

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
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**THE CREATION OF THE  
ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR IN  
DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S *MY COUSIN*  
*RACHEL*  
BA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

Although Daphne du Maurier has always been recognised for her atmospheric stories riddled with darkness and suspense, the critical analysis of her work as part of the Gothic tradition is relatively recent. For this reason, the aim of the present thesis is to further contribute to the analysis of du Maurier's novels as specifically Gothic by exploring how she employs select Gothic elements in her novel *My Cousin Rachel* in order to create an atmosphere of terror. The main purpose is to examine, based on the examples from the book, which Gothic elements she has chosen to achieve such an atmosphere and what effect it is meant to have on the characters as well as readers.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two main chapters and a conclusion. The introduction states the importance of the topic and gives a general overview of Daphne du Maurier's *My Cousin Rachel* which is followed by a short description of the structure of the thesis. The literature review section offers an overview of the Gothic genre and its distinctive characteristics with a special emphasis on the Gothic devices used by du Maurier. The following chapter applies the information presented in the previous chapter and places it in the context of the novel by examining du Maurier's use of Gothic conventions in order to create an atmosphere of terror. The findings of the thesis are outlined in the conclusion.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
CHAPTER 1. GOTHIC FICTION AND DAPHNE DU MAURIER.....	7
CHAPTER 2. THE CREATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR IN <i>MY COUSIN RACHEL</i> .....	18
CONCLUSION.....	35
REFERENCES.....	37
RESÜMEE.....	39

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CR Du Maurier, Daphne. 2017. *My Cousin Rachel*. London: Virago Press.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout her relatively long and successful writing career, Daphne du Maurier (1907-1989) has been recognised as a skilful master of atmospheric stories permeated with almost intolerable suspense. However, despite the apparent similarities of atmosphere created in her fiction and in that of the Gothic, her works have long been regarded as mere fiction for women. As a result, the critical analysis of her work as part of the centuries-long tradition of Gothic fiction is a rather recent phenomenon, making it a particularly fascinating field of study. Even so, the main focus of research has been on her most famous novel, *Rebecca*, leaving the other stories largely in its shadow. For the aforementioned reasons, the present thesis aims to further contribute to the analysis of her fiction as specifically Gothic by exploring how du Maurier employs Gothic elements in one of her less analysed novels, *My Cousin Rachel*, for the creation of the atmosphere of terror.

*My Cousin Rachel* is a particularly intriguing and suspense-ridden novel which demonstrates du Maurier's talent for creating a dark, terror-inspiring atmosphere. It follows the lives of cousins Ambrose and Philip whose striking similarity leads them both to fall into the trap of Rachel, a foreigner, whose sole aim seems to be the acquisition of their wealth and estate. Her mastery of manipulation and vacillation between her English and Italian descent lends intrigue to the story, making it difficult both for the two male characters, and the reader, to reach an understanding of her true nature and intentions. Du Maurier having created Philip as a male counterpart to the nameless heroine in *Rebecca* (Forster 2007: 281), the events are in the same way especially frightening because we are presented only with the protagonist's restricted first-person point of view, which makes the events terrifying as it presents his fears and anxieties.

This thesis is divided into two chapters. The first of these uses various secondary sources to provide a theoretical basis for understanding Gothic literature as a genre and its distinctive characteristics. It also gives an overview of Daphne du Maurier's fiction and its relation to the Gothic genre. The second chapter presents an analysis of du Maurier's novel *My Cousin Rachel* in the context of the information provided in the literature review. It aims to show how du Maurier uses traditional Gothic elements for the creation of the atmosphere of terror and what effect it is meant to have on the characters as well as readers.

## CHAPTER 1. GOTHIC FICTION AND DAPHNE DU MAURIER

The following literature review aims to provide an overview of Gothic literature as a genre and its distinctive characteristics with a special emphasis on the relation of du Maurier's fiction to this genre.

