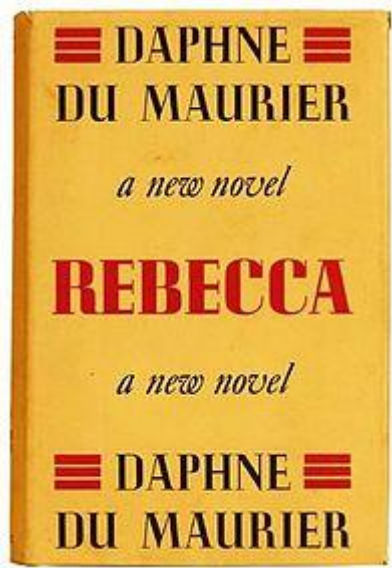


Rebecca (novel)

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Rebecca



First edition cover

Author(s)	Daphne du Maurier
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Genre(s)	Crime , Gothic , Mystery , Romance
Publisher	Victor Gollancz
Publication date	1938
Media type	Print (Hardback and Paperback)
Pages	384 pages
ISBN	NA

Rebecca is a [novel](#) by [Daphne du Maurier](#). When *Rebecca* was published in 1938, du Maurier became – to her great surprise – one of the most popular authors of the day. *Rebecca* is considered to be one of her best works. Much of the novel was written while she was staying in [Alexandria](#), [Egypt](#), where her husband was posted.^{[\[1\]](#)}

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[\[edit\]](#) Plot summary

"Last night I dreamt I went to [Manderley](#) again" is the book's famous opening line, and from here its almost-unnamed narrator reminisces about her past.

While working as the companion to a rich American woman vacationing on the [French Riviera](#), the narrator becomes acquainted with a wealthy Englishman, Maximilian (Maxim) de Winter, a 40-something widower. After a fortnight of courtship, she agrees to marry him and, after the wedding and honeymoon, accompanies him to his mansion, the beautiful [West Country](#) estate Manderley.

Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper, was profoundly devoted to the first Mrs. de Winter, Rebecca. She continually psychologically undermines the new Mrs. de Winter, suggesting to her that she will never attain the urbanity and charm the first one possessed. Whenever the new Mrs. de Winter attempts to make changes at Manderley, Mrs. Danvers describes how Rebecca ran it when she was alive. Each time Mrs. Danvers does this, she implies that the new Mrs. de Winter, a mere middle-class upstart, lacks the experience and knowledge necessary for running an important estate. Cowed by Mrs. Danvers' imposing manner, the new mistress simply caves.

She is soon convinced that Maxim regrets his impetuous decision to marry her and is still deeply in love with the seemingly perfect Rebecca. The climax occurs at Manderley's annual costume ball. Mrs. Danvers manipulates the protagonist into wearing a [replica](#) of the dress shown in a portrait of one of the former inhabitants of the estate—the same costume worn by Rebecca to much acclaim the previous year, shortly before her death. The narrator has a drummer announce her entrance using the name of the lady in the portrait: Caroline de Winter.

In the early morning hours after the ball, the storm that had been building over the estate leads to a shipwreck. A diver investigating the condition of the wrecked ship's hull discovers the remains of Rebecca's boat. It is just prior to this shipwreck that Mrs. Danvers expressly

reveals her contempt for our heroine. Taking her on a tour of Rebecca's bedroom, her wardrobe and luxurious possessions--all kept intact as a shrine to Rebecca--Mrs. Danvers encourages our heroine to commit [suicide](#) by jumping out the window, but is thwarted at the last moment by the disturbance created by the shipwreck.

The revelations from the shipwreck lead Maxim to confess the truth to our heroine; how his marriage to Rebecca was nothing but a sham; how from the very first days husband and wife loathed each other. Rebecca, Maxim reveals, was a cruel and selfish woman who manipulated everyone around her into believing her to be the perfect wife and a paragon of virtue. She repeatedly taunted Maxim with sordid tales of her numerous love affairs and suggested that she was pregnant with another man's child, which she would raise under the pretence that it was Maxim's and he would be powerless to stop her. Rebecca tries to convince Maxim to kill her, taunting him continuously. He, truly hating her, does in fact fatally shoot her. Worried that he might have to spend the rest of his life in jail, Maxim has disposed of her body on her boat, which he then has sunk at sea. Our heroine is relieved to hear he had never loved Rebecca, but really loves *her*.

