

# On the Revelation of Female Group Portrait in the Movie “Rebecca”

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**Abstract:** The film “Rebecca” is a representative work of Alfred Hitchcock, which perfectly shows the unique charm of the literary work Rebecca with its unique film technique. The female characters in the original novel have distinct personalities and are of great symbolic significance, while the interpretation of female images in the film “Rebecca” is just perfect. On the basis of predecessors’ research. This article analyses how the movie “Rebecca” reveal the portraits of women, through the film unfolds, the contrast conflict in the film, black and white image. These three aspects will further reveal the women’s group portrait film, not only has a more profound ponder portraits of the characters, but also further explores the film related techniques, highlighting the symbolism and epochal nature of its female group portraits.

**Keywords:** Film; “Rebecca”; Portraits of women

## 1. Introduction

The film “Rebecca” is Hitchcock’s representative work. With its unique method, it just reveals the female group image which is full of individuality, for example, the mysterious bad woman called Rebecca. A indifferent, eccentric, mysterious but loyal Middle-aged housekeeper called Mrs. Danvers. A kind and generous woman called Mrs. Rice. The naive, docile and clever girl who is the heroine of the film. Above all, with its striking group portraits of women, it is worthy doing a research of how the film revealed it.

The film adopts a unique first-person narrator and narrative perspective, developing the plot through the flashback technique. Therefore, most previous studies focus on the application of suspense technique in the film.

On the basis of previous studies, this paper focuses on the analysis of the presentation of female group images in the film, through three aspects: the development of the plot of the film, the contrast and conflict in the film, black and white image technique. It just further elaborates the film to reveal the female group images. The female group portraits are represented by the heroine, housekeeper Mrs. Danvers and Rebecca.

The research of this article aims to make people pay attention to the distinct female images in the film and understand the significance of the film. New discoveries have been made about the relationship between film plot, film color, conflicts and characters. By the in-depth study of the portrayal of the characters, this article also deepens the understanding of the connotation of each individual female image.

## 2. A Brief Overview of the Film “Rebecca”

Movie “Rebecca” is one of the representative work of Alfred Hitchcock, the film tells a women’s growth story: a young woman marry into a wealthy family, as “wenders lady”, though she wants to be familiar with the environment, unfortunately, under the torture of the housekeeper Mrs. Danvers, she has been shrouded in Mr. Wenders former wife Rebecca. With time passing by, as Rebecca’s body is found, a homicide case is opened : Rebecca committed suicide, but arranged everything as if he was killed by Mr. Wenders himself. At last, in desperation, Lady Danvers lit a fire and went down to ashes with Manderley. The psychological haze of the heroine, along with the revelation of the real cause of Rebecca’s death dissipated eventually, and she also overcome the psychological fear at the same time, gaining growth eventually.

The female group images in the film are very distinctive, which makes the film dramatically, for example: the mysterious bad woman Rebecca. The Middle-aged housekeeper Mrs. Wenders who is indifferent, eccentric, mysterious but loyal. The Kind and generous woman Mrs. Rice. The Naive, docile and clever heroine.

They are independent individuals, but they are inextricably linked. These distinct female group images are perfectly revealed through personality contrast, conflicts and the promotion of the plot of the whole film, and the theme of the whole film is also sublimated by the unique female group images.

## 3. Plot Promotion and Female Group Images

### 3.1 The Image of Rebecca

With the appearance of symbol carrier R, for example, the articles with “R” in the drawer of the study, the handkerchief with “R” in the seaside cottage of the manor, the articles with “R” in Rebecca’s room<sup>[1]</sup> and remembrance of the majority such as servant frank

thinks “she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen”, Mr. Wenders says “a wife should have three kinds of virtues: breeding, mind and feminine beauty, and she has three samples”. the viewer gradually draws the outline of the image of Rebecca: a woman who is a noble, bright and beautiful at a suit, wanting to let the Manderley become a famous place. Manderley gardens, furniture and galleries are all carefully crafted by her. As Rebecca’s death gradually revealed, the plot gradually promoted, Mr. Wenders spoke out the “partnership” with his ex-wife Rebecca and her unknown things. From this, Rebecca’s image begins 360 degrees of transformation. Underneath the bright and beautiful appearance of Rebecca lies the real gory appearance. She is a woman who hunts men as prey and never understands the meaning of love.