Since its inception in 1764 with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Gothic fiction has been a relatively popular form of writing, which has been modified over the years depending on the author and historical circumstances (Botting 2014: 42). Despite being such an intriguing genre, the critical analysis of Gothic texts began only in the 1970s, having been merely descriptive before that time (Punter 2016: 686). Even then, it has been agreed that the Gothic novel is a rather elusive form of writing that tends to defy firm definition. What ensures the unity of the genre is its relative consistency of plots and settings which are used to create a specific atmosphere of darkness, permeated with fear and suspicion (Botting 2014: 2-4). The favoured elements for achieving this effect are castles as well as "dark subterranean vaults, decaying abbeys, gloomy forests, jagged mountains and wild scenery inhabited by bandits, persecuted heroines, orphans and malevolent aristocrats" (Botting 2014: 41). Depending on the author's use of them, they are designed to evoke either terror or horror in the reader, which is one of the prime purposes of Gothic fiction.

The emergence of the Gothic novel is in immediate relation to the times in which it evolved. The 18th century was a period caught up in a vortex of revolutionary turmoil which was most powerful in France. It was already in 1800 that Gothic novels were recognised as "the necessary fruits of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe" (cited in Sage 1998: 83). This statement has left an enduring mark on the later critical judgement of this genre, Maggie Kilgour (1995: 23) and Victor Sage (ibid.: 83) both being in agreement that the French

Revolution was immensely influential in the shaping of the Gothic novel. Kilgour (ibid.: 23) argues further that the total disruption of the existing order that the French Revolution brought about inspired feelings of exhilaration and terror. Considering England's relative proximity to France, it is understandable why those sentiments had a direct impact on the English minds, one manifestation of which was Gothic fiction with its depictions of violence and emotional turmoil. In addition, Gothic literature is seen as a reaction against the Enlightenment values of rationalism and order which were countered by the Romantics whose firm belief was that the human mind and experience is too complex to be placed in the frames of rationalism (Smith 2013: 2). In this sense, as is expressed by Andrew Smith (ibid.), the Romantic mode of thought is closely connected to that of the Gothic. Fred Botting (2014: 12) is of the same opinion, stating further that Gothic literature adds "a darker aspect to more acceptable literary forms". As a result, this genre has come to be associated with irrationality, depicting "disturbances of sanity and security, from superstitious belief in ghosts and demons, displays of uncontrolled passion, violent emotion or flights of fancy to portrayal of perversion and obsession" (ibid.: 2).

The basis of the atmosphere created in Gothic literature is the sublime. Critics tend to agree that it is Edmund Burke's treatise on the concept of the sublime that left an enduring mark on the European mindset, being especially influential in terms of understanding Gothic fiction. The notion itself, however, originates from the first century (Milbank 1998b: 227). While expressing their doubts on the authorship of this piece of literature, both Alison Milbank (ibid.: 226) and Philip Shaw (2006: 12) agree that it was Longinus' *Peri Hupsous*, translated in English as *On the Sublime*, that can be considered the first true study of the sublime, tracing its sources primarily in the power of God and nature. Nevertheless, both of them stress that it was not until the French translation and commentary of Nicolas Boileau in the second part of the 17th century that the concept of the sublime formed a crucial part of the aesthetic debate in Europe, reaching

the wider public, according to Shaw (2006: 27), as late as the mid-eighteenth century, following the success of William Smith's edition in 1739. This resulted in a flow of different analyses on the notion of the sublime, most influential of which, according to the aforementioned authors as well as Botting (2014: 7) and Max Fincher (2016: 683), was Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757. Burke made a significant amount of contributions to the understanding of the sublime, which are of great importance since his ideas were taken as the basis for the creation of a specific atmosphere in Gothic fiction. One of the ideas that many critics, including Shaw (2006: 53) and Milbank (1998b: 227), emphasise is that he, in contrast to his predecessors, separated the sublime from the beautiful, locating the former in relation to fear, the source of which could be death and "a sense of possible threat to the subject's self-preservation" (Milbank 1998b: 227). The words 'possible threat' are especially significant as, according to Smith (2013: 11), the sublime "was associated with grand feelings stimulated by obscurity and highly dramatic encounters with the world in which a sense of awe was paradoxically inspired by a feeling of incomprehension", suggesting that the mind is presented with something unknown that creates fear but is not directly displayed.

