from the expert evaluation that her death could not have been incidental, as the boat has sunk because of holes deliberately made at its bottom. However, as there appears to be no motif for anyone to kill Rebecca, the Coroner eventually gave the verdict that her death is a suicide.

Falling action starts with both in Jack Favell’s and Colonel Julyan’s visits. After Rebecca’s funeral, Jack Favell, Rebecca’s cousin, follows the narrator and Maxim to the Manderley and declares that he has a note from Rebecca which she has written at the day of her death. In this note, Rebecca has asked him to meet her at the cottage, and Favell claims the note can serve as a proof that Rebecca did not intend to commit suicide. As such revelation would cause problems for Maxim, Favell tries to use it to blackmail Maxim for money, asking for “two or three thousand a year for life” (ibid.). However, Maxim refuses to give in to blackmail and calls Colonel Julyan asking him to pay a visit.

Furthermore, falling action continues through the talk with Dr. Baker, as he tells the narrator, Maxim, Favell and Colonel Julyan that Rebecca had a cancer and was terminally ill, “in four or five months’ time she would have had to be kept under morphia” (Du Maurier, 2006:299). In such a way, a reasonable explanation for Rebecca’ suicide is provided, and therefore the case gets closed. Furthermore, since Jack Favell “never had the remotest idea” (Du Maurier, 2006:300) of Rebecca’s illness and there is a motive for suicide now, he is unable to blackmail Maxim further. In such a manner, du Maurier leads everything to a

resolution. Furthermore, as she makes Rebecca terminally ill, Maxim's blame for her death might be considered less significant.

At last, resolution is in the final scene of the novel, when the narrator and Maxim finally return home. Since the threat of exposure is avoided, Maxim and the narrator feel relieved, as they are finally free of Rebecca's "ghost" and can start a new life together. They plan to return to Manderley the next day, but a little while later Maxim gets a call from Frank Crawley and finds out that Mrs. Danvers has suddenly left Manderley. In such a way, du Maurier provides a high level a suspense and tension in the very end of the storyline, as Maxim, concerned by those news, decides to return home immediately. Finally, a dramatic resolution is provided, as he and the narrator drive through the night towards the mansion, they see that the sky is lighted by the flames, since Manderley is burning.

Concerning the narration, it is interesting to note that the relation of the events is cyclic, as the narrator begins to tell her story from the end to the beginning. The novel starts with the narrator and her husband Maxim de Winter living somewhere far away from England and Manderley, as the narrator reflects on her past saying that "last night I dreamed I went to Manderley again" (Du Maurier, 2006:1). After that, the narrator describes her first meeting with her future husband, and events start to unfold then, leading to the end of the story. In such a way, the ending of the story is slightly foreshadowed at the very beginning of the novel, as there is a slight indication that the narrator and her husband are living in exile after some dramatic events: "We can never go back again, that much is certain. The past is still too close to us" (Du Maurier, 2006:3) and "we have both known fear, and loneliness, and very great distress" (Du Maurier, 2006:4).

The personality of the narrator is nameless through the whole novel, as she is only called "Mrs. de Winter", by a title which has previously belonged to Rebecca, and her first name is never mentioned. This moment has attracted a lot of interest from readers over the years, and in her memoir *The Rebecca Notebook: and Other Memories* du Maurier has answered the question about why the narrator was left nameless, saying that she "could not think of one [name], and it became a challenge in technique" (Du Maurier, 2012:3). Such literary device has also added some sort of intrigue and mystery to the novel, as from the very beginning the narrator has something secretive, as readers know neither her first name nor what her surname was before she married Maxim and became Mrs. de Winter.

Apart from that, such absence of a name lets du Maurier present the narrator as an "anonymous" character without her own personality, an insignificant, nameless person, almost a ghost. As the narrator has become the second Mrs. de Winter, she has only taken Rebecca's place, being called the same as Rebecca was. In such a manner, du Maurier

emphasizes that the narrator is only Rebecca's copy in the eyes of everyone around her, and she realizes it herself. Therefore du Maurier makes the narrator feel uncomfortable being called "Mrs. de Winter", as such title only points out she has to compete with Rebecca's "ghost", which is the idea of her, for the right of being called that. From the words of Mrs. Danvers:

"You'll never get the better of her. She's still mistress here, even if she is dead. She's the real Mrs de Winter, not you. It's you that's the shadow and the ghost. It's you that's forgotten and not wanted and pushed aside" (Du Maurier, 2006:200)

Concerned that she cannot sustain bearing the name "de Winter" and the title of the mistress of Manderley, the narrator feels pressured and overpowered by the ghost of her predecessor. To lay an additional emphasis on it, du Maurier constantly mentions Rebecca's name through the novel, its magnitude and importance is pointed, as it is mentioned that "the name Rebecca stood out black and strong, the tall and sloping R dwarfing the other letters" (Du Maurier, 2006:25). In such a way, du Maurier makes the narrator overshadowed by Rebecca to the point of feeling threatened of losing her own identity.

There are also certain parallels between the narrator and the author herself, since at the moment when du Maurier came up with the idea for the novel, she was living abroad with her husband, a commanding officer, and was obliged to perform social duties of a commanding officer's wife. As du Maurier has noted, she was able to "put a brave face on the situation and went to the various cocktail parties which we were obliged to attend, but all I really wanted to do was to write" (Du Maurier, 2012:3). Without a doubt, such attitude reminds the narrator's reluctant way of behaving in the society of the novel, as the narrator did not enjoy the receptions she needed to host and attend. Furthermore, while describing the idea of the novel, du Maurier has admitted "I would have been jealous if my Tommy [her husband] had been married before he married me" (Du Maurier, 2012:4), adding that "he had been engaged once, that I knew, and the engagement had been broken off—perhaps she would have been better at dinners and cocktail parties than I could ever be" (ibid.). In such a way, it is possible to assume that there might be a slight parallel between the novel and the actual events from du Maurier's life experience.

Such perspective, especially the thought about being inferior to a previous wife in performing wifely duties in society, is also very typical for the narrator of *Rebecca*. However, at the same time there is an argument against that the narrator was named after du Maurier. At the beginning of the novel, Maxim has said to the narrator "you have a very lovely and unusual name" (Du Maurier, 2006:17), and the name Daphne can hardly be called unusual for the end of 1930s, when the novel was written. Nevertheless, as there is a certain amount of

parallels with the author's life, a possibility that the narrator might have been named Daphne should be taken into account, though the other reason, which is, as mentioned above, to point out how insignificant the narrator is comparing to Rebecca, appears slightly more believable.

It is also interesting to note that the two main characters, the narrator and Rebecca, are almost mirror opposites of each other. The narrator is completely obedient to her husband, while Rebecca is self-sufficient and poses a threat herself. In such a way, it is possible to assume that the characters contrast each other, in such a way representing two opposite sides of personality, from self-doubts and lack of self-confidence to impudence and self-reliance.

To sum up, the whole novel can be perceived as illustrating the complexity of the narrator's inner thoughts. In such a way, *Rebecca* is a highly multilayered novel of many aspects, full of subtext and open to interpretation. It is a crime story, a mystery story, a story of self-identity, social class, and romance, with elements of gothic and suspense.

## 2.2 The main themes and symbols of the novel “Rebecca”

As *Rebecca* is a highly complex and multi-sided novel, it has a variety of different themes and aspects represented in it. The range of themes covered includes marriage and adultery, fidelity and love, society and class, crime and justice, and the most of those themes are represented in a rather uncharacteristic and nontraditional way, which leaves a wide space for interpretation.

The theme of **marriage** is one the most essential themes of the novel, and mostly du Maurier presents in a materialistic and unromantic manner. As it turns out in the end of the novel, the marriage of Maxim and Rebecca was an act from the start, as she was constantly cheating on him and he was aware of that. Though Maxim has been slightly unsure of marrying Rebecca in the very beginning, as he has admitted to the narrator later “all the time I had a seed of doubt at the back of my mind. There was something about her eyes” (Du Maurier, 2006:220), he has still agreed to marry Rebecca, since she has gotten “the three things that matter in a wife” (ibid.) according to the norms and standards which du Maurier expresses in the novel, such as “breeding, brains, and beauty” (ibid.).

To the moment when Maxim has discovered Rebecca’s true nature, he has not been able to do anything about it because they have been bounded by marriage and divorce would have been highly unfavorable in the society they revolved in. Therefore he has chosen to make a deal with Rebecca and maintain a facade of a happily married couple.

“She made a bargain with me up there, on the side of the precipice,’ he said. ‘I’ll run your house for you,’ she told me, ‘I’ll look after your precious Manderley for you, make it the most famous show-place in all the country, if you like. And people will visit us, and envy us, and talk about us; they’ll say we are the luckiest, happiest, handsomest couple in all England. What a leg-pull, Max!’ she said, ‘what a God-damn triumph!’ (Du Maurier, 2006:221-222)

In such a way, du Maurier presents the relationship of Maxim and Rebecca as based only on mutual benefit, and, though such agreement has been successful for a while, their marriage has eventually fallen apart, resulting in cheating, taunting, and murder.

The motifs of the marriage of Maxim and the narrator are also questionable, as Maxim has never actually declared his love for her. Their proposal and marriage have happened in rather a hurry, and the most likely explanation for it might be that Maxim simply needed to find himself a new wife after Rebecca’s death, in order to replace her in Manderley.

“I’m being rather a brute to you, aren’t I?’ he said; ‘this isn’t your idea of a proposal. We ought to be in a conservatory, you in a white frock with a rose in your hand, and a violin playing a waltz in the distance. And I should make violent love to you behind a palm tree. You would feel then you were getting your money’s worth. Poor darling, what a shame. Never mind, I’ll take you to Venice for our honeymoon and we’ll hold

hands in the gondola. But we won't stay too long, because I want to show you Manderley.” (Du Maurier, 2006:40)

From his words about “getting your money’s worth” and his wish to show the new wife at Manderley, it seems du Maurier characterizes Maxim’s approach to marriage as mostly materialistic and calculated. Though Maxim realizes that his proposal was very sudden and hardly the proposal of the narrator’s dreams, directly admitting that it was “a shame”, he still decides not to do anything about it and did not even allow them to make a lasting honeymoon. At the same time, du Maurier describes the narrator as very excited and having a lot of expectations: “Romantic, that was the word I had tried to remember coming up in the lift. Yes, of course. Romantic. That was what people would say. It was all very sudden and romantic. They suddenly decided to get married and there it was. Such an adventure” (Du Maurier, 2006:44). However, the narrator does not receive the appreciation she expects.

“I wondered if he would tell the waiter, take my arm smilingly and say, ‘You must congratulate us, Mademoiselle and I are going to be married.’ And all the other waiters would hear, would bow to us, would smile, and we would pass into the lounge, a wave of excitement following us, a flutter of expectation. But he said nothing. He left the terrace without a word, and I followed him to the lift. We passed the reception desk and no one even looked at us.” (Du Maurier, 2006:41)

Regarding the further representation of the theme of marriage, when the main couple start living in Manderley, problems in their marriage begin, as the narrator feels unfit for the role of the mistress of Manderley and thinks Maxim is upset with her. “‘You say all this because you are disappointed in me,’ I said. ‘I’m gauche and awkward, I dress badly, I’m shy with people” (Du Maurier, 2006:121). However, du Maurier also emphasizes that since the narrator is unwilling to lose her status, money and respectful position as Mr. de Winter’s wife, she decides to put on appearance and pretend their marriage was successful, stating that she “would be content to live in one corner of Manderley and Maxim in the other so long as the outside world should never know” (Du Maurier, 2006:188) and thinking that they could “bribe servants not to tell, play our part before relations” (ibid.). In such a way, du Maurier describes the narrator’s views of marriage also as rather materialistic and affected by necessity to maintain a proper public image.

