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Candidate session number

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Examination session (May or November)

MAY

Year

2013

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Group 2, ENGLISH B

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: WHAT PART IS PLAYED BY THE
CONCEALMENTS IN "REBECCA" WRITTEN BY DAPHNE
DU MAURIER?

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

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chose a novel that was new to her and engaged with it enthusiastically. Her analysis of the concealments in the novel is perceptive and insightful. She worked hard to organize her ideas into a cogent and coherent essay and applied herself thoughtfully, throughout the essay writing process.

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To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

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Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Criteria	Achievement level					
	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3	
A research question	2	2		2		
B introduction	1	2		2		
C investigation	2	4		4		
D knowledge and understanding	2	4		4		
E reasoned argument	2	4		4		
F analysis and evaluation	2	4		4		
G use of subject language	3	4		4		
H conclusion	1	2		2		
I formal presentation	3	4		4		
J abstract	2	2		2		
K holistic judgment	2	4		4		
Total out of 36	22					

Extended Essay

'Rebecca' by Daphne Du Maurier

“What part is played by the concealments in Rebecca written by Daphne Du Maurier?”

By

Subject: English B
Supervisor:
Word count: 3989

Abstract:

This essay examines the question: “**What part is played by the concealments in Rebecca written by Daphne Du Maurier?**” Daphne Du Maurier builds up tension throughout “Rebecca” using concealment techniques, unanswered questions and secrets. This tension is held until the very end of the novel, at which the main mysteries are revealed, although the suppression of several facts leaves the reader with many unanswered questions. This extended essay will explore the impact of the many concealments on the reader’s interpretation of the novel *Rebecca*.

The scope of the essay will highlight the theme of concealment, as relates to Mr De Winter, those regarding Rebecca, the aftermath of her death and the mysteries unravelled toward the end of the book. Each section will investigate new concealments, related to different characters. Since the novel is told through a personal narrator’s perspective, in the first person voice, the investigation will therefore be with focus on the narrator, Mrs De Winter.

To draw the investigation to a close, it is concluded that the concealments play a significant role in the build-up and resolution of the plot. All the characters have something they conceal and something they want to find out, and this web of concealments creates frustration and friction among the characters. The revelation in the end adds the concealments up to a broader view on the truth of the story.

Word count: 227

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I. Introduction:

Rebecca is a novel written by Daphne Du Maurier in 1938. Daphne Du Maurier wrote many short stories and articles from the age of 21¹, but *Rebecca* was her masterpiece that made her a world famous author. Daphne Du Maurier's novels often had a degree of psychology presented in a mysterious and sophisticated way. She wrote many historical romances and gothic thrills. *Rebecca* is a gothic thriller about a naïve nameless young woman, the narrator, who falls in love and marries a rich man of higher status, Mr De Winter. The couple moves to Mr De Winter's family mansion the famous Manderley. Living at Manderley is not easy for the narrator; there are signs of her husband's dead wife, Rebecca, all over. Everyone adored Rebecca when she was alive; she had status and was the most beautiful creature alive. People had a hard time accepting a new Mrs De Winter at Manderley and the narrator quickly discovers the taboo of Rebecca and her death. She has many questions to ask about Rebecca; who was she, what was so very special about her and why does Mr De Winter acts so strange when she is mentioned? The concealments are gradually exposed and the narrator adds them up to a larger view of the truth. It had for a long time been told that Rebecca's death happened in an accident at sea, where she drowned, but the biggest concealment is revealed when Rebecca's dead body was found by the bay - Confusion starts since Mr De Winter already had identified Rebecca's body two months earlier. Mr De Winter then tells the narrator that he murdered Rebecca; the body he identified was not hers and he did this to avoid getting caught as the murderer. Mr De Winter told that Rebecca was a horrible person, who he never loved. After the founding of Rebecca's body interrogations and meetings started, to find out what happened. It was discovered that Rebecca was a victim of cancer and might have provoked Mr De Winter into shooting her. The interrogations declared Mr De Winter as being innocent and stated that Rebecca's death must have been suicide. It is never revealed to anyone but the narrator, that Mr De Winter was the murderer. All of a sudden the narrator knew more than all the others and was the only one who was trusted, holding the biggest secret of them all.

