

ROMANCE OR GROOMING? IN DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S *REBECCA*

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Love in literature is not always the romantic, dreamy, and glossy version it is presented as in such things as Disney movies, this is especially true for cinematic depictions of classical texts.

Present day movie depictions of novels are romanticizing strong topics such as grooming. Hollywood is currently and undoubtedly making millions through praising this harrowing element from novels in the plots of many films.

Romanticizing means to make something, or someone seem romantic, to treat the focus as ideal or perfect and grooming refers to the process by which an offender prepares a (typically younger) victim for sexually abusive behaviour; often done through the use of certain factors such as; personal living situations, education, status or financial background to take advantage of a person for sexual gain.

These film's attempt to romanticize grooming by decreasing the appearance of an age gap from the story or even filtering out certain plot details, themes, or storylines from the original text. An obvious and recent example of this specific Hollywood romanticization through the adaptation of a classic novel is the 2020 film adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*. This is a classic gothic thriller as a novel; however, **this modern-day cinematic version is just another wishy-washy romantic portrayal of**

the original novel. The film clearly includes a lot more sexually explicit scenes, compared to the novel which rarely explores sex between the characters and on the rare occasions that it does, the author merely alludes to sex rather than explicitly stating what is happening.

Du Maurier's *Rebecca* goes as far as to suggest that the couple (Mr and Mrs De Winter) do not consummate their marriage, let alone have sex in Monte Carlo before the proposal.

In the novel, there are several disturbing scenes, which unsurprisingly do not make an appearance in the adaptation as they would simply be too odd for the audience and would certainly take away the so-called romantic stylistics of the movie depiction.

Such scenes include Mrs De Winter being spoken down to by her husband much like a father disciplining his child:

“Listen, my sweet. When you were a little girl, were you ever forbidden to read certain books, and did your father put those books under lock and key?” “Yes,” I said. “Well, then. A husband is not so very different from a father after all.” (*Rebecca*, Daphne Du Maurier),

their relationship has a parent daughter like appearance in which he states that it is her innocence and purity that he is attracted.

When Mrs De Winter has any form of lust or sexual desire Max De Winter becomes disgusted and aggravated demanding her to stop her impure thoughts. He states that her face and appearance changes into a form which he does not like when she is having these thoughts, and anyone who has watched the film can see that this is clearly quite the contrary to what we have seen within the movie, where Mrs De Winter expresses sexual desire and Max De Winter **is** attracted to this reciprocating the same desires, however this is when they first meet and it is only after they've returned to Manderley and 'settled' into married life that their movie and their sex life grinds to a halt.