The theme of **love** is also represented in a rather untypical way, since there is no sign of a strong and everlasting love in the novel, which is usually required by the genre. The characters are mostly rational, selfish and even ignorant to each other’s feelings. Such representation is rather uncommon for the genre of romance, since usually there is always at least one romantic plotline which is considered to be essential for the progression of events. However, the romantic relationships between characters evolve very slightly during the plot

development in *Rebecca*. As the narrator notes, “I am glad it cannot happen twice, the fever of first love. For it is a fever, and a burden, too, whatever the poets may say” (Du Maurier, 2006:25).

It is left open whether Maxim, the main male character, has ever loved both of his wives, or has he simply felt pressured to maintain an appearance. In such a way, du Maurier creates an image of a rather complex and ambiguous character, and therefore the suspense of the story gets more intense, since the motives of the one of the central characters remain unclear. Maxim never truly declares his romantic feelings towards the narrator, only saying “we’ve got a bond in common, you and I. We are both alone in the world” (Du Maurier, 2006:19). He is not also complimenting her much, on the contrary, he is even rather rude and judgmental towards her appearance several times, for example, when he said “stop biting those nails, they are ugly enough already” (Du Maurier, 2006:28). Maxim is also acting patronizing each time when the narrator speaks about her feelings to him, making no secret that he thinks her attitude is childish and it will pass with time.

“I do love you,” I said. “I love you dreadfully. You’ve made me very unhappy and I’ve been crying all night because I thought I should never see you again.”

When I said this I remember he laughed, and stretched his hand to me across the breakfast table. “Bless you for that,” he said; “one day, when you reach that exalted age of thirty-six which you told me was your ambition, I’ll remind you of this moment. And you won’t believe me. It’s a pity you have to grow up.” (Du Maurier, 2006:40)

From the narrator’s part, there is hardly any love from the start, since though at first her impression of Maxim is mostly positive, it is more friendly than romantic: “I had ill-judged him, he was neither hard nor sardonic, he was already my friend of many years, the brother I had never possessed” (Du Maurier, 2006:20). Later, when Maxim proposes to her, the narrator is more pleased with the idea of living in Manderley, than with him. As she is extremely excited with the thought “I am going to be Mrs de Winter. I am going to live at Manderley. Manderley will belong to me” (Du Maurier, 2006:42), Maxim himself hardly takes much place in her fantasies about the life in Manderley. Du Maurier puts an emphasis on such attitude from the narrator several times through the novel, portraying her the more clear of romantic illusions the more her marriage with Maxim lasts.

However, concerning the progression of the theme of love towards the end of the novel, in the course of development of the events the relationship between Maxim and the narrator changes, as the narrator learns the truth about Rebecca. After that, the narrator stops doubting her husband and starts to show him support, eventually even helping to cover up his crime. Though du Maurier leaves the ending of the novel is rather ambiguous, it is possible to presume that Maxim and the narrator can have a happy and understanding relationship

together, now when they have moved past their misunderstandings and distrust. As the narrator describes their later life, “I can tell by the way he [Maxim] will look lost and puzzled suddenly, all expression dying away from his dear face” (Du Maurier, 2006:4) and “I believe there is a theory that men and women emerge finer and stronger after suffering, and that to advance in this or any world we must endure ordeal by fire. This we have done in full measure” (ibid.).

Since the narrator calls Maxim “dear” and claims that sufferings have brought them stronger together, it can be viewed as a slight indication that they might have become a loving and caring couple in the end. Moreover, the narrator almost confirms it herself, stating that “of course we have our moments of depression; but there are other moments too, when time, unmeasured by the clock, runs on into eternity and, catching his smile, I know we are together, we march in unison, no clash of thought or of opinion makes a barrier between us” (Du Maurier, 2006:4). As she also adds, “We have no secrets now from one another. All things are shared” (ibid.), and in such a way, the mutual trust and understanding are certainly present in their later relationship.

The theme of **adultery** is also expressed in the novel through the actions of Rebecca. Because of adultery, du Maurier portrays Rebecca as an evil, wicked and selfish character, who does not care about her husband, taunts him and in such way even pushes him into murdering her. However, as Rebecca has a multiple number of affairs, including a long term affair with her cousin Jack Favell, this makes her a highly immoral person and is regarded as a prior reason why she is killed by her husband. In such a way, adultery is represented in a highly negative way in the novel, even serving as a means of justifying Rebecca’s murder.

At the same time, the theme of **fidelity** is represented in a highly ambiguous way in the novel. Rebecca is unfaithful to her husband, which is the reason that leads him into murdering her. The narrator is loyal to her husband and therefore justifies him, even though he is guilty of killing Rebecca. At the very beginning of the events, when the narrator does not know the details of Rebecca’s behavior which has provoked Maxim into murdering her, she still addresses him with words “We can’t lose each other now” (Du Maurier, 2006:217) and “We’ve got to be together always” (ibid.), despite Maxim’s concerns that she will not love him anymore knowing he is a murderer. As a result, by such representation of fidelity du Maurier brings a certain amount of moral ambiguity to the novel, putting under doubt the morality of the two main characters. At the same time, in order to diminish this feeling and reduce possible doubts regarding the characters’ behavior, du Maurier makes Rebecca mortally ill.

Because of this, the theme of **crime and justice** is almost the most essential for the novel, since the issue and the consequences of Rebecca's murder are morally dubious in a lot of ways. As the more details of their relationships and Rebecca's actions are brought to light, it becomes clear Maxim had good reasons to murder his wife. In the very end, Maxim manages to evade the punishment, while his second wife, the narrator, decides to stand by him. Such turn of events, when a murderer does not receive a legal punishment by the end of the novel, is rather untypical for fiction, especially in the genres of mystery and romance. Moreover, the main narrator, from whose perspective the readers perceive the events, justifies the actions of the murderer, and such interpretation might be regarded as rather questionable and debatable.

The theme of **society and class** is widely represented in *Rebecca* as well. In the beginning of the novel, du Maurier presents the narrator as a simple paid companion, coming from the middle class, but after getting married to Maxim de Winter, a wealthy representative of an upper class, she becomes the mistress of the Manderley mansion. As the narrator enters a new social circle, she is deeply concerned with what impression she is making both to her new companions and servants. Furthermore, du Maurier notes the importance of public opinion to the narrator, "I did not want the people at the ball to think I had quarrelled with Maxim. I didn't want them to go home and say, 'Of course you know they don't get on. I hear he's not at all happy'" (Du Maurier, 2006:188), in such a way allowing social conventions to influence her behavior.

Another example of such behavior dictated by the matter of society and class is Maxim's, since he does not consider a possibility of divorcing Rebecca because of how such divorce will be perceived in society:

"She [Rebecca] knew I would sacrifice pride, honour, personal feelings, every damned quality on earth, rather than stand before our little world after a week of marriage and have them know the things about her that she had told me then. She knew I would never stand in a divorce court and give her away, have fingers pointing at us, mud flung at us in the newspapers, all the people who belong down here whispering when my name was mentioned, all the trippers from Kerrith trooping to the lodge gates, peering into the grounds and saying, "That's where he lives, in there. That's Manderley. That's the place that belongs to the chap who had that divorce case we read about. Do you remember what the judge said about his wife ...?" (Du Maurier, 2006:222)

At the same time, several characters in the novel do not act according to social norms and conventions mentioned by du Maurier, such as the necessity to comply with the social and gender roles in marriage. Moreover, characters even act completely opposite to these conventions at times. It is rather uncommon that it is Rebecca, a female character, who

commits adultery multiple times and acts aggressively and hostile towards her husband. Such unusualness is noted by Mrs. Danvers, who even states that “She [Rebecca] had all the courage and spirit of a boy, had my Mrs de Winter. She ought to have been a boy, I often told her that” (Du Maurier, 2006:197). Apart from that, her husband is the one who suffers from it and tries to keep up appearances, which is more typically a female role in most of occasions.

Considering the **symbols of the novel**, the main and the most important of them is Manderley. It symbolizes wealth, prosperity and a luxurious style of life; however, at the same time it is a symbol of secrets and deceit, presented almost as a haunted house, which inhabits Rebecca’s ghost. As Manderley is burned in the end of the novel, it symbolizes the beginning of a new life for both Mr. and Mrs. de Winter, as the flame itself is known to symbolize a purifying and cleansing effect. Therefore du Maurier uses the fire in the resolution as a means of showing that all secrets and ghosts of the past disappear into flames by the end of the story.

Regarding the **gothic elements** which are present in the novel, Manderley is once again the essential of them, as it shown as a haunted mansion in which the story takes place. After the two main characters, the narrator and Maxim, come to Manderley, the house is described in such a manner as if it is haunted by the ghost of Rebecca, since the memory of her is very strong in the mansion. Furthermore, Rebecca’s death is enfolded in mystery, as Maxim’s strange behavior whenever someone speaks about her and reluctance to even mention Rebecca’s name suggest that there is a secret related to the death of his first wife. All combined, the portrayal of the haunted house, the main male character with a tragic secret in the past, the death under mysterious circumstances and the indication of a ghostly presence tend to increase the level of suspense in the novel.

In such a way, there is a considerable amount of various themes and motifs in *Rebecca*, some of which are covered exhaustively, and some are touched only slightly. However, despite such diversity of themes, not many of them were noted and fully appreciated by the critics, at least at the moment when the novel was published. Without a doubt, *Rebecca* has become one of Daphne du Maurier’s most successful and well-known works, which is being considered a classic nowadays. However, though the novel has become commercially successful almost immediately after it was printed and has maintained a high level of sales for years later, over a long period of time *Rebecca* was highly underappreciated by critics. The reasons for such attitude are both the slightly inaccurate representation as “a gothic novel” from du Maurier’s publishers and the prejudice towards the “women writing” at that period of time, which is highly noticeable from the critical reviews of the time the novel was published.

Concerning literary criticism after publication of *Rebecca*, the reviews were mostly mixed. In the review by R. D. Charques, published in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1938, it was noted that “the conventions of a story of this kind are not the conventions of the so-called realistic novel” (Charques, 1938:1). Speaking about the representation of the characters and their dubious behavior, the issue of Maxim remaining unpunished for his crime did not get much concern or judgment, as it was said that “his [Maxim’s] dark sorrows and enigmatic postures have an undoubted fascination [...] and in a sense are justified by the revelation that Miss du Maurier springs on us towards the end” (ibid.). As the reviewer has stated, “We learn her [Rebecca’s] true character and the true circumstances of her death, and we understand why Maxim and the second Mrs de Winter live in exile and Manderley is no longer one of the stately homes of England” (Charques, 1938:1).