Rebecca is written with Mrs De Winter as a personal narrator, which gives the reader an insight in her thoughts, feelings and makes it possible for the reader to identify with her.

¹ Daphne Du Maurier, "Rebecca", (London: Virago Press, 2003) Prologue

Throughout the book emotions, feelings and thoughts are described through a beautiful, creative, metaphor rich language. The old-fashioned, personal and descriptive language gives the reader clear pictures of situations and surroundings. *Rebecca* is told in reverse chronology, through a big flashback. It starts in France, where the narrator recalls events from the time she met Mr De Winter. In this flashback the reader is told about her experiences and the violent events that occurred at Manderley. It is known from the very beginning that something terrible is afoot, but the reader is kept in suspense until the very end.

The purpose of this extended essay is to explore the concealments in *Rebecca*. The question 'What part is played by the concealments in Rebecca written by Daphne Du Maurier?' will be examined. Each section will examine concealments from different characters point of view. The first section will examine the concealments kept by Maxim. The second section will examine concealments regarding Rebecca. The third section will examine the concealment and aftermath of Rebecca's death. The fourth section will examine the mysterious ending, which stays as a concealment to the reader.

II. Essay body:

Maxim's concealments

Mr De Winter is the holder of many concealments regarding Rebecca: What happened to her, what she was like and how she died.

Throughout the narrator and Mr De Winter's first dates in Monte Carlo, Mr De Winter is presented as charming, caring and interested in her life - he made her feel of importance.² His only mysterious behaviour at that point was when he brought the narrator to the top of a hill, in a car, with an enormous speed. The narrator, found it funny and enjoyed the ride until she noticed the look on Mr De Winter's face "... he laughed no longer, he was once more silent and detached, the man of yesterday wrapped in his secret self."³ The car stopped. Before them was a fall of around two thousand feet. "A change had come upon our afternoon; it was not the thing of gossamer it had been. The wind dropped, and it grew colder."⁴ Maxim looked at her without recognition and she realized he must have forgotten all about her company. "He himself was so lost in the labyrinth of his own unquiet thoughts that I did not exist."⁵ The narrator describes Mr De Winter as being in a trance. He cleared up, apologized and explained to her that he had memories from that summit. The narrator realized how much she did not know about his past life.

"I wondered what had driven him to this retreat into the past, with me an unconscious witness of his mood. What gulf of years stretched between him and that other time, what deed of thought and action, what difference in temperament?"⁶

This was the first time the narrator saw a concealed side of Mr De Winter. It is from this example clear that Mr De Winter's had baggage and his past was a taboo.

² Daphne Du Maurier, "Rebecca", (London: Virago Press, 2003), P 30

³ *Ibid.* P 31

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* P 32

⁶ *Ibid.*

When the newly married couple arrived at Manderley Mr De Winter's loving and positive attitude changed again. He slowly became more silent and thoughtful. He did not include the narrator in the same way as in Monte Carlo and got angry at unexpected times. She had to accept a new side of Maxim's character. Maxim's frustration was shown when the couple went to the beach, and the dog, Jasper disappeared. The narrator decided to follow him despite Maxim irritably sent her signals not to.⁷ Subsequently Maxim was annoyed: "the cottage is supposed to be locked, the door has no business to be open"⁸ he walked with a "tremendous pace"⁹ This is the first friction between the couple. The argument was unnecessary and something more, than the narrator searching for Jasper, was clearly bothering Maxim. The narrator subsequently told Maxim that she loved him, where he responded with "do you?"¹⁰ The narrator describes: "His smile was my reward. Like a pat on the head to Jasper"¹¹. The narrator did not get the loving responses from Maxim, as she did in Monte Carlo.