Rebecca’s female image gradually appeared in the development of the plot of the film, which triggered a series of conjectures in the hearts of the audience, resulting in strong doubts and psychological shock. Hitchcock skillfully set up suspense, using symbolic carrier as a clue. The movie plot unfolds, slowly present Rebecca’s mysterious figure. She is beautiful, noble and elegant, like the union of angel and devil, sending out the infinite charm, being capable of the personality of angel “image” that all men loved. Also, she has a great destructive power. Having insisted that Mr. Wenders did not want to seriously damage his reputation by a divorce, she offered to “work together” to create a perfect marriage, without interfering in the private lives of both of them.

It can be seen that love between men and women is a game for her.<sup>[2]</sup>

She does not care about her husband’s views, nor does she care about others’ views, which is completely different from the gentle and virtuous ordinary female image in our traditional Chinese family.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **3.2 The Image of Housekeeper**

The middle-aged, Cold eccentric, mysterious, sinister housekeeper called Mrs. Danvers throughout the entire film. Although she is a supporting role in the film, Mrs. Danvers plays a pivotal role. When she appears as a ghost, the audience always feels that the heroine is in such a danger. As the plot uploads, the housekeeper being sarcastic at first to making things difficult for the heroine, for example, taking the opportunity to stick behind her and humiliate her in a demonic tone, “Do you think you can be Mrs. Wenders, living in her house, walking on her feet, with what belongs to her? But she is so much better than you!” “No one will ever be better than her, ever! She failed, but it was not man or woman who defeated her, it was the sea!” “Why don’t you go, why don’t you leave Manderley?” The heroine was almost driven to a mental breakdown. At the end, the whole plot took a dramatic turn when Mrs. Danvers, with a twisted heart, set the house on fire and herself on fire. As a result, the image of the housekeeper is further enriched. She regards Rebecca as an idol and the backbone of her life. Although Rebecca is dead, Mrs. Danvers becomes a tangible continuation of her life form this material world, realizing her control and domination over the Manderley.

### **3.3 The Image of Heroine**

The heroine in the film is an important point of view for the viewers to deeply understand the suspense real events of Manderley, as the opposite character of Rebecca, it is under the impetus of the movie plot that the audience can feel the frustration of the heroine and Rebecca’s strong power. She first appeared as a meek and naive girl<sup>[4]</sup>.

However, because of an accidental opportunity to marry Mr. Wenders, she then driving home to the manor on the island of Manderley with Mr. Wenders, and in the life of the estate, as the plot progresses, in Hitchcock’s lens, we can see the heroine’s image changes, from the initial nervous, excited, to the later panic. Under the powerful shadow of Rebecca, under the push of female supervisors, she often felt inferior, frustrated and cowardly because of her clumsy behavior and inappropriate words. When the movie plot reaches its climax, her image was refined again .the mysterious cause of death of Rebecca surfaced again, she accompanied her husband all the time, gradually getting rid of the inferiority and gaining confidence in the process of being investigated, and healthy growth.

## **4. The Contrast in the Film Related to Images**

### **4.1 The Contrast Between Rebecca and the Heroine**

In the film, the charming Rebecca and the innocent heroine represent two different categories and groups.

The camera follows the heroine directly, recording the heroine’s mind course, and letting the audience directly and vividly know her character, and gradually showing Rebecca through the hidden perspective.<sup>[5]</sup>

The main character is not the heroine of the most appearances, but someone else, a dark scene character who has never been seen, which is the most charming and unique technique of the film “Rebecca”. After the switch of the shot, in the suspense unfolding, this conflict leads to the maximum.

Under the comparison, their images get plump. In the film, the two women have different personalities, different origins, and even different love for Mr. Wenders.

One is the devil with angel united in one body, the other is a cowardly girl who has no confidence and always feels sad.

One, unconcerned with Mr. Wenders’ vision, laid down a code of conduct for the whole estate in order to achieve a grand ambition such as transforming the Manderly into a gathering place for the thoughts of elite members of the upper class, a top manor known far and near. Another one, who had no voice at Manderly, would have been panicked for fear of Mrs. Danvers’ ridicule for smashing a statue of Cupid in the morning room.