In such a manner, though the novel was rather untypical in many aspects, the critics have not found its uncommonness highly noticeable. Even du Maurier’s publishers have not presented it as something unconventional and controversial, and one of the editors, Norman Collins, has even stated that “the new Daphne du Maurier contains everything that the public could want” (Collins, cited in Forster, 2012:135). However, du Maurier herself has expressed doubts whether the novel will be able to attract the readers, saying in one of her letters that “it’s a bit too much on the gloomy side to be a winner, and the psychological side may not be understood” (Du Maurier, cited in Simons and Fullbrook, 1998:53).

Despite du Maurier’s concern that the novel is too dark to become popular, her publishers have promoted it as “an exquisite love story in which the emotion is heightened by drama” (Gollancz, cited in Simons and Fullbrook, 1998:50), as it was described by Victor Gollancz, the owner of the publishing house in which *Rebecca* was printed. It was defined by genre as a “gothic romance”, though du Maurier’s did not favor such labelling, and it instantly became commercially successful. Only in the United Kingdom, the novel has “sold 50,000 copies by 15 October 1938 and 72,000 copies by 25 May 1939” (Simons and Fullbrook, 1998:53), and in the United States *Rebecca* “had sold 150,000 copies by 31 January 1939 (excluding book club sales) and over half a million copies by 17 January 1941” (ibid.). The novel has also received awards both in the United States in the beginning of 1939, where “the American Booksellers’ Association had voted it their favourite novel for the 1938” (Simons and Fullbrook, 1998:53), and in the United Kingdom, where the novel became “the Literary Guild choice for October 1938, and several articles on du Maurier appeared both in the quality and the popular press during the autumn and winter of 1938/9” (ibid.).

However, despite the commercial success, the literary reviews were rather mixed, with a large amount of comparison to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. Mostly the critics simply “did

not see what she [du Maurier] wanted them to see” (Forster, 2012:138). *Rebecca* can be hardly categorized into some one genre, as it can be described as a crime mystery with gothic and romantic elements, however, such multiplicity of style has hardly been noticed by critics. Though du Maurier has described *Rebecca* as a “sinister tale about a woman who marries a widower... Psychological and rather macabre” (Du Maurier, cited in Forster, 2012:131), the critics have referred to the novel simply as a “gothic novel” with a “love story”. As it was noted, “On publication, some critics acknowledged the book’s haunting power and its vice-like narrative grip, but—perhaps misled by the book’s presentation, or prejudiced by the gender of the author—they delved no deeper” (Beauman, 2012:90).

Apart from the commercial success upon its release, *Rebecca* has continued to sell well over the years and has never gone out of print. The commercial success of the novel and its recognition among the readers has led to the number of various adaptations, as for stage and for screen, as for radio and opera. The most well-known adaptation is the film version of 1940, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, which is also considered a classic nowadays, as because of the suspense unique to the director, as for providing a representation of the famous novel on the screen.

### **3. THE SCREEN ADAPTATION OF *REBECCA* BY ALFRED HITCHCOCK**

#### **3.1 The analysis of the changes of the plot**

It can be assumed that the screen adaptation of *Rebecca* follows the storyline of the original novel with great deliberation: both the storyline and the representation of the characters appear highly similar to their counterparts in the novel. However, at the same time there is a considerable number of alterations in the plot, some of which are not significant, and some influence the storyline greatly. In general, only a few alterations modify the original storyline, while most of the changes are implemented by Hitchcock in order to increase the level of suspense and to demonstrate the romantic storyline to a greater extent.

Alterations start from the very beginning of the storyline, at the scene of the narrator's and Maxim's first meeting. In the novel, the narrator meets Maxim for the first time at the restaurant of Hotel Cote d'Azur at Monte Carlo, and soon afterwards they are introduced to each other and start spending time together. In the film, Maxim is standing on the edge of a cliff at the very first scene and is leaning forward to the precipice, before the narrator, who is a complete stranger to him at this moment of time, sees him, gets worried and shouts "No! Stop!" to him. Maxim has answered with annoyance "What the devil are you shouting about? Who are you? What are you staring at?" As a result, Hitchcock provides a different exposition of the story, which affects as the plot, as well as the characterization.

Such alteration completely changes the whole dynamic of the relationship between Maxim and the narrator. By indicating that Maxim is intending to jump off the cliff Hitchcock immediately presents him as tragic figure, as a character who needs salvation, and the narrator is the one who provides it. In the novel, it is only stated that Maxim is a widower, and there is no indication, at least in the very beginning, that he is deeply suffering because of the death of his first wife. Furthermore, with such meeting scene between the narrator and Maxim Hitchcock creates additional romantic vibe, as the narrator is shown as a caring person who saves Maxim from himself. However, in the novel there is very little romance between the couple, they mostly spend time driving around together and certainly are not shown to care about each other to such extent.

Therefore, the main reason of that alteration is to create a romantic atmosphere between the narrator, who is the main female character, and Maxim, the main male character, who is supposed to be her love interest. There are a number of further scenes which are added with the same purpose, such as when Maxim and the narrator dance together a slow dance and

when Maxim sends her flowers with a “thank you” note. In the novel, there is no such episodes, however, it appears that Hitchcock considered the original relationship between the characters too monotonous and decided it needs a dramatic episode. Furthermore, their wedding is described very briefly in the novel, with the only indication that the couple has spent their honeymoon in Italy, and there is no mention nor of flowers, neither of any other romantic gifts or gestures from Maxim to the narrator.

In the film, not only the wedding is shown and Maxim buys flowers for the narrator after that, but as they are in Manderley, a scene in which they watch romantic clips from their honeymoon is implemented. In general, there is almost no sign of love and attraction between Maxim and the narrator in the novel, and as such cold relationship between the main male and female characters would less likely attract and entertain audience, more romantic scenes are added to the adaptation.

Concerning another additional romantic scenes, the scene of Maxim’s proposal is also altered. In the same manner as in the novel, proposal is made at the last moment, however, Hitchcock also adds a certain amount of suspense and drama in the film. After finding out that Mrs. Van Hopper has suddenly decided to leave, the narrator makes numerous attempts to reach out for Maxim and tell him she will never see him again, yet those attempts remain unsuccessful. At first, she tries to find Maxim in the hotel, but he is out riding, then she tries to reach him on the phone in his hotel room. However, the first time Mrs. Van Hopper walks in and the narrator has to hang up the phone, and when she tries calling for the second time, Maxim is in the shower and does not hear the phone ringing. In the end, Hitchcock makes the narrator barge in Maxim’s hotel room, to create a dramatic effect.

Hitchcock obviously makes such alterations in order to add more tension to the story and make it more difficult for Maxim and the narrator to get together, creating a “star-crossed lovers” element. Another alteration to the proposal scene, on the contrary, is even more unromantic than in the original. Though Maxim’s proposal is rather short and primitive, with words “I’m asking you to marry me, you little fool” (Du Maurier, 2006:39), in the novel he makes it while having a breakfast with the narrator. In the film, however, Maxim does not even propose to the narrator’s face, as he is speaking from a different room, still being in bathroom, while the narrator is waiting for him in the main room of his suite. On the other hand, such move might be interesting, since the viewers get to see only the narrator’s reaction to the proposal, and as Maxim’s face is not even shown at this moment, Hitchcock makes his motifs even more unclear than in the novel.

The second alteration with the proposal is that though in the novel Maxim speaks with Mrs. Van Hopper alone at her hotel room, but in the film he calls Mrs. Van Hopper in his

hotel room and conversation is held in the narrator's presence. Such alteration is most probably made with a purpose to shorten the number of events, so everything would fit in the screen time. However, at the same time it destroys a certain ambiguity, since in the original the narrator never knows in which words precisely Maxim describes their relationship to Mrs. Van Hopper. In the novel, the narrator only imagines how it might have been: "Perhaps he [Maxim] said, 'I fell in love with her, you know, the very first time we met. We've been seeing one another every day.' And she [Mrs. Van Hopper] in answer, 'Why, Mr de Winter, it's quite the most romantic thing I've ever heard' (Du Maurier, 2006:44), yet in the film the real conversation is shown and therefore the narrator's fantasies are left aside.

There are a number of minor alterations regarding Rebecca's death and life at Manderley. The most notable one relates to the narrator's behavior at the first social gathering. In the novel, the narrator makes an extremely tactless remark about Rebecca's death at a dinner with Beatrice, her husband Giles and Frank Crawley, as they are talking about bathing and the narrator asks "Is the bathing safe in the bay?" (Du Maurier, 2006:77). In the film, it is Giles who acts tactless, since he asks the narrator "Don't sail, do you?", and after she answers that she does not, Giles remarks "Thank goodness for that". As a result, Hitchcock portrays the narrator more tactless than in the original, however, he passes a similar remark to a minor character in order to preserve a tense atmosphere at the dinner.

In the film, however, the narrator also makes a misstep in the beginning of the story, when she does not know Maxim very well. As they are watching the sea together, she talks about swimming, mentioning that "there was a man drowned here last year" and stating "I never have any fear of drowning". After she asks Maxim "Have you?", he does not answer and simply says "come, I'll take you home". However, at that moment of time the narrator does not know the details of Rebecca's death; only later that day, when she returns to the hotel, Mrs. Van Hopper informs her that "she [Rebecca] was drowned, poor dear, while she was sailing near Manderley". In such a way, the narrator once again is not shown tactless, since she does not speak without thinking as in the novel, but simply cannot know it is a sensitive subject for Maxim.

The most crucial alteration in the plot regards Rebecca's death. Though Maxim murders Rebecca in the novel, purposely shooting her after she provokes him, in the film Maxim does not kill Rebecca, and eventually Rebecca's death is displayed as an accident. Such change in the storyline is applied because of the Hollywood standards and norms, which require that the main male character, who represents both a "positive hero" and the love interest of the female narrator, cannot murder his wife and remain unpunished. As this would send the wrong message to the audience, Rebecca's death is shown accidental. Such change is

crucial in many senses, but mostly because it destroys the main case of ambiguity and in some way dignifies the characters, not letting the readers decide for themselves whether they judge Maxim and the narrator or, on the contrary, prefer to justify them.

Concerning the final events of the novel, number of slight alterations are implemented. In the novel, the narrator faints at the inquest of Rebecca's death, when Maxim is interrogated. Noticing her state, Maxim exclaims "Will someone take my wife outside? She is going to faint" (Du Maurier, 2006:254), and with those words the chapter ends, creating a high suspense. In the film, the narrator faints before Maxim has notices it, and therefore this moment seems less dramatic than it is in the original. There are also few changes of the setting comparing to the novel, as Jack Favell approaches Maxim and the narrator in the car, and after that they dine in a café, where Colonel Julyan later joins them. In the original, these events take place at Manderley, however, Hitchcock preferred to show more different locations in the film.

Regarding the final events of the novel, Hitchcock presents them more tensely and simplifies in the film. For example, Maxim slaps Jack Favell in the film, while in the novel no one resorts to physical violence; with such alteration Hitchcock most likely wished to make the scene look more spectacular. As for the simplification of the storyline, in the film Rebecca mentions her visit to a doctor in the note she left to Jack Favell, and everyone finds out the name of the doctor was Baker from Mrs. Danvers. In the novel, the characters get this information from reading Rebecca's diary, but as this scene is hardly entertaining Hitchcock omitted in from the adaptation. Another alteration for the purpose of simplifying the flow of events is that in the film Jack informs Mrs. Danvers that Rebecca was terminally ill on the phone. The reason why Hitchcock adds such episode is most probably to explain Mrs. Danvers' later actions in the very end of the story.