Another example of Maxim's changed behaviour was at the fancy dress ball at Manderley. The narrator unfortunately wore the same dress, as Rebecca wore. "'What the hell do you think you're doing?' He asked. His eyes blazed in anger."¹² The narrator was devastated and felt ignored by Maxim for the rest of the evening. The narrator was confused but also convinced Maxim acted this way, because that he still suffered from the loss of Rebecca. The situation changed when Captain Searle came with news. Not only was Rebecca's boat found, her body was on the inside. "There was a body in there, lying on the cabin floor"¹³ This finding started discussions because Mr De Winter already identified Rebecca's dead body in Edgcombe. This made the narrator assume that someone was with Rebecca, and the newly found body was not Rebecca's.¹⁴ Maxim responded with: "No, you don't understand (...) It's Rebecca's body lying there on the cabin floor (...) There was never an accident. Rebecca was not drowned at all. I killed her. I shot Rebecca in the cottage in the cove. I carried her body to the cabin, and took the boat out that night, and sunk it there, where they found it today."¹⁵ The narrator is described as shocked as Maxim continued:

⁷ Du Maurier, "Rebecca", P 124

⁸ *Ibid.* P 128

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* P 131

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.* P 238

¹³ *Ibid.* P 292

¹⁴ *Ibid.* P 298

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 305

“You thought I loved Rebecca? You thought I killed her, loving her? I hated her, I tell you. (...) She was a 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 normal.”¹⁶

All Maxim’s true feelings were exposed, when he told the narrator about the murder of Rebecca. The narrator and reader’s view on Rebecca completely changes here. What the reader has been told about Rebecca so far has been wrong; she was not the perfect and loving person as presented as so far and she never died in an accident, her husband murdered her. The couple had to keep this secret together; if Maxim was revealed to be the murderer horrible consequences could follow. Maxim had kept a secret that could get him killed if revealed, but he decided to trust his wife. He was nervous and tense and did not know what to do. “I thought I should go mad, sitting here, day after day, waiting for something to happen. Sitting down at the desk there, answering those terrible letters of sympathy. (...) eating, drinking trying to be normal.”¹⁷ When Rebecca’s dead body was found in the bay, Maxim decided to tell the narrator, that he murdered Rebecca. This revelation turned out to be the turning point for Mr and Mrs De Winter’s relationship.

“He ran his fingers through my hair. Different from his old abstracted way. It was not like stroking Jasper anymore. (...) Sometimes he kissed me. Sometimes he said things to me. There were no shadows between us any more.”¹⁸

After Maxim shared his secret with the narrator, he did not have to conceal anything anymore. The tenseness and nervousness was gone. The couple still have to keep the murder as a secret towards everyone else, but revelation to the narrator changed Maxim; he opened up, relaxed and they got closer again.

¹⁶ Du Maurier, “Rebecca”, P 304

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, P 302

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, P 308

The concealments regarding Rebecca

"It's Max De Winter, (...) the man who owns Manderley. You've heard of it, of course. He looks ill, doesn't he? They say he can't get over his wife's death..."¹⁹ Rebecca, is first shortly mentioned by Mrs Van Hoppers in Monte Carlo. It was said that Rebecca died in an accident and the reader, along with many of the book's characters, believe this statement for a great part of the book. The concealments regarding Rebecca are revealed slowly and mysteriously. Daphne Du Maurier builds up tension about Rebecca's character. We, as readers, keep getting new impressions and new revelations, about Rebecca, the view of Rebecca keeps changing through the book. We have only received positive information about Rebecca, so the reader receives a great shock, when Mr De Winter is proved to be Rebecca's murderer. In the end this adds up to a completely different picture of Rebecca than expected.