One, who has a strong heart, is full of confidence and autonomy in life, showing rebellious and overbearing to men, making unreasonable demands, breaking the marriage contract. The other is willing to give up everything for Mr. Wenders, needing to survive under Maxim’s wing, and even having the idea of suicide under the guidance of the housekeeper.

One thinks that love between male and female is a game, the other remains faithful to marriage. In the contrast of them, the image of the two becomes three-dimensional, arousing the reader’s diversified thinking like being an independent Rebecca or to be a docile heroine?

### **4.2 A Contrast Between Mrs. Danvers’ Attitude Toward the Two Mrs. Wenders**

The ghostly Mrs. Danvers creates a strong conflict and contrast to the diametric attitudes of the two Mrs. Wenders, which enhances the drama and enriches the image itself.

For Mrs. Danvers, Rebecca is a dream that makes her addicted, a synthesis of the two sexes beyond the female gender. She adored her, infatuated with her, revealing a kind of abnormal psychology. But when towards the new mistress, the air is arrogant, aggressive.

The film focuses on the dialogue between Mrs. Danvers and the hostess directly to reveal the conflicting relationship between the two, and mostly reveals the intimate relationship between Danvers and Rebecca secretly by means of single-shot monologue.

In the comparison of the attitude of the Mrs. Danvers, we can find that Mrs. Danvers is like the ghost in the manor.

She is not only Rebecca's special servant, but also the steward who can make the heroine lose herself and commit suicide. She is the stumbling block to the happiness of the heroine and Mr. Wenders, also the bridge connecting the two Mrs. Wenders, and the faithful spokesperson of Rebecca.<sup>[6]</sup>

## 5. The Black and White Color of the Film

Colorless color, is the so-called big color. Hitchcock used black and white image technique to make his films show strange artistic features and mysterious themes, and the revelation of the characters has played a sublimation role.

### 5.1 Relationship Among Characters in Black and White Images

Although the relationship between Mrs. Danvers and the heroine in the film is master and servant, it is influenced by Rebecca, which makes it present a relatively conflict-type relationship. Black and white image, with its mysterious color background, against every silent gaze and ghostly appearance of Mrs. Danvers in her black dress. From the very beginning of the matron's indifference towards the heroine to the end of the attempt to persuade her to jump off a building, the relationship between the two reached the extreme of conflict.

And Mrs. Danvers was fiercely loyal to Rebecca, her former master. Every time she mentioned Rebecca, her calm way of speaking and her deep dark eyes sets off her deformed worship to Rebecca under the dignified black and white image.

### 5.2 Mrs. Danvers in Black and White Image

In the black and white film "Rebecca", all the color phenomenon has disappeared, giving people an ethereal meaning of contemplation. The dark atmosphere of the old manor house has created the classic black and white charm of Mrs. Danvers. Mrs. Danvers, in her black dress, with her large sunken eyes, gave a depressing look against the black image, under the grim shadow of the Manderly estate, like a living ghost, cold and indifferent. Peeping at the hostess's every move from a distance makes people shudder, making her present a kind of weird, sinister and malevolence. The black and white photography appropriately presents her image to the audience, and it is this melancholy black temperament, stripped of any color, that is deeply rooted in people's hearts and immortal.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the analysis of the presentation of female group images in the film, through three aspects: the development of the film plot, the contrast and conflict in the film, the film black and white color to further elaborate the film to reveal the female group images. The female group portraits are represented by the heroine, housekeeper Mrs. Danvers and Rebecca.

First of all, the plot of the film plays an important role in revealing the images of the three women. The plot gradually Outlines Rebecca with symbols as the carrier. The development of the plot gradually deepens the image of the heroine, and thus completes the transformation of a "butterfly". The ups and downs of the plot run through Mrs. Danvers all the time, playing a rendering role in her cold and grim image.

Secondly, the contrast and conflict in the film make the characters more full. For example, the contrast of Mrs. Danvers' attitude towards the two Mrs. Wenders reflects her deformed worship of Rebecca and through the contrast of the two Mrs. Wenders under the lens of Hitchcock, also enriches their respective images.

Finally, through the analysis of the color of the film, the black and white image technique further explores the inner meaning of its characters, taking Mrs. Danvers as a typical.

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