

## A FORMALISM APPROACH ON DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S REBECCA

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**Abstract:** Literature is a human living description expressed by the authors through their literary texts. Understanding literature is about how to understand the texts that contain their creative process. Formalism is one of the approaches aimed at finding out what and why the motor of the story works in the literary texts. Daphne du Maurier's was analyzed using the formalism approach. The main character obsession is the one that runs the story, which arouses various conflicts among characters. How the main character solves the problems in the conflict is the final answer of the story analysis using the formalism approach.

**Keywords:** formalism, tension, "I" character, Rebecca

Literature is an expression of society. This statement is stated by Luxemburg in Noor (2004:12) on his explanation about literature as an imaginative story. Talking about literature, this paper will talk about aesthetics and arts. Literature is everything which is written down, creating the writer's imagination and inspiration as a portrait of human beings and then presented in a literary work as well. As the above explanation, Literary works, like novel, short story, poetry and play, portray a human life, culture, and behavior. By reading a literary work, it is important to understand not only the content of the story, but also the moral value or other aspects besides the structural aspects which are useful for us as well.

*Rebecca* is a kind of literary work written down by Daphne du Maurier, completely presenting the whole portrait of human being in general. A novel which is written down with a good fiction is able to prove us that there is something beyond the text telling about moral value, human behavior, and it also tells us how to be good people, a good woman without being someone else, or just be yourself. What is experienced by character 'I' as the main character is well performed in this novel, and it is the main story of *Rebecca*. The presentation of the other characters also supports the main content of the story. There are about six characters presented in this novel, and they have their own part to complete the story in a good sequence. The conflicts happened, characterization and setting of the story also give a real portrait of a real human life.

*Rebecca* is a novel which takes Manderley as the name of a castle, and it tells about a young woman who is a wife of a rich man namely *Maxim de Winters*. It was written that Maxim's wife passed away a couple years ago in an accident. 'I' in this novel, had a dream of Manderly as her dreaming place. The place gave a lot of memories for her, especially after she married Maxim de Winter, and to be

his second wife, living at the house called the *West Wing* which is located in Manderly. There, 'I' experienced many events that she never imagined before. Inside the house, she found everything that made her think a lot about the late Rebecca – her death, the fact that she had to loose her lovely *West Wing* in an accident because her maid had burnt it.

Many things happen in the story time by time, and the story is well arranged in a good time and chronological order. It makes the readers understand and follow the story well as they drift away by their imagination.

In this paper, *Rebecca* as the English contemporary literature will be analyzed by *formalism* as part of a text oriented approach. The analysis focuses on the tension and how the tension is being resolved. *Formalism* also tries to emphasize on the intrinsic and structural aspects of a literary work. By this analysis the writer wants to describe how the main problem experienced by the protagonist will move the whole story in this novel, and in Formalism it is usually called as tension and anti-tension. Based on the above explanation, the writer finally decides to analyze Maurier's *Rebecca* with formalism approach. It is hoped, by this approach the readers will see the obsession of 'I' to be the late Rebecca who is the main tension of the novel, and also find out how "I" resolve the tension.

Related to the topic explained above, the writer intends to state the statements of the problem, as follows:

1. What tension does the novel play text project?
2. How does the text resolve the tension?

### **TEXT-ORIENTED APPROACH AND FORMALISM**

As Klarer states in *Theoretical Approaches in Literature*, one can distinguish between text, author, reader, and context oriented approach.

The text-oriented approaches focus more on analyses of language and style and the formal structure of literary works. Author-oriented approaches focus on the author, and it also tries to establish connection between the work of art and the author's biography. Reader-oriented approaches focus on the reception of texts by readers, and how those texts influence the reader. Contextual approaches try to place literary texts against the background of historical, social, or political developments.

The following theoretical approaches can be subsumed under these four basic rubrics as follows:

**Text**  
Philology  
Rhetoric  
Formalism and Structuralism  
New Criticism  
Semiotics and Deconstruction

| <b>Author</b>            | <b>Reader</b>             |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Biographical Criticism   | Reception Theory          |
| Psychoanalytic Criticism | Reception History         |
| Phenomenology            | Reader-Response Criticism |

**Context**  
Literary History  
Marxist Literary Theory  
Feminist Literary Theory  
New Historicism and Cultural Studies (Klarer, 1999:78)

The above classification shows that *Formalism* is classified into *text-oriented approaches*. Like *structuralism*, this approach also focuses the analysis on the intrinsic and structural aspects of a literary work. It tries to analyze intrinsic elements of a text like characters, characterization and plot, especially for the narrative structure. Klarer states that Formalism also tries to analyze structurally elements of a text, such as characters in a plot, which older schools traditionally explain on a merely thematic level (Klarer, 1999:84).