It is almost impossible for the narrator to find any information about Rebecca, since her existence is presented as a taboo. The information the narrator got in the beginning was very vague and biased from, the housekeeper at Manderley, Mrs Danvers, which showed Rebecca from a subjective, positive perspective. This was how majority saw Rebecca, not the actual truth. Many characters such as Ben, Mr De Winter, Frank Crawley and Mrs Danvers held many concealments about Rebecca, which all gives the reader different impressions - It is very hard to decipher the actual truth about Rebecca. A description of Rebecca's handwriting gives the narrator her first impression of Rebecca's strong character. "The name Rebecca stood out black and strong..."²⁰, "The tall sloping R dwarfing the other letters."²¹ Her handwriting is described as beautiful but impatient and curious written in thick letters. When the narrator arrived at Manderley, Mrs Danvers said, "... when the late Mrs De Winter was alive; there was a lot of entertaining then, a lot of parties "²², "The room that looks down at the sea, that was Mrs De Winter's bedroom, the most beautiful room in at Manderley"²³ This indicates to the narrator that Rebecca was a lot of fun, liked parties and the sea. Maxim's sister, Beatrice, visited Manderley. She knew a lot about Rebecca, but did not say much; "You're so very different from Rebecca."²⁴ This comment was the first but not the last comparison of the

¹⁹ Du Maurier, "Rebecca", P 15

²⁰ *Ibid.* P 36

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.* P 82

²³ *Ibid.* P 84

²⁴ *Ibid.* P. 120

narrator and Rebecca. The comparison to Rebecca made the narrator insecure and made her feel unwanted.

The narrator had heard about Rebecca, her death, and wanted to know more about her. She did not trust many people at Manderley and did not know who she could ask about Rebecca's death. She decided to let the curiosity out on Frank Crawly. "What did she use the cottage for?"²⁵, "Why is the buoy there in the little harbour place"²⁶, "What sort of size boat was it?"²⁷, "What made it capsize?"²⁸, "Could not someone have got out to her?"²⁹ The narrator did not get a lot of information out of Frank Crawly since he felt very uncomfortable on this topic and concealed a lot of information. What she did get out of him was that Rebecca was alone by the bay, she had her own boat and it was the one that capsized, she drowned and was found near Edgemoor two months later and identified by Maxim. We are never told how much Frank Crawly actually knew about Rebecca's death.

Mrs Danvers on the other hand had a great deal to say about Rebecca. She let it all out, when she found the narrator, led by curiosity, in Rebecca's old bedroom. Mrs Danvers reminded her of how Rebecca used to say "You maid me better than anyone, Danny (...) I won't have anyone but you" Rebecca and Mrs Danvers had a relationship that the narrator could never live up to, she would never call Mrs Danvers 'Danny' or talk to her for pleasure. Mrs Danvers continued: "Mr De Winter used to brush it (hair) ... "Harder Max, Harder" she would say, laughing up at him."³⁰, "She (Rebecca) made him very happy!"³¹ Mrs Danvers described Maxim and Rebecca as a happy, loving couple. She made Rebecca's time at Manderley sound, as something everyone enjoyed. There has not been a happy description of the new couple at Manderley, so from Mrs Danvers examples Maxim seemed happier with Rebecca. Mrs Danvers continued the comparison: "She was much taller than you"³², "She had a beautiful figure"³³, "She was slim"³⁴, "She had small feet for her height"³⁵ she is later described as beautiful as a picture

²⁵ Du Maurier, "Rebecca", P 145

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.* P 191

³¹ *Ibid.* P 274

³² *Ibid.* P 191

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.* P 192

and very intelligent³⁶. The narrator does not at any point describe herself as beautiful, intelligent or funny. This conversation made the narrator feel that she was not good enough and made her self-conscious. Mrs Danvers told the narrator how Rebecca used to take men to the cottage and make love to them. A very important concealed bit of information is told here: Rebecca used to take men to the cottage and make love to them. Mrs Danvers described this as Rebecca being independent and doing exactly what she wanted. The narrator does not seem to take much notice of this important comment, but later it made her believe Maxim, when he told her that Rebecca was unfaithful towards him. The narrator's lack of knowledge, ignorance and insecurity made her think: "He did not belong to me at all, he belonged to Rebecca. He still thought about Rebecca. He will never love me, because of Rebecca"³⁷. The narrator had a superior view on Rebecca. The narrator felt out of importance to her husband, she saw herself as an obligation instead of his beloved wife. She lost her self-esteem by all the comparison to Rebecca. What changes the narrator's perception of Rebecca is Maxim's revelation of the murder, where he told the narrator that Rebecca was a horrible person. Mrs Danvers never lied though, she genuinely saw Rebecca as being perfect. She was tall, beautiful, intelligent and most people liked her, they just did not know the truth about her. Many concealments were kept about Rebecca, everyone had a different anecdote and impressions of Rebecca.