This perception of the sublime fuels the creation of terror in Gothic novels. This term, however, should not be confused with horror as there is a significant difference between them. The broad definition of these words, which is taken as a basis of discussion by most critics, is provided by one of the most influential Gothic writers, Ann Radcliffe, who regarded terror as superior to horror and used the former in her fiction. She defined terror as something which "expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life" and horror as something which "contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them" (cited in Botting 2014: 68). The academics are in general agreement that the first critic who analysed the ways by which different

Gothic writers achieve terror in their works was David Punter. In his influential book, *The Literature of Terror*, first published in 1980, terror is defined as “trembling, the liminal, the sense of waiting” and “a limitless implication of the self in a series of actions which persuade us of their inexorability” (cited in Cavallaro 2002: 2). Later critics, such as Fincher (2016: 683) and Botting (2014: 2, 69), have confirmed his view, adding that a work of terror is permeated with darkness and speculation in a world veiled by obscurity. This obscurity inhibits the character’s, and the reader’s, understanding of “what may be real or imagined”, thus making them susceptible to infinite paranoia and anxiety (Fincher 2016: 683). This turmoil of emotions is exactly what the Gothic writers intend to evoke in the reader, especially because, as Ian Watt (1986: 165) argues, Gothic literature is mostly concerned with having an effect upon the reader instead of character development.

The creation of terror has been regarded as an integral element in the Female Gothic fiction. The term itself, however, is a debatable one. It was coined by Ellen Moers in 1976 in *Literary Women*, referring simply to Gothic stories written by women (Wallace 2016: 231). Since then there has been an ongoing debate on what exactly can be categorised under this label (Horner et al. 1998: 27). Milbank (1998a: 54) states that the division between Male and Female Gothic generally “follows the gender of the author”. However, she claims that there is a lack of consistency in such a division (ibid.). Anne Williams's (1995: 139) idea coincides with that of Milbank’s in the sense that the Female Gothic is “most likely to emerge through the writing of women, but it is not necessarily limited to them”. Despite this lack of clarity, there is a set of characteristics that have generally come to be seen as integral to the Female Gothic tradition. Diana Wallace (2016: 231) argues that it is Radcliffe’s fiction that is usually taken as the basis for the traditional Female Gothic storyline. Wallace (ibid.), Botting (2014: 58) and Milbank (1998a: 54) all agree that at the centre of this plot is a persecuted young heroine threatened by

a malevolent villain. Botting (ibid.) argues further that often they are “orphans separated from protective domestic structures” who are thrown into an alien environment full of mystery and threat. As they are treading on a path full of castles, ruins and dark forests, confused and fearful by everything they see, their imagination is soaring, filled with “images of ghostly and supernatural powers”, which makes them particularly susceptible to the terrors of the Gothic world (ibid.). Although it has been debated as to what extent du Maurier’s works belong to the Female Gothic tradition, she exhibits multiple elements traditionally attributed to this specific genre.

Having been born in 1907, du Maurier had a successful writing career throughout the twentieth century. She was born into a family of considerable creative impulse, her parents having been involved in theatre production and her grandfather a renowned writer (Forster 2007: 26, 29). As a member of such an artistic family, she was encouraged to use her imagination since an early age (Forster 2007: 29). Therefore, it can be deduced that the foundation of a writing career was always present, resulting in du Maurier being recognised as an author of eighteen novels, over forty short stories, a couple of plays and multiple memoirs and biographies (Horner et al. 2016: 209). One of the most widely recognised aspects of du Maurier’s fiction has been her masterful creation of an atmosphere ridden with suspense and a “strong sense of place” (Forster 2007: 63). Margaret Forster emphasises that “if she [du Maurier] was describing a scene, she wanted her readers to be there” (ibid.). In many of her novels, it was her home, Menabilly, in Cornwall that provided her with the creative impulse for describing such an atmosphere. In Forster’s words, du Maurier was at first sight enchanted by this “forlorn” house that seemed to her to be “asleep”, thus conforming to the idea of a Gothic house that inspires feelings of terror (Forster 2007: 204). The surroundings of Menabilly, too, thrilled her imagination which could at one point be “mellow” and “peaceful” and at another veiled in fog