Russian formalist Shlovsky develops two concepts of formalism which are used for its analyses. Those aspects are distinguished into text and content, or *fabula* and *sjuzet*. *Fabula* is a sequence of plot which is arranged chronologically, and *sjuzet* organizes the whole incidents in a story into narrative structure. It is well arranged and it appears tension and anti-tension of a story. Further Ratna states about this in *Teori, Metode, dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra* that:

*Fabula dan sjuzet merupakan konsep formalis yang paling terkenal. Cerita dan penceritaan, cerita dan plot, dianggap sebagai konsep kunci yang membedakan karya sastra, khususnya sastra naratif, dengan sejarah dan peristiwa sehari-hari. Fabula adalah bahan kasar, kejadian yang tersusun secara kronologis, oleh karena itu, fibula disebut sebagai konstituen plot. Sjuzet mengorganisasikan keseluruhan kejadian kedalam struktur penceritaan (Ratna, 2004:86).*

Wardoyo in the Road Map states that formalism can be used to analyze poem, novel, short story and drama, and it recommends identifying the tension underlying the text. In the same source he also describes that literary analysis like qualitative research is conducted with a high degree of subjectivity. Thus, the researcher's creativity leads him or her to find the most ingenious path of analysis. He divides formalism analysis into tension and the resolution of the tension as follows:

Formalist analysis

1. What tension does the text project?
2. How does the text resolve the tension? (Wardoyo: 346)

Based on the above theories about Formalism, the writer only focuses on what tension does the text project and how the text resolve the tension as the approach of this paper.

### **TENSION PROJECTED IN THE NOVEL**

Analyzing the tension in a novel is an important thing to do. By describing what the tension in a novel is, it shows where and how the story is. To understand further about what tension in this novel projects, it will be discussed later, by some quotations related to the analysis.

The main character 'I' as narrator of the story was described as a young orphan woman who was working with an old lady named Mrs. Van Hoper. By Mrs. Van Hoper 'I' was introduced to a rich man Mr. Maxim de Winter. "I" was falling in love with him, and their relationship was getting closer and closer until they were getting married. Maxim's wife, Rebecca, passed away a couple years ago. The narrator loved him very much and it seemed she wanted to do everything that Maxim liked to make Maxim happy, until she forgot to be herself.

'I' had an obsession to be the late Rebecca by trying and finding out anything related to the late Mrs. De Winter. She always forced herself to be the late Rebecca by imitating her performance, getting to know all of Rebecca's properties, room, picture, her life style, and everything. She didn't realize that she did it further until she lost herself which Maxim liked it very much. 'I' didn't realize that her husband loved her whatever she was, not being someone else or the late Rebecca. Unfortunately, she didn't realize this.

The time went day by day, and the narrator was still in the obsession to be Rebecca. Her ambition appears at the beginning of the story till the end, covers almost the whole story, and becomes the tension of the novel. The narrator's obsession to be the late Rebecca recommends us to identify the tension in this novel. She really wanted to have Rebecca's figure, like her performance, life style, the way of thinking and dressing. She forced herself by this way only with one purpose to make her husband happy and love her very much; even the fact didn't say so. When the first time she came to the Manderley there were many things that made her curious. A room called Morning Room where Rebecca usually spent her spare time in the morning made the main character in this novel curious so much. She didn't realize that she had forced herself to drift away on the situation of Rebecca's life. The following quotation shows us the main tension that might cause any conflicts in this story.