The aftermath of Rebecca's death,

The Death of Rebecca was treated as a taboo, also after the murder was revealed to the narrator and the interrogations started. The interrogations build up great tension in the end of the novel.

During the interrogations Maxim decided to conceal everything. After the first proper interrogation, the judge stated that Rebecca had committed suicide. Rebecca's lover, Mr Favell, was not pleased with this out-come and turned up at Manderley just after. He wanted to prove Maxim as the murderer of Rebecca.³⁸ Mr Colonel Julyan was brought to Manderley to overhear Favell's claims. The narrator is described as tense and nervous when she noticed Frank Crawly's reactions, which were different from what she expected them to be. The narrator got the impression of Frank Crawly knowing more, than he showed: "I was more

³⁶ Du Maurier, "Rebecca", P 273

³⁷ *Ibid.* P 261

³⁸ *Ibid.* P 367

convinced than ever that he knew the truth. He had always known it. From the very first.”³⁹ He is described as silent and conservative through the interrogations. When Rebecca’s lover, Mr Favell, after the interrogations, blames Mr De Winter for the murder, Frank Crawly became insecure and nervous, as if he knew Maxim was the murderer of Rebecca. A witness was needed before Colonel Julyan made any decisions. The narrator was nervous, but trusted that Frank Crawly, would stay silent. Mr Favell then said “A local half-wit spends his time on the beach”⁴⁰ - Favell wanted Ben to be his witness; he must have seen what happened that night. We follow the narrator’s frustration when she through thoughts states: “Ben had seen. Ben with queer crazed brain, had been a witness all the time.”⁴¹ Ben was brought to Manderley to answer questions. He was scared and was seen as anything but a reliable source. “I never see no one”⁴² was Ben’s only comment and not enough to put Maxim behind bars. We know from earlier comments from Ben, that he knew more than what he told. The times he met the narrator on the beach, he had comments specifically related to the murder: “She is down there isn’t she? She won’t come back again”⁴³, “The fishes have eaten her up haven’t they?”⁴⁴ Ben concealed what he knew and pretended as if he knew nothing - If this was done to help Maxim or in fear, the reader will never find out. We get the impression that he was afraid of Rebecca and knew about her lover but had “never seen no one.”⁴⁵ Ben, Maxim, the narrator and Frank Crawly all concealed what they knew, but Favell did not give up. Rebecca’s calendar was found and gone through. It turned out Rebecca had a doctor’s appointment on the day she died. “Here it is (...) What have we here, though? Baker at two o’clock. Who is Baker?”⁴⁶ The situation seemed to change completely here, since it turned out that Rebecca had concealments as well. Favell, Colonel Julyan, Maxim and the narrator arranged a meeting with Dr Baker, to understand why Rebecca had to see a doctor. “I saw a Mrs Danvers on the twelfth at two o’clock”⁴⁷ Dr Baker had Mrs Danvers’ name in his calendar, instead of Rebecca’s. But since the appointment matched Rebecca’s diary and his description fitted Rebecca’s, it must have been her. Dr Baker explained that Rebecca suffered from cancer and she knew that she was going to die. This was very unexpected to everyone, not even Mrs

³⁹ *Du Maurier, "Rebecca", P 340*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* P 374

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.* P 378

⁴³ *Ibid.* P 374

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* P 378

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* P 401

⁴⁷ *ibid.* P 411

Danvers knew this. Rebecca knew she was dying from cancer and might have provoked Maxim into shooting her in the cottage. Daphne Du Maurier though never exactly reveals this to the reader. Daphne Du Maurier manages to build up tension all the way through the ending, with many new surprises for the reader. New concealments are revealed every time the reader gets comfortable in the book.