The last notable plot alteration concerns the whole final scene with a fire at Manderley. In the novel, the narrator pays a visit to Dr. Baker along with everyone else, yet in the film she stays at Manderley waiting for Maxim to return. In such a way, in the novel the narrator and Maxim return to Manderley together and watch it burn from afar. In the film, Maxim drives back to Manderley with Frank Crawley, they meet the narrator outside of the burning building and then watch Mrs. Danvers die in the flames. Such alteration is most likely added to create more suspense in the end, as the life of the main character, the narrator, is put in danger, since for a moment it was not clear at first whether she was captured in Manderley as it was burning or has gotten outside.

Another alteration regarding the plot is the fate of Mrs. Danvers. In the novel, it is never purposely stated that it is Mrs. Danvers starts the fire. However, it is strongly implied,

as it is known that she suddenly leaves Manderley before the fire rises. Moreover, she definitely has a motive for doing so, as she adores Rebecca and cannot let Maxim and the narrator live happily in the house he has lived with Rebecca. In the film, it is clearly shown that the fire was Mrs. Danvers' doing, and in such a way audience does not have to come up with the assumptions who has started the fire, as they are given an unambiguous answer right away. Apart from that, if in the novel Mrs. Danvers disappears at the end of the story, at the end of the film version Mrs. Danvers dies in the fire she has started. Such alteration must once again been made due to the Hollywood standards, in which the villain-like character is usually tend to die in the end of the story to make a proper happy ending for the protagonist.

In such a way, it may be concluded that the screen adaptation can be classified as commentary adaptation type, since it follows the original novel, yet features altered elements of the story. However, the culmination of the storyline is changed significantly, comparing to the events of the novel, especially in the episode in which the narrator discovers the circumstances that had led to Rebecca's death. The other alterations appear to be less significant and therefore do not have great influence on the storyline, and the reasons for such alterations are mostly to please the audience by adding romance and suspense in the film, as well as to simplify the plotline for the viewers, not leaving any unanswered questions.

### 3.2 The analysis of the changes of characterization

The character representation in the film is similar to the original in many ways, since they are portrayed generally close to their descriptions in the novel. However, differences are also present, as in the appearance of the characters, as well as in their behavior, character traits and involvement in the plot.

Regarding the **appearance** of the characters, as the narrator describes herself at the beginning of the novel, looking back to everything that had happened, “I suppose it is his [Maxim’s] dependence upon me that has made me bold at last. At any rate I have lost my diffidence, my timidity, my shyness with strangers. I am very different from that self who drove to Manderley for the first time, hopeful and eager, handicapped by a rather desperate gaucherie and filled with an intense desire to please” (Du Maurier, 2006:7). However, in the film the narrator does not appear particularly timid and shy, at least not to that extent to which she is in the novel. Without doubt, the narrator looks convincing, for example, in the scene when she drops gloves at her first meeting with Mrs. Danvers, and acts extremely polite to everyone. However, it is rather questionable whether her “timidity” and “intense desire to please” are fully displayed in the film, since she looks much more confident than in the novel.

Most probably, the reason for such impression would be the narrator’s appearance. From her own words, she is “with straight, bobbed hair and youthful, unpowdered face, dressed in an ill-fitting coat and skirt and a jumper of my own creation, trailing in the wake of Mrs Van Hopper like a shy, uneasy colt” (Du Maurier, 2006:7). In another scene, it is said “the wind blowing [the narrator’s] dull, lanky hair” (Du Maurier, 2006:27). In the film, the narrator is portrayed by Joan Fontaine, and though the actress mostly matches the description, she can hardly be called “dull” or “shy”, since she simply appears too good-looking for such part. Such casting choice was most likely made due to Hollywood standards, as it might not have been considered a good commercial move to cast a regularly looking actress for the main female part.

Concerning Maxim’s appearance, in the novel he is only described as “attractive” (Du Maurier, 2006:32) from Mrs. Van Hopper’s words, and the narrator notes that “his face was arresting, sensitive, medieval in some strange inexplicable way” (Du Maurier, 2006:11). In the film, Maxim is portrayed by Laurence Olivier, also very handsome, perhaps, even a little too handsome comparing to Maxim’s description in the novel. Among other things, Maxim is forty-two at the moment he met the narrator, however, Laurence Olivier was only thirty-three when the adaptation was released. The main reason for such casting is probably the filmmakers’ wish to appeal to the female audience by casting a rather young and good-

looking actor. Furthermore, another reason for such casting is to narrow the age gap between Maxim and the narrator, therefore making them look more appealing together.

As for the **character features**, regarding Maxim, Mrs. Van Hopper describes him as “queer-tempered” (Du Maurier, 2006:32) and “difficult to know” (ibid.). Laurence Olivier’s performance makes exactly such impression, creating a portrait of a mysterious and secretive character who has experienced a tragedy in the past. In such a way, it is safe to assume that Maxim in the film is mostly similar to Maxim in the novel, except for a change in his age and slight differences in his temper, for example, in the scene when he punched Jack Favell in the face. Apart from that, Maxim is acting in a more open and romantic way towards the narrator in adaptation, especially in the beginning of the film when he has only met her.

The other change of appearance regards the character of Mrs. Danvers. In the novel, Mrs. Danvers is described as “someone tall and gaunt, dressed in deep black, whose prominent cheek-bones and great, hollow eyes gave her a skull’s face, parchment-white, set on a skeleton’s frame” (Du Maurier, 2006:52) with a “dull and toneless” voice (Du Maurier, 2006:58). Such description is even mentioned twice, as the narrator notes “she was like a shadow standing there, watching me, appraising me with her hollow eyes, set in that dead skull’s face” (Du Maurier, 2006:61). Apart from that, Maxim refers to her as “old Danvers” (Du Maurier, 2006:62), therefore it can be assumed that Mrs. Danvers is an elderly woman.

However, in the film Mrs. Danvers is rather young, as Judith Anderson, the actress who portrays her, was only slightly above her forties at the moment the film was released. Concerning her appearance in general, though Mrs. Danvers indeed looks grim and intimidating in the film, there is no sign of a “skull’s face”, “skeleton’s frame” and “hollow eyes”. Such changes in Mrs. Danvers’ age and appearance might be related to the concept of rivalry, since by making the housekeeper closer to the narrator’s age Hitchcock puts her and the narrator in the same category, therefore adding emphasis on their rivalry.

Concerning the minor characters’ appearances, there are also a number of changes. Beatrice, Maxim’s sister, is described as “tall, broad-shouldered, very handsome, very much like Maxim about the eyes and jaw” (Du Maurier, 2006:75). In the film, Gladys Cooper, the actress who portrays Beatrice, is very elegant and feminine, not even a little “broad-shouldered”. Frank Crawley is described as “a colourless, rather thin man with a prominent Adam’s apple” (ibid.), however, Reginald Denny, the actor who plays him in the film, is about as handsome as Maxim. George Sanders, who portrays Jack Favell, is nowhere close to the description of “a big, hefty fellow, good-looking in a rather flashy, sunburnt way. He had the hot, blue eyes usually associated with heavy drinking and loose living. His hair was reddish like his skin. In a few years he would run to fat, his neck bulging over the back of his

collar. His mouth gave him away, it was too soft, too pink” (Du Maurier, 2006:130), as he is rather slim, dark-haired and had a rather large nose and thin lips. In such a way, so-called “good” minor characters, friends of the narrator, are made more handsome according to the Hollywood standards, while one of the antagonists, Jack Favell, is not given such good looks.

The other change relating to the portrayal of minor characters is the representation of their **personalities and motives**. In the novel, the narrator only finds out that Jack Favell is Rebecca’s cousin from Beatrice, asking her who he is soon afterwards the narrator meets Favell. In the film, however, Jack Favell tells her himself that he is “Rebecca’s favorite cousin”. In such a way, there is less intrigue about his character in the film, however, at the same time the unnecessary scene with the narrator’s conversation to Beatrice is cut down from the story, therefore reducing screen time.

Mrs. Danvers has a completely opposite situation, since in the novel her past and motives are revealed. In the scene when she encourages the narrator to jump out of the window, she speaks about Rebecca with a great admiration, stating that she knows her from the time Rebecca was a child, “lovely as a picture” (Du Maurier, 2006:197), and claiming “I saw her, I was with her” (Du Maurier, 2006:198). In the film, however, Mrs. Danvers only answers the narrator’s question “Why do you hate me? What have I done to you that you should ever hate me so?” with words “You tried to take her place, you let him marry you”. Therefore, though Mrs. Danvers’s motives remain the same, they are rather unclear in the film, as it is shown she was extremely loyal to Rebecca yet the cause of such loyalty is never fully explained.

Regarding the portrayal of minor characters in general, many moments involving them are omitted in the film. In the novel, Beatrice and the narrator have a face to face conversation after Beatrice and Giles pay Maxim and the narrator a visit. In the film, however, they never speak in private, and Beatrice gives the narrator less advices about her looks. Furthermore, in the novel the narrator has a personal maid, Clarice, whom the narrator feels “at ease with” (Du Maurier, 2006:110), and a housemaid, Alice, who “had been so superior” (ibid.). In the film, Clarice is never mentioned by name, and Alice is simply referred as “the parlor maid”, who is “perfectly satisfactory”, and therefore the theme of the narrator’s relationship with other maids except Mrs. Danvers is never put under emphasis. In such a way, minor characters are less sufficient in the film and are less involved with the story comparing to the novel.

### 3.3 The analysis of the themes presented in the film

In the same way as is the novel, there are a variety of themes in the film. Few of them, such as themes of love and society and class, are represented in a different manner comparing to the original, due to a number of reasons, the most common of which is to comply with the Hollywood standards and expectations of the audience.

From all the themes present in the novel, the theme of **love** is expressed the most differently in the film. In the novel, Maxim is rather unpleasant towards the narrator at times and does not hesitate to insult her, even in the moments when he declares his feelings for her. For example, when the narrator is expressing doubts about marrying Maxim, concerned that she does not “belong to [his] sort of world” (Du Maurier, 2006:39), Maxim addresses her with words “You are almost as ignorant as Mrs Van Hopper, and just as unintelligent. What do you know of Manderley?” (ibid.). In the film, Maxim never calls the narrator unintelligent or ignorant, nor does he call Mrs. Hooper such. In such a way, Maxim is portrayed as being more considerate towards the narrator, being made suitable for the role of the male “romantic hero”.

The most notable difference regarding representation of **love** in the film is in Maxim’s proposal speech. In the novel, Maxim’s choice of wording is almost brutal, as he objects to the narrator’s assumption that he was playing a joke on her.

“If you think I'm one of the people who try to be funny at breakfast you're wrong,” he [Maxim] said. ‘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 Manderley with me.’” (Du Maurier, 2006:39)

In the film, when Maxim asks the question “Which would you prefer, New York or Manderley?”, and the narrator answers “Oh, please don't joke about it”, almost the same way he does it in the novel. However, in the film Maxim’s response is only “I'll repeat what I said”, without any mention of his ill temper in the morning. In such a manner, the whole proposal is much more softened, as Maxim does not act harshly and gloomy towards the narrator, and therefore even his later ultimatum does not seem as threatening as it is in the novel.