that made everything around her look ominous and full of mystery (Forster 2007: 70, 209). Despite her magnificent skill of creating an atmosphere permeated with suspenseful terror, for a long time she has been seen merely as a writer of romantic fiction for women, especially in the case of her “Cornish” novels (Horner et al. 1998: 26). It was only in 1998 that the first full-scale study focusing on her works as specifically Gothic was published by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik. Their central argument is that what constantly induced her to write Gothic fiction was her “complicated sense of gender identity” (Horner et al. 1998: 21), which she most strikingly explores through the use of the double, an inherent element of Gothic fiction. This idea is already expressed by Forster (2007: 250), the official biographer of du Maurier, whose reading of her correspondence with Ellen Doubleday reveals that du Maurier saw herself as a “half-breed” and “disembodied spirit”. She suggests that this sense already manifested itself in her childhood as she wished she had been born a boy, creating for herself even an alter ego named ‘Eric Avon’ (Forster 2007: 34). At the same time, she looked very decidedly feminine (Forster 2007: 34). Horner and Zlosnik (2020: 108-109), in turn, claim that the consequent fracture of identity proved to be a powerful force which inspired her to write novels in which “femininity and masculinity are represented as being fissured and contested”. This concern with the identity manifests itself especially powerfully in her works that employ Italian settings and characters, which allowed her to explore identity in contact with the foreign “other” that results in inducing immense identity crises in the English characters (Horner et al. 2020: 108).

The novel *My Cousin Rachel* was published in 1951 and became an instant success, selling in the first year after its publication even more than du Maurier’s most famous novel, *Rebecca* (Horner 1998: 128). By that time, du Maurier had established herself as a writer known for her atmospheric stories and *My Cousin Rachel*, the last of her “Cornish” novels set in Menabilly, was regarded as yet another fine example of it (Forster 2007: 280-281). However,

what makes this novel particularly outstanding is its complexity which distinguishes it from mere romantic fiction for women. In his Introduction to *My Cousin Rachel*, Roger Michell (2017: v) expresses his surprise as to what he had suspected to be “fifties chick-lit with a dash of melodrama proved to be complex, dark, mysterious, and full of erotic, brooding disquiet”. This manifests itself most powerfully in the ambiguity of the novel, which plays on the ground of doubles and antitheses. The novel’s leading female character, Rachel, is an utterly enigmatic figure. Half-English, half-Italian, she is inherently both the “same” and the “other” (Horner et al. 1998: 132). As a result, in du Maurier’s own words, “you will never really know whether the woman is an angel or a devil” (Forster 2007: 280-281). Therefore, it remains dubious as to whether she is a Gothic villain of Italian descent or an innocent victim. Furthermore, du Maurier presents two of the leading male characters, Philip and Ambrose, as doubles who resemble each other so much so as to fall into the same destructive pattern. At the same time, as was mentioned previously, du Maurier herself had an alternative masculine self which she reconstructed in the character of Philip (Forster 2007: 289). Having been influenced both by her alter ego and her turbulent relationship with the charismatic figures Ellen Doubleday and Gertrude Lawrence, whom she took as inspiration for Rachel, du Maurier “turned [herself] so completely into Philip that [she] was beguiled, and she [Rachel] could have poisoned the entire world and [she] would not have minded” (Forster 2007: 289, 457). Despite the fact that there can be numerous different readings of this novel, the present thesis focuses on presenting Philip as du Maurier’s alter ego, who, although presented as masculine, still exhibits characteristics traditionally attributed to the Gothic heroine. I believe that this interpretation helps to provide a better understanding of this story as part of the Gothic tradition.