The last concealment

The cause of the disaster in the ending of *Rebecca* is a mystery. The new couple were having a break in a cottage, on their way back from the doctor back to Manderley, when Frank Crawly contacted Maxim on the telephone and said "... he found her room empty. Her bedroom too. They looked for her but could not find her."⁴⁸ Mrs Danvers had disappeared from Manderley. Maxim had a bad feeling about the phone call and knew something must have been terribly wrong. As Mr and Mrs De Winter got closer to Manderley, the narrator got confused: "It looks almost as though the dawn was breaking over there, beyond those hills. It can't be though it's too early"⁴⁹, "It's in winter you see northern lights, isn't it?"⁵⁰ Maxim responded by saying "It's not the northern lights (...) That's Manderley!"⁵¹ - Manderley was on fire. This solicits many questions for the reader. Was it Mrs Danvers who could not accept a new Mrs De Winter? Was it Mr Favell who set the mansion on fire in anger? Was it Rebecca's spirit as a last farewell, as it can be interpreted: "And the ashes blew towards us with the salt from the wind."⁵² Daphne Du Maurier never reveals to the reader what happened to Mrs Danvers or what happened to Manderley. This disaster led the couple back to Monte Carlo, where they only had the memory of Manderley left. "We can never go back"⁵³. We don't know how much time has past since the fire, when we meet Mr and the narrator in Monte Carlo again, and we do not know what has happened in the time in between. What we know as readers is that they are still together and especially Mr De Winter suffered from horrible memories. But what actually happened remains to the reader a mystery.

⁴⁸ Du Maurier, "Rebecca", P 427

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* P 425

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.* P 428

⁵³ *Ibid.* P 10

III. Conclusion:

While investigating the research question 'What part is played by the concealments in Rebecca written by Daphne Du Maurier?' it was found that the theme of concealment plays a big role for the plot of the novel; the concealments kept by Mr De Winter, the concealments regarding Rebecca, her death and the last mystery, all give the book a degree of mysterious psychology. "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again"⁵⁴ The famous opening line of *Rebecca* is presented more as a nightmare, than a dream. The narrator's reaction to this nightmare and Manderley is from the beginning concealed, which leaves the reader with curiosity from page one and puts the reader in suspense. The reader's views on characters keep changing throughout the book because of constant newly exposed concealments. Daphne Du Maurier slowly reveals more and more about the death of Rebecca and when the reader through the revelation of the murder think he/she knows everything, Du Maurier surprises again by telling that Rebecca had cancer, which implies that she wanted to die. All of the characters were influenced a lot by all the mysteries, secrets and concealments. They were trapped by the rumours regarding Rebecca, and their own ability to create imaginative stories of the truth. *Rebecca's* storyline is build up through concealments, kept by various characters. The concealments build up tension, which is kept to the reader, until the very end of the novel. There are though many unanswered questions and not everything is revealed to the reader. The reader is never told how much Ben, Frank Crawly and Mrs Danvers actually knew. It is neither revealed who Rebecca was, all the information giving is biased, either by Mr De Winter, Mr Farwel or Mrs Danvers. After the revelation of Rebecca being a victim of cancer, the reader sits with confusion– did Rebecca really want to die, did she provoke Maxim, was it all a part of her plan? But the biggest question is the ignorance shown by the narrator, Mrs De Winter, not once is there a comment made of her being in love with a murderer. The fact that she stays with her murderous husband remains a mystery to the reader.

⁵⁴ Du Maurier, "Rebecca", P 1

IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Daphne Du Maurier, "Rebecca", first published by Victor Gollancz in 1938, used edition published in 2003 by London, Virago Press, afterword by Sally Beauman