Concerning the representation of love in the very beginning of their relationship, there are also considerable changes. Apart from the flowers, slow dancing and romantic moments, added in the film, Maxim addresses the narrator with a very brutal speech in the novel.

“You have blotted out the past for me, you know, far more effectively than all the bright lights of Monte Carlo. But for you I should have left long ago, gone on to Italy, and Greece, and further still perhaps. You have spared me all those wanderings. Damn

your puritanical little tight-lipped speech to me. Damn your idea of my kindness and my charity. I ask you to come with me because I want you and your company, and if you don't believe me you can leave the car now and find your own way home. Go on, open the door, and get out." (Du Maurier, 2006:29)

The narrator feels utterly upset after hearing those words, stating to herself that "had I been a year or two younger I think I should have cried" (ibid.). However, in the film Maxim's monologue does not have such effect, as it is sufficiently shortened:

"I asked you to come out with me because I wanted your company. You've blotted out the past for me more than all the bright lights of Monte Carlo. But if you think I just asked you out of kindness or charity, you can leave the car now and find your own way home. Go on. Open the door and get out."

The main point of Maxim's words remain the same, however, as he does not mention that the narrator "spared him wanderings" and does not address her with the words "damn you", it sounds even pleasant, as Maxim is trying his best to reason the narrator out of thinking he is only being polite to her. However, since he still tells her to get off the car, she still cries, and if in the novel Maxim "put out his hand and took hold of mine, and kissed it, still saying nothing" (Du Maurier, 2006:30), in the film he does no such thing. In such a way, Hitchcock once again slightly changes the romantic dynamics between the characters, showing Maxim as more soft and caring in some cases. Another interesting moment is that in the novel the narrator even notes to herself "I thought of all those heroines of fiction who looked pretty when they cried, and what a contrast I must make with blotched and swollen face, and red rims to my eyes" (ibid.), while in the film her face is not even slightly blotched or swollen, she looks as beautiful as usual, being glamorized due to the Hollywood standards.

Apart from that, the age gap between Maxim and the narrator is considerably softened in the film. In the novel, it is pointed out multiple times that the age difference between them is significant, as Maxim notes himself "I suppose you are young enough to be my daughter, and I don't know how to deal with you" (Du Maurier, 2006:31). Furthermore, Mrs. Danvers calls the narrator "a young ignorant girl, young enough to be his [Maxim's] daughter" (Du Maurier, 2006:199). The narrator's age is never revealed in the novel; moreover, it is purposely left a secret: "How old are you?" he [Maxim] said, and when I told him he laughed, and got up from his chair. 'I know that age, it's a particularly obstinate one'" (Du Maurier, 2006:20). However, as it is known that Maxim is forty-two years old, in such a way it can be safely assumed that the narrator most likely is in her early twenties.

In the novel, the emphasis on the age difference between the main couple is put in the very beginning of their relationship and is noted by the narrator herself, as she even admits preferring older men, when Maxim asks her "Does forty-two seem very old to you? (Du

Maurier, 2006:42)", and she answers "I don't like young men" (ibid.), saying that "quickly, too eagerly perhaps" (ibid.). Apart from that, Mrs. Van Hopper also expresses her doubts, asking the narrator "you realize he's years older than you?" (Du Maurier, 2006:46). In the film, however, the age difference between the two main characters is left unnoted, as the actor Laurence Olivier, who portrays Maxim, was only ten years older than his screen partner, Joan Fontaine, and therefore she is certainly not "young enough to be his daughter". As a result, the screen couple fits together well, making a good match with each other and creating a beautiful on-screen romance, much more convincing than the one in the novel.

Concerning the theme of the **society and class**, its representation is also different comparing to the original. Hitchcock leaves the importance of marriage in the eyes of the society out of the story, as the narrator's intentions to live with Maxim as complete strangers and to even "bribe servants not to tell" (Du Maurier, 2006:188) about their problems, so she could preserve a façade of a successful marriage, are never mentioned in the film. Furthermore, the importance for a wife to produce a male heir for her husband is never accented upon, while in the novel Beatrice is almost pressuring the narrator about it, telling her "I must say I do hope you will produce a son and heir before long. It would be so terribly good for Maxim. I hope you are doing nothing to prevent it" (Du Maurier, 2006:144). In the film, Hitchcock cut out such episode was, most probably due to the reason that it is irrelevant to the development of the storyline and does not convey any important message.

At the same time, the representation of Maxim's marriage to Rebecca is almost the same as in film, as in the novel. The idea about "breeding, brains, and beauty" being the most important things in a wife, which is expressed Maxim's grandmother, is repeated in the film word by word. Rebecca's bargain with Maxim and the nature of their relationship, driven by Maxim's desire to preserve his reputation, are present in the film as well. The main reason of such representation would be that it is one of the core elements of the plot, highly important for Maxim's characterization. Therefore it was necessary for Hitchcock to lay an emphasis on societal norms concerning marriage of the time, so Maxim would be justified in the eyes of the audience for committing his wife's murder and therefore the film would not be as morally dubious as the original novel.

The adaptation was very well acclaimed both critically and commercially, receiving both praise from critics and box office success. The film also won two Academy Awards, including the most important category, Best Picture, and Best Cinematography, and had nine other nominations, regarding as the actors' performances, both main and supporting, as adapted screenplay, film editing and direction, since Hitchcock was "nominated for an Oscar as Best Director" (Freedman, 2015:18),.

In the review in *The New York Times*, published in 1940, *Rebecca* was called “an altogether brilliant film, haunting, suspenseful, handsome and handsomely played” (Nugent, 1940:1). Concerning the narration, the reviewer has noted that its structure was very close to the original, as “Miss du Maurier's novel was an “I” book, its story told by the second, hapless Mrs. de Winter” (ibid.) while in the adaptation “the film is first-personal too, so that its frail young heroine's diffident blunders, her fears, her tears are silly only at first, and then are silly no longer, but torture us too” (ibid.). In such a way, Hitchcock’s ability to preserve the original narration was regarded and praised, as the voice of the narrator was noticeable in the film as well.

The review has also given praises to the screenwriters and the adapted script, stating “but here we have been giving Mr. Hitchcock and Miss du Maurier all the credit when so much of it belongs to Robert Sherwood, Philip MacDonald, Michael Hogan and Joan Harrison who adapted the novel so skilfully” (Nugent, 1940:2). As for actors’ performances, the reviewer was content with both main heroes, especially with the actress who has portrayed the narrator, describing her as “humiliatingly, embarrassingly, mortifyingly shy, a bit on the dowdy side, socially unaccomplished, a little dull; sweet, of course, and very much in love” (ibid.). Moreover, the reviewer has expressed an opinion that her characterization in the film was even better than in the original, claiming that “Miss du Maurier never really convinced me any one could behave quite as the second Mrs. de Winter behaved and still be sweet, modest, attractive and alive. But Miss Fontaine does it” (ibid.). Such statement can be perceived as rather inaccurate, as Fontaine’s portrayal of the narrator was slightly less modest than in the novel, yet in general she has still looked mostly similar to the original and rather convincing.

In another review, published in *Harrison's Reports* in 1940, the film was also praised, being called “a powerful psychological drama for adults” (*Harrison's Reports*, 1940:54), full of “situations that thrill and hold the spectator in tense suspense” (ibid.). Regarding the most important plot change Hitchcock has implemented, portrayal of Rebecca’s death as an accident, it was named an “intelligent alteration” (ibid.), as because of it “the audience’s sympathy for the hero is unchanged” (ibid.). In the review in *Variety*, also published in 1940, the film was called “one of the finest productional efforts of the past year” (*Variety*, 1940:17), and furthermore, regarding the issue of fidelity, the adaptation’s resemblance to the original was noted, as the reviewer has stated the film was “noteworthy in its literal translation of Daphne du Maurier’s novel to the screen” (ibid.). However, at the same time the reviewer has doubted that the film can be widely appreciated by the viewers, stating that it is “too tragic and deeply psychological to hit the fancy of wide audience appeal” (ibid.), almost in the same

manner du Maurier herself has described the novel. According to the reviewer, though Hitchcock's adaptation would "receive attention from critics and class patronage as an example of the power in narrative drama of vivid screen portraiture" (ibid.), at the same time "general audiences will tab it as a long-drawn out drama that could have been told better in less footage" (ibid.).

Concerning the portrayal of the characters, in *Harrison's Reports* the female lead was praised, at the reviewer has noted that "Joan Fontaine portrays the heroine with deep feeling and understanding" (*Harrison's Reports*, 1940:54) and "one pities her because of her inability to cope with certain problems, yet respects her for her courage" (ibid.). In *Variety*, Laurence Olivier's portrayal of Maxim was called "impressionable" (*Variety*, 1940:17), while Joan Fontaine's representation of the narrator was named "excellent [...], carrying through the transition of a sweet and vivacious bride to that of a bewildered woman marked by the former tragedy" (ibid.). The portrayal of minor characters was also complimented in *Variety*, as it was stated that "supporting cast has been selected with careful attention to individual capabilities" (ibid.), and George Sanders was even called "personable in portrayal of the despicable Jack Flavell" (ibid.), misspelling the character's name.

In such a way, it can be concluded that the adaptation was well received by critics, as its screenwriting, directing and acting were constantly praised. From all the plot changes and different representation of the novel's core themes, Hitchcock's alteration of Rebecca's death was mostly noted and described as beneficial for the story and perception of Maxim's character. Concerning the film's casting, it has also received great amount of appraisal and any of the mismatches and irregularities were rarely mentioned. Therefore it can be stated that the differences with the novel are hardly notable, and those who are sufficient for the plot were altered in such a way that have turned out only to the film's advantage.

## **4. THE BIRDS BY DAPHNE DU MAURIER**

### **4.1 Structure and interpretation of the short story “The Birds”**

*The Birds* is one of Daphne du Maurier’s most well-known works. The story takes place in Cornwall, England, a short time after the Second World War, and revolves around Nat Hocken, a farmer with “a wartime disability” (Du Maurier, 1999:1).

The idea of the story came to du Maurier after she saw “a farmer being attacked by a flock of seagulls as he plowed his field” (Maunder, 2007:128). Fascinated by this episode, du Maurier has come up with a horror story “of birds becoming progressively more hostile to humans when an especially rough winter has led to food scarcity” (ibid.). However, the motives of the birds might be interpreted in many ways, not only because of starvation, as Nat, the narrator, has also assumed that this might as well have been a longtime plan, wondering “how many millions of years were stored in those little brains, behind the stabbing beaks, the piercing eyes, now giving them this instinct to destroy mankind with all the deft precision of machines” (Du Maurier, 1999:30-31).

Concerning the dramatic action of the story, exposition is when Nat, the main protagonist, notices the strange behavior of the birds, as they “had been more restless than ever this fall of the year” (ibid.), and is attacked by them later at night, when the birds fly in his children’s room and Nat fights the birds until the early morning.

Rising action starts when Nat describes the events of the last night to a few of their neighbors, but they do not take his story seriously. Furthermore, rising action continues in a few later episodes, when Nat sees what appears to be a legion of gulls across the sea, and later his wife informs him there has been an announcement on the radio about the birds. Tension builds further when Nat leaves to pick his daughter from the bus stop, escaping the birds which try to attack him at the last moment.