One of the most important Gothic elements that du Maurier uses in *My Cousin Rachel* is the double, which is defined in Cambridge English Dictionary as “a person who looks exactly

the same as someone else". Although the concept of the double may be said to be as old as the Western civilisation itself, then according to Dale Townshend (2016: 189-190), it acquired its importance in literature with the advent of Romanticism, becoming especially influential in Gothic fiction. This idea is supported by Smith (2013: 94) and Botting (2014: 5), both of whom agree that the double is one of the stock elements of Gothic literature. As is suitable for a genre that is concerned with the supernatural and sinister, the double is used to refer to a second, often evil, self of a person (Gonzalez 1998: 264). In *My Cousin Rachel*, du Maurier employs this element to emphasise the similarity between two of the main characters, Ambrose and Philip, which proves to be calamitous. Although Ambrose is arguably not the 'evil' other self, then by acting as Ambrose's double Philip "does indeed inflict great pain upon himself" by repeating the same destructive pattern as Ambrose had done before him (Horner et al. 1998: 142). In this sense, it can be argued that du Maurier's use of the double resembles closely to the term 'the uncanny' which means that something is strangely familiar, thus inspiring feelings of dread (Royle 2003: 1).

Du Maurier enhances the terror by her choice of setting in semi-isolated mansions. As a genre that is obsessed with a dark and threatening world bereft of comfort, there is little in Gothic fiction that invites trust and safety in the characters as well as readers. This is also true in relation to the houses presented in Gothic literature which, instead of representing places where the characters should find safety, are sites of threat. One of the most preferred tropes that Gothic writers employ is an old, isolated mansion which, according to Botting (2014: 4), is "never secure or free from shadows, disorientation and danger". The isolation and wilderness of the nature surrounding the house stress the danger, dark forests and stormy weather inspiring dread in the character and the reader (ibid.). The sinister presence of the house and its surroundings in the story can be so unmistakable that it seems to "[acquire] autonomous life",

thus becoming a character itself (Cavallaro 2002: 29). Furthermore, as a genre preoccupied with limits and transgression, Gothic literature often fosters narratives in which the established social order is disturbed and finally reaffirmed only after punishment in the form of death or damnation (Kilgour 1995: 8). The Gothic houses may be one of the places in which its established order is disrupted for the creation of terror. Horner and Zlosnik (1998: 130) argue that du Maurier makes use of this element in her fiction by presenting Menabilly, called the Ashley estate in *My Cousin Rachel*, as a “site of threat wherein apparent stable established values, enshrined in the house and estate, are seen to be in danger”.

This danger is presented in the form of Italy as a dangerous, foreign ‘other’. The tradition of depicting Italy as a source of menace is a long one, extending back to the very first Gothic novel. Sage (1998: 81) and Massimiliano Demata (2006: 1) both point out that the Italian setting was present already in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, setting a pattern for the subsequent novels in that genre. Demata (ibid.) explains that “writers viewed ‘Gothic Italy’ as a nest of enormous narrative potentialities: Italy was represented as a place of violence and passion, ruled by a feudal and despotic nobility and under the influence of a degenerate Catholic clergy”. Taking into consideration that the audience to whom these writings were addressed was post-Reformation and mostly Protestant (Sage 2016a: 565), this passionate and antagonistic view of Italy may be well understood. Sage (2016b: 521) argues that after the Reformation of Henry VIII as a result of which England abandoned Catholicism and adopted Anglicanism, the Protestant propaganda was decidedly anti-Catholic, regarding Catholics as superstitious and suspicious. He emphasises that what fuelled this view further was the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation led by the Jesuits, who were also involved in the Inquisition, for the reason of which they “acquired a reputation [...] for spying, stealth, and devilish cunning” (ibid.: 522). Smith (2013: 24) suggests that the resulting anti-Catholicism was reflected in Gothic novels

which used it as a source for the creation of terror. Therefore, it is understandable why Gothic novelists throughout the years have depicted Italian characters as villains and places in Italy as terrifying. Horner and Zlosnik (2020: 108) argue that du Maurier draws on this “centuries-long tradition that associated Italy with corruption and deviance”. In *My Cousin Rachel*, she presents Italy as a “malign ‘other’” which undermines the natural order of things in England (ibid.: 107-108).