Rebecca's boat is raised and it is discovered that holes had been deliberately drilled in the bottom and the sea-cocks were opened, which would have caused it to sink. There is an [inquest](#) and despite it not being clear who drilled the holes, a verdict of suicide is brought. However, Rebecca's first cousin (and also her lover) Jack Favell appears on the scene claiming to have proof that Rebecca could not have intended suicide. He attempts to blackmail Maxim because he believes that Maxim killed Rebecca and then sank the boat.

Rebecca, it is revealed, had an appointment with a Doctor Baker shortly before her death, presumably to confirm her pregnancy. When the doctor is found he reveals Rebecca had been suffering from cancer and would have died within a few months; furthermore, due to the malformation of her uterus, she could never have been pregnant. The implication is that knowing she was going to die, Rebecca lied to Maxim that she was pregnant by another man because she wanted Maxim to kill her, rather than face a lingering death. Maxim feels a great sense of foreboding and insists on driving through the night to return to Manderley. However, before he comes in sight of the house, it is clear from a glow on the horizon and wind-borne ashes that it is ablaze. Mrs. Danvers has set fire to it.

It is evident at the beginning that Maxim and the second Mrs. de Winter now live in some foreign exile. The events recounted in the book are in essence a memoir of her life at Manderley.

[\[edit\]](#) Literary structure

The famous opening line of the book "Last night I dreamed I went to Manderley again" is an [iambic hexameter](#). The last line of the book "And the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea" is also in metrical form; almost but not quite an [anapestic tetrameter](#).

It is unusual in that the narrator, is never referred to by her personal name. She is referred to as 'my wife', Mrs. DeWinter, 'my dear', etc, but her first and last name are never revealed by the author.

Some commentators have noted parallels with [Jane Eyre](#).^{[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)}

[\[edit\]](#) Legacy

When first published, *Rebecca* had a print run of 20,000 and was a popular success. However, it did not receive critical acclaim. *The Times* said that "the material is of the humblest...nothing in this is beyond the novelette...". Few critics saw in the novel what the author wanted them to see: the exploration of the relationship between a man who was powerful and a woman who was not.^[4]

In the U.S., Du Maurier won the [National Book Award](#) for favourite novel of 1938, voted by members of the [American Booksellers Association](#).^[5]

[\[edit\]](#) Related works

The novel has inspired three additional books approved by the du Maurier estate:

- *Mrs de Winter* (1993), by [Susan Hill](#), is a sequel originally written in the 1980s. [ISBN 0-09-928478-2](#)
- *The Other Rebecca* (1996), by [Maureen Freely](#), is a modern-day version. [ISBN 0-89733-477-9](#)
- *Rebecca's Tale* (2001), by [Sally Beauman](#), [ISBN 0-06-621108-5](#) is a narrative of four characters affected by Rebecca. It is often mistakenly referred to as a [prequel](#).

[\[edit\]](#) *Rebecca* as a WWII code source

One edition of the book was used by the Germans in [World War II](#) as a code source.^[6] Sentences would be made using single words in the book, referred to by page number, line and position in the line. One copy was kept at [Rommel](#)'s headquarters,^[6] and the other was carried by German [Abwehr](#) agents infiltrated into [Cairo](#) after crossing [Egypt](#) by car, guided by Count [László Almásy](#).^[citation needed] This code was never used, however, because the radio section of the HQ was captured in a skirmish and hence the Germans suspected that the code was compromised.^[7] This use of the book is referred to in [Ken Follett](#)'s novel *[The Key to Rebecca](#)* - where a (fictional) spy does use it to pass critical information to Rommel.^[8]

This use of the novel was also referred to in [Michael Ondaatje](#)'s novel *[The English Patient](#)*.^[9]

[\[edit\]](#) Impact on popular culture

The novel, and the character of Mrs. Danvers in particular, have entered many aspects of popular culture.