Climax is most likely when the whole family gathers in kitchen, listening to the next radio announcement, and they all hear the sound of flying planes, which brings them hope. However, shortly after that they hear distant crashes, and though his wife thinks that were the sounds of bombs dropping, Nat immediately understands that the planes have crashed, as they could do nothing “against birds that flung themselves to death against propeller and fuselage but hurtle to the ground themselves” (ibid.). Nat and his family stay in the kitchen all night, where they are out of the birds reach, though during the night Nat hears “the pattering of the feet in the children’s bedroom, the brushing of those wings against the door” (Du Maurier, 1999:25), as it is surrounded by birds.

Falling action is when Nat realizes that there is not going to be a next broadcast on the radio with the further instructions and they are on their own now, as no help is coming. Since birds do not attack in the daylight, only sitting on the trees and watching him, Nat decides to go to the farm to get some food. Nat sees dead bodies of a few of his neighbors, killed by birds, then observes that there is no smoke coming out from other neighbors' chimneys.

Resolution is when Nat returns home with his family and they wait for another attack, as "the tapping began at the windows, at the door. The rustling, the jostling, the pushing for position on the sills. The first thud of the suicide gulls upon the step" (Du Maurier, 1999:30). Though they have got food and supplies, it is unknown whether they will be able to survive the next attacks, especially since it is possible they are the only ones who are left alive as in their area, as in the whole country.

The whole story might be interpreted as a metaphor for the bombings during the Second World War, written from du Maurier's experience witnessing her country under attacks. There are many parallels between the birds' attacks and the attacks during the war through the story, both from the birds' behavior and from the human reaction to it.

"What they ought to do," she [the wife] said, "is to call the Army out and shoot the birds. That would soon scare them off."

"Let them try," said Nat. "How'd they set about it?"

"They have the Army to the docks," she answered, "when the dockers strike. The soldiers go down and unload the ships."

"Yes," said Nat, "and the population of London is eight million or more. Think of all the buildings, all the flats and houses. Do you think they've enough soldiers to go around shooting birds from every roof?"

"I don't know. But something should be done. They ought to do something."

Nat thought to himself that "they" were no doubt considering the problem at that very moment, but whatever "they" decided to do in London and the big cities would not help the people here, three hundred miles away. Each householder must look after his own." (Du Maurier, 1999:11)

In the conversation with his wife, Nat expresses the viewpoint that it is "the big cities" that matter to "them", to the government, and it is the first place where some measures would be taken. In the countryside, however, everyone has to depend on themselves, as they are considered more of a second-priority. Such state of things was also common during the war, as there were more opportunities to escape the bombs and receive a medical help in the large cities, and it was rather difficult to grant aid and resources to the countryside. The same thing concerns the attackers, as Nat has noted that they are mostly attacked by "rooks, crows, jackdaws, magpies, jays, all birds that usually preyed upon the smaller species" (Du Maurier, 1999:12), while the larger birds were "given the towns" (Du Maurier, 1999:13). Nat explains

such division with words “We don’t matter so much here. The gulls will serve for us. The others go to the towns” (ibid.).

Furthermore, the countries involved in the Second World War are also mentioned in the story, with the same attitude they might have been discussed during the war. In Nat’s conversation with his neighbor, Harry Trigg, Russians are mentioned in a rather ironical manner.

“Well, what do you make of it? They’re saying in town the Russians have done it. The Russians have poisoned the birds.”

“How could they do that?” asked Nat.

“Don’t ask me. You know how stories get around. Will you join my shooting match?” (Du Maurier, 1999:15)

A while later, as Nat is speaking to his wife, she expresses a different viewpoint about America, asking “Won’t America do something? [...] They’ve always been our allies, haven’t they? Surely America will do something?” (Du Maurier, 1999:30). Such opinion was also very common for the time of the Second World War, as America was considered a powerful ally.

Another important indication is Nat’s characteristics of crashed planes, as he calls it a “waste of life and effort” (Du Maurier, 1999:20), stating that “We can’t destroy enough of them that way. Cost too heavy” (ibid.). His viewpoint is not only highly typical regarding the war, since a large part of the citizens perceive the military action as something meaningless, simply a “waste of life and effort”, but it also corresponds with du Maurier’s opinion on the matter, as she has written in one of her letter during the war “What carnage there is going to be [...] and what will have been achieved? Nothing” (Forster, 2012:184).

Concerning the **characterization**, the main protagonist of the story is Nat, while his main goal is to protect his family from the attacks and to keep them safe. The main antagonist is an unidentified force of evil which influences the birds’ behavior and therefore threatens the lives of Nat and his family. The additional antagonist is ignorance of the other farmers and neighbors, as they do not take Nat’s words seriously and though they do not endanger Nat’s family directly, they decrease their chance to survive, as Nat and his family are most likely the only ones who have survived in the area by the end of the story.

## 4.2 The main themes and symbols of the short story “The Birds”

By its genre, *The Birds* can be defined as a horror story and a thriller, however, if to explore the story further, it can be stated that it is highly implicative and full of symbolism. As it was written and published in the beginning of 1950s, the story is highly influenced by the events of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, providing many references, both direct and indirect, to the political and military situation of that time.

Concerning the themes of the story, the most widely explored is the theme of **a man’s hesitation and failure to act** under the threat of danger, deriving from denial to acknowledge such threat. In the beginning of the story, when Nat gets attacked by birds for the first time, he warns his neighbor, Mrs. Trigg, about the unusual behavior of the birds. However, she has only “stared at him doubtfully” (Du Maurier, 1999:7) and “nodded, smiled, and went back into the kitchen” (ibid.). After that, as Nat notices gulls, he reflects upon this conversation and the safety of Triggs family.

“He wondered if they would take these precautions up at the farm. He doubted it. Too easygoing, Harry Trigg and his missus. Maybe they’d laugh at the whole thing. Go off to a dance or a whist drive.” (Du Maurier, 1999:10)

As Nat discovers Harry Trigg’s body the next day, killed by birds, through the actions of Harry and his wife du Maurier provides criticism on human ignorance and unwillingness to listen to the others’ warning. The same goes for another Nat’s neighbor, Jim, who also did not believe Nat’s words and acted irresponsibly along with Mr. Trigg, starting a “shooting match” (Du Maurier, 1999:15) on the birds from their guns, which has only endangered them both. In the end, Nat sees “Jim’s body lay in the yard ... what was left of it. When the birds had finished, the cows had trampled him. His gun was beside him” (Du Maurier, 1999:27).

Another indication of such behavior would be the attitude of the announcer on the radio, who was commenting on the situation with a “smooth and suave” (Du Maurier, 1999:11) voice. From the tone of the announcer Nat gets the impression that “this man, in particular, treated the whole business as he would an elaborate joke” (Du Maurier, 1999:10). As he reported, “the sight has been so unusual that traffic came to a standstill in many thoroughfares, work was abandoned in shops and offices, and the streets and pavements were crowded with people standing about to watch the birds” (ibid.). Though du Maurier describes a highly unusual phenomenon in the story, such human behavior is also very common in reality, as people are always being attracted by negative news, events and accidents.

In such a way, even though there were constant warnings to the householders, many people saw this situation as an entertainment and refused to take the necessary safety actions.

As Nat suspects, most people simply do not realize the whole danger of the situation, since they “did not know what it was to struggle in darkness with a flock of birds” (ibid.), and therefore “there would be others like him, hundreds of them” (ibid.), as well as “there would be parties tonight in London, [...] people standing about, shouting and laughing, getting drunk. “Come and watch the birds!” (ibid.). Since there is nothing but silence on the radio the next morning, it can be assumed that such reaction to the danger did not prove to be useful to anyone.

Concerning the **symbols** of the story, the main its symbol are the birds themselves, as they are most commonly considered to represent the German planes which have bombed the country during the war. Such interpretation is regarded as essential, since du Maurier provides multiple indications in the story that the birds are acting as if they are single entity having certain orders: “It was as though they waited upon some signal. As though some decision had yet to be given. The order was not clear” (Du Maurier, 1999:14). Crashed planes and a gun can be also interpreted as symbols of a man’s helplessness during the war, as both those weapons only take a few birds’ lives, failing to help in the big picture and only providing human losses, as both the plane pilots and the neighbors who wanted to shoot the birds, to “make the feathers fly” (Du Maurier, 1999:15), are dead by the end of the story.

Another important symbol is a radio, “the wireless”, how it is called in the story. At first, du Maurier presents it as the means of connection, as well as the means of unity of the whole nation under attack. As the radio goes silent, it is the indication that there is a complete disorder in the country and every man has to depend on himself now, not waiting for a help from outside. As Nat “switched on the silent wireless” (Du Maurier, 1999:31) in the very last paragraph of the story, it might be a hint that he still has hope of someone reaching out for them.

Concerning the critical reception of *The Birds*, the short story is one of du Maurier’s most critically appraised works, being well received since its very first publication in 1952. In the review in *New York Times*, written by John Barkham in 1953, the story was called “a masterpiece of horror” (Barkham, 1953:5), being described simply as “a hair-raising battle against the winged warriors that darken the sky” (ibid.). In other reviews, however, more themes and aspects of the story were discussed. In the review by Sylvia Berkman, published in *New York Herald Tribune* in 1953, *The Birds* were called a “powerful story, [...] marred by unresolved duality of intent” (Berkman, 1953:4).

In the same review, the main theme of the story was defined as “the ancient struggle of man against the forces of nature” (ibid.) and was even compared with “Robinson Crusoe’s struggle to overcome an elemental adversary through cunning, logic, and wit” (ibid.).

However, though the reviewer has noted the subtext of the story, she has doubted if it was necessary, stating that “the turning of this material also into a political fable, with the overt references to control from Russia and aid from America, [...] dissipates the full impact of a stark and terrifying tale” (Berkman, 1953:4).

Nowadays, *The Birds* is considered a classic of its genre, mostly perceived as a horror story regarding survival and struggle against the undefined evil power of nature. The story was adapted both for television and radio multiple times, and its most well-known adaptation is the film of 1963, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, which is regarded as a classic of the horror and thriller motion pictures.

## **5. THE SCREEN ADAPTATION OF *THE BIRDS* BY ALFRED HITCHCOCK**

### **5.1 The analysis of the changes of the plot**

Unlike the adaptation of *Rebecca*, which is mostly loyal to the original novel, the screen adaptation of *The Birds* is only loosely based on du Maurier's short story of the same title. In further words, the film only inhabits the core idea of the short story, while its representation, the characters and the setting are entirely different from the original literary work. In such a way, the film can be defined as the analogy by Geoffrey Wagner's classification, as well as the borrowing from the classification proposed by Dudley Andrew.

In the film, the events take place not in England, as in the original, but in the United States. The story starts in San Francisco, and the main part of the action is set in Bodega Bay, a small town in San Francisco Bay Area, where all the birds' attacks happen. Hitchcock most likely makes such change of setting for the purpose of appealing to the audience of the United States, as they would relate more to the story set in a familiar country. However, it is worth noting that the setting is to some extent similar to the original story, since most of the events take place only in one secluded town.

Furthermore, the timing of the events is changed in the adaptation as well. In the original, the story starts to unfold in December, and it is assumed that the birds start to behave violently because of the "hard weather" (Du Maurier, 1999:4), as "black winter had descended in a single night" (Du Maurier, 1999:5). In the film, the time of the season is indefinite, and though the main female heroine wears a fur coat most of the time, the weather is still sunny and reminds of summertime. In such a way, the assumption that the birds are influenced by the weather conditions is never made in the film.