Another element in the novel used for the creation of terror is the trope of the discovered manuscript. According to Andrew Biorn Grace (2013: 1), the incorporation of found manuscripts is one of the most continuous elements of Gothic fiction that is designed to evoke terror. Williams suggests that “Gothic narrative conventions [...] dramatize both the materiality of writing and its implicit inadequacies: its discontinuities, ambiguities, unreliabilities” (cited in Horner 1998: 139-140). One way of creating such ambiguity and unreliability in Gothic stories is by presenting the reader with a discovered manuscript, either in the form of a letter or a will. Grace (2013: 4) suggests that found manuscripts heighten the terror that Gothic texts create since they remind the reader that “their access to information is limited and faulty”, which makes it difficult to reach a complete understanding of the events as well as of the author’s thoughts and experiences. He stresses that what enhances this feeling are “abrupt endings” and “veiled” language, both of which are designed to limit the scope of judgement (ibid.). As is explained by Botting (2014: 6), such narratives offer “partial perspectives” and “[deny] a clearly visible [...] picture of the world”, thus creating mystery and anxiety. As letters and wills are pieces of information written by someone in the past, they can enforce terror by presenting the characters with what Punter (2016: 691) terms as “the return of ghosts” which come to haunt the readers. This is especially significant in the case of wills that, as is emphasised by Williams, “[convey]

the ‘will’ of its writer from beyond the grave”, therefore becoming “meaningful only after the writer’s death” (cited in Horner 1998: 140).

In view of the foregoing, it may be inferred that the main emphasis of Gothic literature is on creating a specific atmosphere that evokes either terror or horror in the reader. For this, Gothic writers throughout the ages have employed numerous elements that contribute to the formation of such an atmosphere ridden with suspense and dread. The present thesis aims to explore how du Maurier has employed select Gothic stereotypes and devices, such as semi-isolated mansions, foreign characters and surroundings, doubles, and manuscripts in the form of letters and wills, to create terror in her novel *My Cousin Rachel*. In order to do this, I will be focusing on how the main character, Philip, is presented as a version of the Gothic heroine who is thrown into a world of menace in which the established order is endangered by the foreign influence.

## **CHAPTER 2. THE CREATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR IN *MY COUSIN RACHEL***

The following analysis will apply the information presented in the literature review and place it in the context of du Maurier's novel *My Cousin Rachel*. It aims to exemplify how du Maurier builds up tension little by little through her use of Gothic stereotypes and the sublime, accentuating the atmosphere of terror by alternately raising and easing tension.

Du Maurier sets the scene of the story by presenting the reader with a most tranquil English countryside idyll, the centre of which are cousins Philip and Ambrose whose household has remained intact of any foreign influence. Philip admits that theirs was a "strange household from the first" (CR 8). After the death of Philip's parents when he was only eighteen months old, it was Ambrose who took pity on Philip and raised him (CR 8). Being a bachelor and having sent away Philip's nurse, the only woman in the mansion, Ambrose's household became thoroughly manly (CR 8). Ambrose was even "shy of women, and mistrustful too, saying they made mischief in a household" (CR 9). Therefore, to both Philip and Ambrose female influence is unfamiliar and, consequently, foreign. Moreover, they lead a common English country gentleman's life. Ambrose is "liked and respected by his neighbours, and loved by his tenants", he "shot and hunted in the winter, [...] fished in the summer from a small sailing boat he kept anchored in the estuary, dined out and entertained when he had the mind to do so, [and] went twice to church on a Sunday" (CR 9). Philip, in turn, wishes to resemble Ambrose in every aspect and has "no desire to be anywhere but at home" (CR 8). This demonstrates how both of them are extremely attached to the idyll they believe to have in their home, having no desire for anything foreign to threaten this comfort.

However, du Maurier is intent on doing just that in a true Gothic fashion. Having set this scene of English tranquillity, du Maurier destroys the reader's peace of mind by sending