[\[edit\]](#) In literature

The character of Mrs. Danvers is alluded to numerous times throughout [Stephen King](#)'s *[Bag of Bones](#)*. In the book, Mrs. Danvers serves as something of a [boogeyman](#) for the main character Mike Noonan. King also uses the character name for the chilly, obedient servant in "Father's Day," a tale in his 1982 film *[Creepshow](#)*.

In [Jasper Fforde's](#) *Thursday Next* series, in the bookworld, they have accidentally made lots of Mrs. Danvers clones, which they use as troops against The Mispeling Vyrus, and other threats, including as an army.

In [The Maxx](#) issue #31, a teenage Julie Winters watches a black-and-white version of the movie.

In [Danielle Steel's](#) novel *Vanished*, it is mentioned that the main character is reading *Rebecca*. This was most likely deliberate on Steele's part, considering that the novel has many of the same elements as *Rebecca*.

Childhood visits to [Milton Hall, Cambridgeshire](#) (then in [Northamptonshire](#)) home of the Wentworth-[Fitzwilliam](#) family, may have influenced the descriptions of Manderley.^[10]

Was the inspiration for Paige Harbison's 2012 young adult novel, *New Girl*.

[\[edit\]](#) In film

The 1983 science fiction comedy film [The Man with Two Brains](#) gives a brief nod to aspects of *Rebecca*. After falling for Dolores Benedict, Dr. Hfuhruhurr ([Steve Martin](#)) intends to marry her and seeks a sign from the portrait of his deceased wife, Rebecca. The supernatural reaction of the portrait doesn't convince him and so he places her in a cupboard.

[\[edit\]](#) In television

The 1970 Parallel Time storyline of the Gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* was heavily inspired by *Rebecca*. Also the second *Dark Shadows* motion picture, *Night of Dark Shadows* took inspiration from the novel.

In the television series *The Sopranos*, Meadow compares her mother Carmela to Danvers for her perceived controlling behavior.

The fifth episode of the second series of *That Mitchell and Webb Look* contains an extended sketch parodying the 1940 film, in which Rebecca is unable to live up to Maxim's and Mrs. Danvers's expectations for the Second Mrs. DeWynter - described as "TBA".

The plots of certain Latin-American [soap operas](#) have also been inspired by this story, such as *Manuela* (Argentina),^[11] and *Infierno en el paraíso* (Mexico).^[12]

On an episode of *The Carol Burnett Show*, the cast did a parody of the film titled "Rebecky", with [Carol Burnett](#) as the heroine, Daphne; [Harvey Korman](#) as Max "de Wintry" and in the guise of Mother Marcus as Rebecky de Wintry; and [Vicki Lawrence](#) as Mrs. Danvers.

In 1986, an episode of *The Comic Strip* called 'Consuela' parodied *Rebecca*. It was written by French and Saunders, and starred Dawn French as the maid and Jennifer Saunders as the new wife of Adrian Edmondson.

[\[edit\]](#) Music

[Meg & Dia's](#) Meg Frampton penned a song entitled "Rebecca", inspired by the novel.

[Sondre Lerche](#)'s song, "She's Fantastic", makes a reference to Rebecca. In it he says, "In that old movie 'bout Rebecca's spell I feel like Max never felt, minus the drama and the fraud..."

[Kansas](#) alumnus [Steve Walsh](#)'s solo recording *Glossolalia* includes a song entitled "Rebecca", with lyrics seemingly composed from Maxim de Winter's point of view: "I suppose I was the lucky one, returning like a wayward son to Manderley, I'd never be the same..."


The [Pet Shop Boys](#)' song "King of Rome" includes the "Rebecca" inspired line "I'm here and there/or anywhere/away from Manderley..."

[[edit](#)] Dramatic adaptations

[[edit](#)] Film

Rebecca has been adapted several times. The most notable of these was the [Academy Award](#) winning 1940 [Alfred Hitchcock](#) film version *Rebecca*, the first film Hitchcock made under his contract with [David O. Selznick](#). The film, which starred [Laurence Olivier](#) as Max, [Joan Fontaine](#) as the Heroine, and [Judith Anderson](#) as Mrs. Danvers, was based on the novel. However, the Hollywood [Production Code](#) required that if Max had murdered his wife, he would have to be punished for his crime. Therefore, the key turning point of the novel – the revelation that Max, in fact, murdered Rebecca – was altered so that it seemed as if Rebecca's death was accidental. At the end of the film version, Mrs. Danvers perishes in the fire, which she had started. The film quickly became a classic and, at the time, was a major technical achievement in film-making.