In order to present the storyline from a different perspective, Hitchcock makes the film revolve around a rather spoiled and cunning young woman, Melanie Daniels, who comes from a wealthy family. Hitchcock symbolically and ironically sets the opening scene in a bird shop in San Francisco, when Melanie meets Mitch Brenner, a handsome and successful criminal lawyer. Regarding the later scenes which present exposition of the altered story, Melanie wants to get to know Mitch, attracted to him and rather discouraged by his unfriendly and scornful attitude towards her. As an excuse, she decides to drive all the way to Bodega Bay to deliver Mitch a pair of lovebirds, whom he was looking for as a present at his sister's, Cathy's, eleventh birthday.

After finding out from locals where Mitch lives, Melanie surprises him by sailing on a boat to his dock and leaving the cage with the lovebirds inside the house. As Mitch notices Melanie, he drives to wait for her at the other side of the bay. Rising action is achieved by the episode in which Melanie gets attacked by a gull in the bay and suffers from a bleeding head wound. This is the first time when Hitchcock implements a bird's attack in the storyline, however, neither Mitch nor Melanie pay much attention to this accident.

Regarding the further development of rising action, an outside party is held to celebrate of Cathy's birthday, during which the guests are attacked by a pack of gulls and have to flee to the house. Later that day, another birds' attack takes place, as the birds get in the Brenner family house through the chimney. The police is called in, however, they refuse to take this call seriously, even stating that "attack" is a "pretty strong word" to describe what has happened.

Hitchcock increases the level of suspense in the number of further episodes, when Mitch's mother, Lydia, pays a visit to their neighbor only to find his course with no eyes left, as there were pecked by birds. Another such episode is when Melanie, concerned for Cathy's safety, decides to drive to pick her up from school. All the children in Cathy's class, along with her teacher, Annie, flee the school, getting subtly injured by the crows which are flying after them, and eventually Melanie manages to hide in her car with Cathy and her classmate.

Climax is most likely in the scene when the birds start attacking a local café, causing massive destructions and damage as one of the passers-by tries to light a cigarette, unaware that the street is filled with a spilled fuel from another car. Mitch manages to save Melanie from the chaos, and they both drive to pick up Melanie and take her to a safe place. Arriving to Annie's house, they see her body lying outside, as she was killed by birds after pushing Cathy into the house.

Falling action is when Mitch and Melanie drive to the Brenner family house, where they seek shelter. At night, Melanie suddenly hears the sound of the birds' wings fluttering somewhere from above. She goes up to the one of the upper rooms alone and finds out that the birds have managed to fly into the room through the hole in the roof. The birds attack Melanie, and though Mitch comes to help and gets her out of the room filled with birds, she is in critical condition, almost irresponsive to everything. Resolution of the story is when Mitch decides that they should drive to San Francisco to take Melanie to a hospital. As Mitch walks out of the house, he finds it surrounded by an enormous number of birds, though they do not attack yet, only watch him. While the characters are driving away in the car, the new day starts, as the sun appears in the sky and lights up the hundreds of birds covering the road to

the house. In the same manner as in the original story, Hitchcock decides to leave an open ending, and therefore the viewers can never be sure whether the characters will get away.

In such a way, Hitchcock presents a completely different storyline in the film, with the original characters and an alternative course of events. The main reason for such substantial alteration of the plot lies in the fact that the original story is rather short and uneventful, certainly not featuring enough scenes to adapt it onto the screen and make a full-length film. Therefore, in order to create a proper screen adaptation, the essential idea of the story is expanded with a large amount of new characters, events, themes and aspects. More specifically, the original events of the story are featured only in the final half an hour of the film, while the characters use the Brenner family house as a shelter from the birds' attacks.

However, certain episodes of the original are also present in the adaptation. In the film, as well as in the short story, there are a number of scenes in which the main characters try to convince others that the birds pose a threat to them, however, no one listens to their warnings. Both in the short story and in the film there is a scene of discovering a neighbor's body, and in both cases the body is disfigured by the birds. Furthermore, in both versions of the story there is a necessity to save a child, a daughter of the main male protagonist in the short story and his younger sister in the film. The scenes of the birds following and attacking the running children are also featured both in the original and the film, even being repeated twice in the film, as the kids are put in danger as at Cathy's birthday party, as at the school.

Concerning the nature of plot alterations introduced in the adaptation, they are mostly implemented with a purpose of making the story more appealing to the viewers. In the original story, the struggle of one family is present, and the relationships inside the family are never disclosed, as the readers only get to know that Nat, the protagonist, has a wife and two kids whom he is desperately trying to save during the events of the story. In the film, apart from the struggle of a single family against the evil force of nature, a romantic storyline is implemented, as Mitch and Melanie are not in a relationship in the beginning the story, but are highly interested in each other. In such a way, as the viewers get to observe how Mitch and Melanie get to know each other and develop an attachment, they become emotionally involved with the story and are highly concerned about the fates of the characters.

Apart from the romantic storyline of the main couple of the film, the minor characters are also given a greater amount of attention compared to the original story. This is especially noticeable regarding the character of Lydia, Mitch's demanding mother, whose past and family relations substantially influence the plot development, and Annie, the schoolteacher who informs the main female protagonist, Melanie, about Mitch's complex relationship with

his mother. Annie also serves as an opponent to Melanie to some extent, as it is revealed she has had a relationship with Mitch in the past.

Beyond that, it is worth mentioning that Hitchcock alters the storyline in many ways to look much more dramatic and impressive from a visual point of view. In the original short story, there indeed were numerous intimidating birds' attacks and lifeless bodies of their victims. However, the gas explosion in a petrol station, due to which the major part of the street is caught on fire, is an alteration of the filmmakers, most probably made to add more action to the story and to lay an emphasis on how much damage has been caused to the town by the birds' attacks.

Furthermore, from all the birds present in the story, the crows are not devoted much attention in the original, as they were only mentioned to attack the characters along with rooks and other birds' species. In the film, however, the children are attacked by a pack of crows only, most probably due to the fact that the crows seem rather chilling and frightening because of their chilling black appearance and cawing. Moreover, the crows are generally considered the symbol of death, and therefore the scene in which Melanie notices a large number of crows on the school playground creates an additional suspense, since it might be perceived as a prediction of death of one of the characters.

To sum up, it can be concluded that the original story is altered in such significant manner in order to make it more dramatic, romantic and eventful. Furthermore, the political subtext of the story was completely excluded from the adaptation, with a purpose of simplifying it for the viewers and most probably also letting them come up with their own interpretation of the birds' behavior.

## 5.2 The analysis of the themes presented in the film

Since the plot and the characterization of the story are changed to a great extent, a number of themes presented in the story are omitted in the adaptation. Most significantly it concerns the main symbolism of the birds, as in the original story they represent the bombing during the Second World War. In the film, such parallel is unnoticeable, as the references to the bombing are excluded from the story, since there are no comparisons between the packs of birds and the flying planes dropping bombs. Moreover, the main idea expressed in the film is that the birds are acting violently because of their nature, not driven by some undiscovered evil force.

Furthermore, any political references and allusions are removed from the script as well, since none of characters mentions Russia in the film. America, in its turn, is also not mentioned as a possible ally in the battle against the birds, since the events of the film occur in America in the first place, being moved there from Great Britain. Regarding the theme of war, it is stated in the film that “the very concept [of such war] is unimaginable”, because “if that happened, we wouldn't have a chance”. However, such opinion is expressed only concerning the war against birds, from a point of view that the human kind would physically and technically stand no chance in theme. The whole representation of a war in general as something pointless, which only leads to multiple human losses, is not present in the film, while it is constantly put under emphasis in the original story.

Another widely expressed theme of the short story, human's **lack of action** under conditions of danger, is presented in the film as well. However, it is also expressed not to the same extent as in is in the original, where the minor characters perceive the birds' behavior as amusing, treating the birds as another source of entertainment. It is repeatedly noted in the short story, as the announcer on the radio speaks with a “smooth and suave” (Du Maurier, 1999:11) voice, treating “the whole business as he would an elaborate joke” (ibid.). Regarding the behavior of others, as the announcer reports, “work was abandoned in shops and offices, and the streets and pavements were crowded with people standing about to watch the birds” (ibid.).

In the film, the minor characters do not express any reckless and careless attitude, though the discussion of a war against birds was once addressed with smiles and a line “I'm glad you all think this is so amusing”. However, most of the minor characters in the film still refuse to believe that the birds pose a threat, the same way it is presented in the original. When Melanie calls her father and Mitch from a local café and describes the attack at the school to them, other customers hear her conversation, but still act skeptical about it, saying that “birds are not aggressive creatures” and even asking Melanie “to lower [her] voice”,

because her story is “frightening the children”. Shortly after, Mitch arrives with a policeman and tells Melanie that Santa Rosa Police has supposed their neighbor’s death was “a felony murder” by a burglar, even despite the fact that his body was surrounded with dead birds.

Moreover, the human behavior is portrayed even more off-puttingly after one of the birds’ attacks, while the group of people who were hiding in the café have blamed Melanie for the birds’ attacks, stating that “when you got here, the whole thing started” and “you’re the cause of all this! [...] you’re evil!” In the original short story, no similar episode is present, therefore such speech serves as another of Hitchcock’s means to add more intimidation and display of human cruelty to the storyline.

Regarding the themes which are intentionally added in the film to make it more appealing to the viewers, such are the themes of love and family relations. However, though the film ought to be rather romantically oriented, Hitchcock hardly presents the theme of **love** in an eloquent way. In the film, there is no genuine love between Mitch and Melanie, only attraction and mutual interest, as they only meet each other very shortly before the main events start to unfold. At the same time, the characters of the original story, Nat and his wife, certainly have a strong connection, as they were married and had two children, one of which was old enough to go to school. In the course of the events, Nat repeatedly shows great care to his wife and family, and though their love and attraction is never widely expressed in the story, the couple is definitely portrayed as attentive and caring.

In the film, Hitchcock replaces the main couple of the story, Nat and his wife, with new characters, Melanie and Mitch, in order to make the story more attractive to the viewers. However, because of such alteration the depth of their connection is reduced, as Melanie is portrayed as a rather shallow character. Though her emerging friendship with Mitch shows her in a different perspective, as she is eager to take care of his mother and younger sister, Melanie’s relationship towards Mitch still lacks sincerity, as she repeatedly lies to him in order to make an impression on him. As for Mitch, whose character is most probably inspired by Nat, he is constantly looking after Melanie through the story and clearly cares for her. However, as Mitch does not know Melanie very well, his interest also appears to be rather superficial.

Concerning the theme of **family relations**, it Hitchcock mostly shows it through the relationship between Lydia and Mitch, as Lydia is extremely possessive of him. The reason behind such attitude is the death of her husband, Mitch’s father, since, as Annie supposes, after that Lydia started to be “afraid of being abandoned” by her son as well. In such a way, Lydia perceives every woman Mitch meets as an intruder, as someone who might take Mitch away from her, being “afraid of any woman who would give Mitch what Lydia can give him:

love”. However, as Melanie shows great care for her other child, Cathy, Lydia slowly starts to appreciate her by the development of the story. In general, such family conflict adds a certain complexity both to the storyline and the characterization, as through her communication with Lydia Hitchcock shows Melanie’s character development. In the beginning of the film, Melanie’s behavior is somewhat spoiled and selfish, however, exactly through her interaction with Lydia a softer side of Melanie’s personality is displayed. In such a way, Hitchcock makes Melanie a more dynamic character, showing her evolution through the story in order to make her favored one the audience.