*The morning-room was quiet small and very different from the library. It was a woman's room, graceful and charming. Someone had chosen everything in this room with the greatest care. Each chair, each rug, each small ornament had been put to make the room perfect.*

*Flowers filled the room, glowing blood-red flowers. They were the same flowers we had seen in the drive. A beautiful old writing-desk stood near the window. I went over and opened the desk carefully. Every drawer was labeled and everything was in order.....I sat down and opened the Guest Book. Every page was covered with the same writing (Rebecca: 30).*

Another event considered as the tension of this novel is shown when 'I' found a cottage in a bay by accident. This cottage belonged to Rebecca, but it had been left for a long time since Rebecca's death. Actually 'I' just wanted to find some strings for her dog, Jasper. In fact she found something else inside the room, and it made her think about the late Rebecca more and more. She found many things in the room covered by thick dust, even all of the furniture were well placed. Everything told about Rebecca, and everything convinced her as if Rebecca was still alive. Her ambition motivated her to find what she wanted more although she was afraid of the darkness of the small room. This situation can be described as the second tension which proves the main character's obsession to be the late Mrs. De Winter or Rebecca. The following quotation will support the analysis:

*The room was furnished and there were books on the shelves. But everything was covered with thick dust. The air was damp and still. Another door at the end of the room led into knife. I cut a piece of string on a shelf and an old knife. I cut a piece of string for Jasper and went out of the cottage. There was something frightening about that small, dark room. I was glad to be outside again (Rebecca: 42).*

One thing that could be said as the tension happens when 'I' came into a special room called the West Wing. It was the most beautiful room among the rooms in Manderley. Rebecca usually uses this room for taking a rest, dressing, while watching the sea outside the room. Everything was still well arranged, because Rebecca's maid, Mrs. Danvers, a woman who adored Rebecca made the room well. Like what happened at the morning room and the cottage, she also got everything about Rebecca inside the room, like her bedroom and her nightdress. Her motivation to get more information about Rebecca moved her strongly to the West Wing even though she was still afraid of that. She wanted to know more about Rebecca, but she didn't want Rebecca come back into this house and her life. It can be seen from the following quotation which supports the above description:

*I was again in the corridor where I had stood on my first morning at Manderley. I turned the handle of the nearest door and went inside. Everything was dark. I found the light and switched it on. I was surprised to see that the room was completely furnished. There was no dust.....  
I walked slowly into the middle of the room. No, it was not used. It was not lived in any more. The air was not fresh. Rebecca would never come back to this room again.....(Rebecca:58).*

One day, Maxim was going to hold a party called *costume party*, and this was I's idea. Mr. De Winter welcomed this idea very enthusiastically and suddenly he asked everyone in Manderley to prepare everything for the party. Of course all of the Maxim relations also welcomed this idea happily.

When the day came, all of the guests came to the party, and they were wearing colorful costumes. 'I' was still in a doubt at that time because she had prepared something special on her costume. That was Rebecca's costume. She was forced by Mrs. Danvers to wear it, and she thought it would make Maxim

very happy to see Rebecca came back in the I's body and performance. With no questions finally she wore the dress and changed herself to be Rebecca. Fortunately, what she had done made Maxim angry with her. He didn't want her to be like that because he tried to forget his late wife from his life. Maxim wanted her second wife to be herself, not Rebecca. While shouting out of her, he asked his wife to change the clothes and leave the party. Certainly, it made 'I' very disappointed and upset. She never thought about it before that her husband would do that to her, it was shocking her.

From this event we can see that the tension in this novel plays the role very much until some conflicts appear, like conflict between the 'I' with her husband and conflict within herself. This tension can be described as the beginning of the climax or turning point. We can see from the following quotation:

*As I went down to dinner, I stepped in front of the picture of the young girl. Her name was Caroline de Winter and she had been famous for her beauty. The dress was very simple, with short sleeves and long full skirt. Her hair was in curls. I would have to wear a wig over own straight hair. I felt very excited. I was glad that I had chosen at last (Rebecca: 67-69).*

That is the end of the first analysis about what tension does the novel project. From the analysis it can be seen there are more than one tension mentioned above, but there is only one tension which plays in this novel. That is about the main character's ambition to be the late Rebecca.

### **TENSION RESOLUTION IN THE NOVEL**

In this part, the analysis is focused on the resolution of the conflicts based on the tension which plays the project in this novel.