 Pan UK paperback edition cover (showing [Joanna David](#) as Mrs. de Winter from the BBC television production. Jeremy Brett played the role of Maxim de Winter opposite Joanna.)

[[edit](#)] Television

Rebecca has been adapted for television both by the [BBC](#) and by [Carlton Television](#). The 1980 BBC version starred [Joanna David](#) as the second Mrs. de Winter; it was broadcast in the United States on [PBS](#) as part of its *Mystery!* series. The [1997 Carlton production](#) starred [Emilia Fox](#) (Joanna David's daughter) in the same role, and was broadcast in the United States by PBS as part of its *Masterpiece Theatre* series.

[[edit](#)] Theatre

Du Maurier herself adapted *Rebecca* as a [stage play](#) in 1939; it had a successful [London](#) run in 1940 of over 350 performances.^{[13][14]}

On 28 September 2006 a [musical](#) version of *Rebecca* premièred at the [Raimund Theater](#) in [Vienna, Austria](#). The new musical was written by [Michael Kunze](#) (book and lyrics) and [Sylvester Levay](#) (music) and directed by the American director [Francesca Zambello](#). The cast includes [Uwe Kröger](#) as Max de Winter, Wietske van Tongeren as "Ich" ("I", the narrator) and Susan Rigvava-Dumas as Mrs. Danvers. Before 2008 there was talk of moving the musical to the [Broadway](#) stage, but all plans were eventually cancelled due to the complexity of the sets, scenery, and special effects — including a grand staircase that twirls down into the stage and a finale in which the entire stage - including Mrs. Danvers - is engulfed in flames.^[*citation needed*] In September 2008 it was announced that the musical would be arriving on [Broadway](#) by 2010 with a pre-Broadway try-out in at the [Guthrie Theatre](#) in [Minneapolis, MN](#).^[15]

In July 2011, it was announced that Rebecca would officially be starting previews on March 27th, 2012 - Sierra Boggess is expected to play the lead role.^[16]

[[edit](#)] Plagiarism allegations

Shortly after *Rebecca* was published in Brazil, critic Álvaro Lins pointed out many resemblances between du Maurier's book and the work of Brazilian writer Carolina Nabuco. Nabuco's *A Sucessora* (*The Successor*) has a main plot similar to *Rebecca*, including a young woman marrying a widower and the strange presence of the first wife — plot features also shared with the far older [Jane Eyre](#). Nina Auerbach alleged in her book, *Daphne du Maurier, Haunted Heiress*, that du Maurier read the Brazilian book when the first drafts were sent to be published in England and based her famous best-seller on it. According to Nabuco's autobiography, *Eight Decades*, she (Nabuco) refused to sign a contract brought to her by a [United Artists](#)' representative in which she agreed that the similarities between her book and the movie were mere coincidence.^[*citation needed*] Du Maurier denied copying Nabuco's book, as did her publisher, claiming that the plot used in *Rebecca* was quite common.^[*citation needed*]

In 1944 in the United States, Daphne du Maurier, her U.S. publishers, [Doubleday](#), and various parties connected with the 1940 film version of the novel, were sued by Edwina L. MacDonald for plagiarism. MacDonald alleged that du Maurier had copied her novel, *Blind Windows*. Du Maurier successfully rebuffed the allegations.

Du Maurier commented that the book was based on her own memories of [Menabilly](#) and [Cornwall](#), as well as her relationship with her father.^[17]

[[edit](#)] Footnotes

- ¹ *Afterword by Sally Beauman to "Rebecca"* (2003 ed. ed.). Virago Press. 30 January 2003. [ISBN 1-84408-038-2](#).
- ² Yardley, Jonathan (2004-03-16). "[Du Maurier's 'Rebecca,' A Worthy 'Eyre' Apparent](#)". *Washington Post*. Retrieved 2006-12-12.