Furthermore, the family values in general are represented in a completely different light in the adaptation. In the original story, an already established family is described, as Nat shows great care for his wife and kids, desperately trying to save them and even wishing to secure them from some displeasing details of what was happening, for example, not letting them know that the birds have crashed the planes. In the film, the essential idea of the story remains the same, such as to show one’s family struggle for survival. However, the model of the family is entirely different in the film, as the main protagonist of the story, Melanie, is an outsider, whose relationships with all three Brenner family members are only starting to develop in the beginning of the story.

In such a way, the whole relationship framework of the characters is entirely different from the original story, since though they take care of each other as best as they can, they have different motives, which lead to a number of disagreements. Therefore the relationships between the characters also affect the plot, unlike in the original story, in which Nat’s wife is entirely obedient to her husband, never doubting his actions for a moment. Hitchcock’s portrayal of the family relations is entirely different from the way it is portrayed in the film, where Lydia does not hesitate to express her opinion to Mitch, as he is working upon way to secure the safety of their family from the birds.

The film was generally well received by the critics, getting mostly positive reviews. In the review in *Village Voice*, written by Andrew Sarris in 1963, it was noted that “Alfred Hitchcock has fashioned a major work of cinematic art, and ‘cinematic’ is the operative term here, not ‘literary’ or ‘sociological” (Sarris, 1963:10). In the same review, Sarris has regarded the ending of the film as “much-criticized” (ibid.), stating that “Hitchcock succeeds in implicating his audience to such an extent that the much-criticized, apparently anticlimactic ending of the film finds the audience more blood-thirsty than the birds” (ibid.).

In the review published by Dean Essner in *Time* magazine in 1963, the alteration of the plot was not regarded as working in the storyline’s favor, as the reviewer has called the first part of the film, which features the implemented romantic storyline, “an hour of some

silly plot-boiling about a flirtatious society girl (Tippi Hedren), a lovelorn schoolmarm (Suzanne Pleshette), an Oedipus wreck (Rod Taylor) and a pair of lovebirds” (Essner, 1963:1). Essner has also criticized the ending of the film, stating that “Hitchcock does not tell [what the birds are after], and the movie flaps to a plotless end” (ibid.). Though it is possible to agree with such statement, at the same time it should also be considered that the ending of the story is the one part which Hitchcock did not alter, as it resembles du Maurier’s ending from the original short story.

In another review, written by Bosley Crowther in *New York Times* in 1963, the reviewer has also called the concept of the film unclear, at the same time noting that “whether or not it is intended that you should find significance in this film, it is sufficiently equipped with other elements to make the senses reel” (Crowther, 1963:24). From Crowther’s point of view, though “there may be no explanation” (ibid.) for what the birds represent, either way “the fierceness and frightfulness of it [the film] are sufficient to cause shock and chills” (ibid.). Regarding the setting and narration, the reviewer has expressed admiration with “how clear and naturalistic the narrative elements are: a plausible confrontation, beautiful scenery, a literal enactment of a playful intrigue—all very nicely arranged” (ibid.).

In such a way, it can be concluded that the film was mostly positively received by the audience, however, it rose a certain amount of confusion regarding its ending and the core concept of the story. Furthermore, the transition from the romantic part of the storyline to the horror part with the birds’ attacks was also regarded as confusing by some of the viewers, as the altered part of the film was considered rather unconvincing and called a “silly plot-boiling”. As for the horror part, it was criticized for the lack of resolution and explanation of the birds’ behavior, since after removing du Maurier’s references and symbolism, the filmmakers have provided no alternative interpretation of the story. However, even though the film did not receive full critical acclaim and a number of awards, getting “its only nomination” (Paglia, 1998:78) for an Academy Award for Best Special Effects, concerning the cinematography, *The Birds* is generally considered well made, in time being regarded as a classic of horror films.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the research is to analyze how the storylines of Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* and short story *The Birds* are represented in their screen adaptations, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and how does the portrayal of the characters in adaptation differ from the original novel and short story.

Concerning the theoretical findings of the research, it can be concluded that the issue of fidelity towards the original literary work is regarded as highly topical in the adaptation discourse. In general, the filmmakers' approaches of adapting a literary work can differ very significantly, depending on the attitude towards the original novel and the cinematic tendencies favoured by the audience. Though mostly it is encouraged to be rather faithful to the original literary source, there are a number of conventions which are commonly applied to the story in order to attract audience and assure the commercial success of the adaptation.

The comparative analysis revealed that the screen adaptation of *Rebecca* can be classified as a commentary according to Wagner's classification and transforming according to Andrew's classification, as the film followed the storyline of the novel very faithfully. However, a certain amount of alterations is also present in the adaptation, and the most significant changes have been applied to the plotline of the film, especially to the culminating part of the story. The main reason for such alteration, which regards the circumstances of Rebecca's murder, is to exclude dubious morality from the storyline. At the same time, the film features a number of less significant alterations, such as additional romantic scenes, and their purpose was mostly to make the adaptation look more appealing to the audience. The other alterations, such as the final scenes of the story, appear to be implemented in order to increase the level of suspense in the story, as well as to simplify the plotline for the viewers, not leaving any questions regarding the storyline unanswered in the end.

Regarding the change of characterization in the screen adaptation of *Rebecca*, it can be stated that the portrayal of the characters was slightly different from the novel, referring to both their physical appearance and their personality traits. The most noticeable alterations concern the age of the two main characters and the main antagonist, Mrs. Danvers, as they were made younger in the adaptation, and the characterization of the narrator, as she was shown being rather more confident than in the original. At the same time, several minor characters were made less relevant in the film, as many moments involving them were omitted and therefore they had less screen time in the film comparing to the amount of scenes with them in the novel.

To sum up the results of the comparative analysis of the novel *Rebecca* with its screen adaptation, it can be concluded that alterations appear to have been beneficial for the film. The adaptation of *Rebecca* was highly critically acclaimed and received a number of awards, including the Academy Award for the Best Picture in 1940.

Concerning the screen adaptation of *The Birds*, it can be classified as an analogy according to Wagner's classification and borrowing according to Andrew's classification. The adaptation is only loosely based on the original short story and only inhabits its essential idea, as the short story was not eventful enough to adapt it into a full-length film. Regarding the change of the storyline, it can be stated that the setting, the timing and the whole course of the events were all altered in the adaptation, and the purpose of such alterations was mostly to make the story more likeable by the viewers. The most sufficient change, a romantic storyline which was implemented in the film, was introduced in order to make the viewers empathize with the characters so in such a way they would perceive the later events of the story with more concern for the characters.

As for the change of characterization in the screen adaptation of *The Birds*, since an altered storyline was represented in film, featuring new characters as well. The main couple of the original story, Nat and his wife, was replaced with different characters, Melanie and Mitch, and the aim of such change was to make the storyline of the film more attractive to the viewers. The main female protagonist is a young woman, rather cunning, by no means similar to the protagonist of the short story. From all appearances, it can be assumed that such representation of a protagonist would seem more appealing and entertaining in the eyes of the film audience, as they observe the character development through the story.

In general, it may be concluded that the alterations in the screen adaptation of *The Birds* have hardly been beneficial for the storyline. Though the film was mostly positively critically acclaimed, it had attracted a number of criticism regarding the altered parts of the story, as the romantic part of the storyline was regarded as mismatching to the original horror elements. At the same time, the ending of the film was also generally criticized for not providing an insight in the behavior of the birds, since all the original references from the short story, both direct and indirect, were removed from the adaptation. However, the film can be still considered successful, as it remains widely known and has certainly found its place amongst the film classics of the twentieth century.

All things considered, it can be concluded that the aim of the research has been reached, and the research questions have been successfully answered. For further research different themes from the novel and the short story could be analyzed, concerning the nature of their representation in the screen adaptations.

## THESES

1. In general, adaptations can be regarded as a transfer of a literary work, such as a novel and a short story, to a film, which creates a screen adaptation on the basis of the original story.
2. Depending on their fidelity to the original literary work, adaptations can be divided into a number of different categories. According to the classification by Geoffrey Wagner, such categories are transposition, the commentary and analogy. According to another classification, proposed by Dudley Andrew, such categories are borrowing, intersecting and transforming.
3. Different filmmakers have different attitudes and approaches towards the process of adapting a literary work into a film. However, generally it is considered important to treat the original literary source rather carefully and attentively, in order to show respect to the original, as well as to assure the financial success of the adaptation.
4. Over the years, the question of whether certain adaptations provide required level of fidelity to the original literary works has raised a great number of discussions. In general, a highly common opinion is present that in some cases films can even ruin impressions of great novels, if their adaptations are not faithful enough and often are unable to convey the original meaning properly.
5. At the same time, there is a widely spread point of view that film makers tend to think about commercial success of an adaptation in the first place, not giving much attention to whether a film represents the original novel properly. Such attitude has attracted a large amount of criticism in the twentieth century, as in general practice fidelity to the original literary source was viewed as an essential element of a worthy adaptation.
6. The screen adaptation of *Rebecca* can be described as following the storyline of the original novel to great extent. However, a certain amount of alterations is also present, regarding both the storyline and the characterization.
7. By its category, the screen adaptation of *Rebecca* can be classified as a commentary and transforming adaptation type. The most significant plot alterations have been applied to the culminating part of the story, made with the purposes of excluding a dubious morality from the storyline.
8. Regarding the critical reception of the screen adaptation of *Rebecca*, it can be stated that the alterations, both sufficient and barely noticeable, have only worked to the film's advantage, as the film has received a wide critical acclaim and a number of awards, including the Academy Award for the Best Picture.

9. The screen adaptation of *The Birds* is only loosely based on the original short story, as the film only inhabits the core idea of the short story, while its representation, the characters and the setting are entirely different from the original literary work.
10. By its category, the screen adaptation of *The Birds* can be classified as analogy and borrowing adaptation type. As the original story did not feature enough scenes to adapt it into a full-length film, a completely different storyline was represented in the adaptation, being expanded with a high amount of new characters, themes and events.
11. Regarding the critical reception of the screen adaptation of *The Birds*, it can be concluded that the alterations have hardly worked in the storyline's favor, since due to the altered part of the story the core idea of the film was mostly regarded as confusing. At the same time, the adaptation was mostly critically acclaimed and considered cinematographically well-made, earning a nomination for an Academy Award for Best Special Effects.

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**Films:**

1. *Rebecca*. [Film] Directed by: Alfred Hitchcock. USA, Selznick International Pictures, 1940.
2. *The Birds*. [Film] Directed by: Alfred Hitchcock. USA, Universal Pictures, 1963.

## Dokumentārā lapa

Maģistra darbs „Screen Adaptations of Daphne du Maurier’s Novel “Rebecca” and Short Story “The Birds” (“Dafnes di Morjē romāna “Rebeka” un stāsta “Putni” ekranizācijas”) izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

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