Time goes slowly day by day together with main the character's change. She found many things related to the Rebecca's life, and the events why Rebecca's was killed. First it began when there was a ship hit the rocks in the bay. Many people included Maxim went there to see what happened. The captain who was responsible to this moment investigated that the boat was Rebecca's boat. It made 'I' nervous because there was a name Rebecca coming up. Her sickness about being Rebecca once again disturbed her mind and made her can not stand of this situation, especially when the policeman asked her about Maxim. She was afraid and frightened about her husband being in jail. In her fear she felt that her husband loved and cared her very much. It was proven when he was always close to her, holding her hand to calm down, trying to persuade her who was very afraid of the events. This situation made 'I' wonder about her husband's love to her and about being the late Rebecca. During her searching about Rebecca she found her husband wanted to forget about his late wife. He always wanted to stay closer to his second wife, but unfortunately his wife didn't know about that. This following quotation may give a prove about that:

*I felt very afraid. I went out of the room quickly and shut the door behind m. Jasper was in the hall and he walked out on to the terrace with me. I sat down. I must not fail Maxim now.*

*I sat on the terrace until I heard Captain Searle's car drive away. Then I stood up and walked slowly Back to the library. Maxim was standing by the window. I went and stood beside him. I took his hand and held it against my face.*

*'I want to help you, Maxim,' I said. 'I've grown up, you know. I'm not a child any more.'*

*Maxim put his arm around me and held me closely (Rebecca:88).*

From the above quotation it can be seen that the I's ambition to be Rebecca was decreasing. She knew that her husband really loved her and didn't want to be far away from her. She started to realize that what she did to imitate Rebecca would hurt her husband's feeling. Then she started to understand her husband and what he wanted from her. Mr. De winter was able to convince 'I' about Rebecca. He told the truth about Rebecca and his feeling about her. Maxim didn't love the late Rebecca because she was a woman who liked spending the money for something useless, and it caused their marriage unhappy. They lived in a separate living even they lived in the same house. Maxim, then, told 'I' about Rebecca, her lifestyle, how she was murdered, and also he told to 'I' how deep his love was. Certainly it made the narrator feel happy and she got her life back not as Rebecca.

*'I knew you were thinking about Rebecca all the time.*

*How could I ask you to love me when I knew you loved Rebecca?'*

*'You thought I love Rebecca?' he said. 'I hated her. We never love to each other. Rebecca never loved anyone except herself' (Rebecca: 90).*

All of this made 'I' convinced herself that she was being loved by her husband. She also accompanied her husband in court for the case of Rebecca's murder. It proved that she really wanted to forget her obsession about Rebecca in her life. After the court finished, she returned back to Manderly together with Maxim. They were happy for Maxim won the case of Rebecca's murder. He was not guilty.

Fortunately, as they arrived at Manderly, suddenly they were shocked by the house fire, and it came from the West Wing. They were surprised to see their castle was burnt without anything left. Mrs. Danvers did it. She did it because she didn't like 'I' and her ambition to be Rebecca. She adored the late Mrs. De Winter so much.

What Mrs. Danvers had done didn't change what Maxim thought about his second wife. He would always love his second wife even he had to lose his house forever. He thought that his second wife was more important than everything. Finally 'I' realized to forget her ambition to be the late Rebecca, and she then tried to forget everything about that. She would dedicate herself only for her husband, Maxim de Winter. Then they left Manderly and lived together happily, even they had to lose their beautiful castle Manderley.

*We reached the top of the hill. The road to Manderly lay before us. There was no moon and the sky above our heads was black. But the sky in front of us was full of dreadful light. And the light was red, red like blood. The wind blew towards us from the sea. The wind smelt of smoke and it was grey with ashes. They were the ashes of Manderly (Rebecca: 118).*

## CONCLUSION

After finding what the tension on this novel projects and how the novel resolves the tension, finally it is concluded that the narrator's obsession to be the late Rebecca could be said as the main tension in this novel. It may cause many conflicts happen here.

The main character 'I' here plays almost the whole role in this story, from the beginning until the end. Her obsession to be Rebecca is caused by her motivation to make her husband, Maxim de Winter happy. Her obsession began when she came to the morning room on the first day she arrived at Manderley, then when she came to the West Wing (Rebecca's private room), and the last when she wore Rebecca's dress which made Maxim angry.

Even she tried many efforts to make Maxim always love her. Finally she realized that her husband only wanted her to be herself, not Rebecca. It convinced 'I' that Maxim loves her very much.

Because of I's love to her husband, it made her left her obsession and she decided to live with her husband with a true love in Manderly since Maxim won the judgment of being involved in Rebecca's murder. It was decided that Maxim is not guilty. Maxim and his wife won and being a happy married couple. They lost their castle in Manderly by an accident. Mrs. Danvers, her maid, had destroyed the house by burning it. Honestly it made Maxim and his wife sad, but they didn't think about it seriously. At the end of the story, they left Manderly, the dreamed castle to somewhere that they thought it would give the happiness forever in their living.

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