3. [^] ["Presence of Orson Welles in Robert Stevenson's Jane Eyre \(1944\)". *Literature Film Quarterly*](#). Retrieved 2006-12-12. ^{[[dead link](#)]}
4. [^] [Daphne du Maurier by Margaret Forster](#)
5. [^] "Book About Plants Receives Award: Dr. Fairchild's 'Garden' Work Cited by Booksellers", *The New York Times*, 15 February 1939, page 20. ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2007).
 - Du Maurier participating in the [Hotel Astor](#) luncheon by transatlantic telephone from London to New York. She called for writers and distributors to offset, in the literary world, the contemporary trials of civilization in the political world.
6. [^] ^{[a](#)} ^{[b](#)} Andriotakis, Pamela (December 15, 1980). ["The Real Spy's Story Reads Like Fiction and 40 Years Later Inspires a Best-Seller"](#). *People archive*. Retrieved 2010-02-28.
7. [^] ["KV 2/1467"](#). The National Archives. Retrieved 2010-02-28.
8. [^] ["The Key to Rebecca"](#). *Ken Follett*. Retrieved 2010-02-28.
9. [^] ["The English Patient - Chapter VI"](#). *Spark Notes*. Retrieved 2010-02-28.
10. [^] ["Milton Park and the Fitzwilliam Family"](#). *Five Villages, Their People and Places" A History of the Villages of Castor, Ailsworth, Marholm with Milton, Upton and Sutton*. p. 230. Retrieved 2010-02-28. ^{[[dead link](#)]}
11. [^] ["Il Mondo dei doppiatori, Zona soup opera e telenovelas: Manuela"](#). *antoniogenna.net*. Retrieved 2010-02-28.
12. [^] ["Telenovelas A-Z: Infierno en el paraíso"](#). *Univision.com*. Retrieved 2010-02-28.
13. [^] [DuMaurier.org](#)
14. [^] [Du Maurier profile at Turner Classic Movies](#)
15. [^] [BroadwayWorld.com](#)
16. [^] [\[1\]](#)
17. [^] ["Bull's-Eye for Bovarys"](#). *TIME*. 1942-02-02. Retrieved 2007-10-26.

[[edit](#)] External links

- [Article about sexual ambiguity in "Rebecca", by Cathy Pryor in the London Independent](#)
- [Rebecca Book Notes](#) at [Literapedia](#)
- [Rebecca \(Hitchcock, 1940\)](#) at the [Internet Movie Database](#)

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Works by [Daphne du Maurier](#)

Fiction Novels

[The Loving Spirit](#) (1931) • *I'll Never Be Young Again* (1932) • *The Progress of Julius* (1933) • [Jamaica Inn](#) (1936) • ***Rebecca*** (1938) • [Frenchman's Creek](#) (1941) • [Hungry Hill](#) (1943) • *The King's General* (1946) • [The Parasites](#) (1949) • [My Cousin Rachel](#) (1951) • *Mary Anne* (1954) • [The Scapegoat](#) (1957) • [Castle Dor](#) (1961) • *The Glass-Blowers* (1963) • *The Flight of the Falcon* (1965) • [The House on the Strand](#) (1969) • *Rule*



Britannia (1972)

Happy Christmas (1940) • *Come Wind, Come Weather* (1940) • [*The Apple Tree*](#) (1952) • *Early Stories* (1959) • [*The Breaking Point*](#) (1959) • [*The Birds and Other Stories*](#) (1963) • [*Not After Midnight*](#) (1971) • *The Rendezvous and Other Stories* (1980)

Plays *Rebecca* (1940) • [*The Years Between*](#) (1945) • *September Tide* (1948)

Gerald (1934) • *The du Mauriers* (1937) • *The Young George du Maurier* (1951) • *The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë* (1960) • **Non-fiction** *Vanishing Cornwall* (1967) • *Golden Lads* (1975) • *The Winding Stairs* (1976) • *Growing Pains — the Shaping of a Writer* (a.k.a. *Myself When Young — the Shaping of a Writer*) (1977) • *Enchanted Cornwall* (1989)

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