Ambrose, who is suffering from rheumatism, to find relief in Italy, a distant place of menace representing everything alien to the English minds. The reader's suspicion of foreign surroundings and people is most strikingly aroused when Wellington, the coachman in the Ashley estate, having heard of Ambrose's travel plans, "shook his head at the news, and foretold an accident", adding that he was "of the firm opinion that no Frenchman could drive, and that all Italians were robbers" (CR 14). This disdainful sentiment instantly inspires distrust in the reader towards the foreign people who are presented as unreliable and unscrupulous. Therefore, when Ambrose mentions in a letter to Philip his meeting his Italian cousin Rachel about whose existence he had no previous knowledge, the reader is slightly alarmed since now Ambrose is in direct contact with a suspicious foreign character who is supposedly plotting something sinister. However, du Maurier manages to quieten both Philip's, and the reader's, feeling of suspicion by stating that Rachel is only half Italian (CR 15). Furthermore, Ambrose asserts that "[s]he is just as English as you or I in her way and outlook, and might have been living beside the Tamar [a river in southwestern England, bordering Cornwall] yesterday" (CR 15). This opinion seems to suggest that the comfortingly domestic English part of Rachel predominates, thus inspiring trust in the reader. However, the comfort instilled by this opinion is soon to be shattered again when the news arrives about Ambrose having married Rachel who, according to Seecombe, the steward in the Ashley estate, "will have everything upside down, and we shan't know where we are", thus collapsing the male household (CR 20). As the running of an English aristocratic household is traditionally ascribed to a female housekeeper, then Rachel's arrival would disrupt the male household in which the steward has taken over this role owing to the absence of female presence. The situation acquires an even more menacing atmosphere when Philip starts to sense "some underlying note of anxiety creeping upon [Ambrose]" (CR 25). This minor suspicion is confirmed when Ambrose begins to complain about headaches and a feeling

of unease, stating that he is “[moving] about from room to room like a dog before a thunderstorm”, as if he was trapped in the “high” Italian villa with “no air in it” (CR 25). With each letter, du Maurier adds a new layer to the anxiety, eventually bringing all the distrust instilled previously to the surface as Ambrose frantically declares:

All is not well with me. [...] Better keep silent though. She [Rachel] watches me all the time. I have written to you several times, but there is no one I can trust, and unless I can get out myself to mail the letters they may not reach you. Since my illness I have not been able to go far. As for the doctors, I have no belief in any of them. They are liars, the whole bunch. The new one, recommended by Rainaldi, is a cut-throat, but then he would be, coming from that quarter. (CR 26)

By the end of reading this letter written by an undoubtedly agitated mind, Philip along with the reader is certain that something sinister must be happening in that Italian villa. As Philip is about to set out on his journey to Italy in order to inspect the situation himself, an urgent note from Ambrose, the writing being “scrawled, almost illegible” (CR 27), confirms all the suspicions that du Maurier has instilled. The words “For God’s sake come to me quickly. She has done for me at last, Rachel my torment. If you delay, it may be too late” (CR 27) seem to leave no doubt both in Philip’s and the reader’s mind as to the malevolent character of Rachel. Thus, when Philip, a young Englishman with no experience of the foreign, hastens towards Italy, the distrust of this alien nation is deeply ingrained. As was mentioned previously, the English saw Italians as corrupt practitioners of Catholicism who could not be trusted, thus setting the ground for infinite scepticism as to their character and intentions. What further contributed to this disdainful view was that, as the Grand Tour involving many places in Italy became a means for the British for finding inspiration for their own expanding empire, the English were increasingly looking at Italians as a degenerate nation who did not deserve the legacy of the Romans (Strong 2000: 393, 396). Du Maurier takes advantage of this mistrustful and contemptuous view to present Philip and her readers with an alien environment full of supposedly villainous Italians who are in striking contrast to the English both in terms of their appearance and behaviour.

Having previously merely hinted at the happenings in Italy, thus setting the ground for suspicions, du Maurier takes the reader along with Philip himself to Florence. At this stage, du Maurier's use of the Italian atmosphere most strikingly echoes the works of Ann Radcliffe who employed Italian settings in her fiction to confound the heroine (Botting 2014: 58-59). It is more apparent than ever that Philip is presented as a male counterpart to the Gothic heroine who is traditionally a young female, often an orphan deprived of human support and possessing little or no experience beyond the domestic sphere which makes her particularly susceptible to the terrifying happenings in a world full of menace to which she is sent (Tracy 1998: 104). As du Maurier's own alter ego, Philip acquires a number of feminine characteristics. This sexual ambivalence is exhibited throughout the story since Philip's overly emotional attachment to Ambrose, and later to Rachel, makes him appear more as a woman than a man. His inexperience is what makes him especially vulnerable to the terrors he is about to experience. Having never before been away from England, the Italian surroundings confound Philip deeply, "the ceaseless clatter and turmoil of the foreign cities [coming] near to stupefying [him]" (CR 29). Nevertheless, Philip's dislike is not confined merely to his inexperience. Since the reason for his visiting Italy is to reach Ambrose who is ill in a foreign country, his "anxiety turn[s] to loathing all things alien, even of the very soil itself" (CR 29). Du Maurier sets this anxiety as a basis for inspiring terror in everything Philip sees in this exotic country. As Philip commences his journey in Florence, he is struck with the heat of the environment:

It grew hotter every day. The sky was a glazed hard blue, and it seemed to me, twisting and turning along those dusty roads in Tuscany, that the sun had drawn all moisture from the land. The valleys were baked brown, and the little villages hung parched and yellow on the hills with the blaze of heat upon them. Oxen lumbered by, thin-looking, bony, searching for water, goats scuffed by the wayside, tended by little children who screamed and shouted as the coach rolled by, and it seemed to me, in my anxiety and fear for Ambrose, that all living things were thirsty in this country, and when water was denied they fell into decay and died. (CR 30)

This terrifyingly sublime world is in direct contrast with the harmless greenery that Philip associates with his home in England, the tranquillity of which Rachel is later going to disrupt by bringing the foreign atmosphere with her. The aforementioned description indicates right from the start that this alien environment is a seedbed of death. This sense of foreboding is enhanced with each step Philip takes towards Rachel's villa, passing by the river Arno which, to his distressed mind, seems to be a representative of the river Styx (Horner et al. 1998: 144), offering a cup of water which could be "poured down the throat as one might pour a draught of poison" (CR 30). When Philip finally reaches the villa, he learns that Ambrose has indeed had a sip from that cup of death. Convinced that the foreign Rachel is behind this, he sees her villa as a "sepulchre" (CR 34). Furthermore, as the servants are unclosing the shutters, it seems as if the Villa Sangalletti is a representative of Rachel who is opening her malignant eyes, casting an inquisitive look at Philip. As the reader along with Philip steps into the house, it feels like they have entered her malevolent soul with its "large and sparse" rooms permeated with "a medieval musty smell", creating a sense of oppression in the reader (CR 35). In addition, as Philip enters the courtyard, du Maurier turns the reader's attention to the poisonous laburnum trees as a slight hint at their fatal significance in the events to come (CR 35). By presenting the reader with such scenes that associate Rachel and her home with death, du Maurier engages the reader in the Gothic mode and forms a basis for the increasing anxiety that Philip senses throughout the remainder of the story.

After building tension on the heated road of death has reached its climax with the death of Ambrose, du Maurier eases the feeling of apprehension by creating a brief scene of tranquillity, which, in turn, serves as a prelude to another moment of terror. As Rachel herself was absent, Philip is on his way to finding signor Rainaldi, a friend and advisor of Rachel's, who was claimed to have been there during Ambrose's illness and death (CR 36-39). At first,

the reader is pacified while Philip is riding to his next stop surrounded by the “monotonous chanting” of crickets and the “cooler cleaner air of the surrounding hills” (CR 42). Yet du Maurier veils the reader in obscurity. As Philip crosses the bridge, reaching the other side of the river Arno, it suddenly becomes darker and more silent (CR 43). Furthermore, there are few people in the streets, doors and windows being closed, making Philip’s “footsteps [sound] hollow on the cobbled stones” (CR 44). By creating this scene, through Philip du Maurier makes the reader feel obscure and isolated, so that the striking image of signor Rainaldi is more effective:

He was a little less than my own height, and of some forty years perhaps, with a pale, almost colourless face, and lean aquiline features. There was something proud, disdainful about his cast of countenance, like that of someone who would have small mercy for fools, or for his enemies; but I think I noticed most his eyes, dark and deep-set, which at first sight of me startled into a flash of recognition that in one second vanished. (CR 44)

This stereotypical figure of a Gothic villain instantly establishes distrust in the reader. As Rainaldi explains to Philip the departure of Rachel and the particulars of Ambrose’s illness, which he believes to have been a tumour, Philip’s distrust towards him increases with each word (CR 46). Although Rainaldi’s reasoning is perfectly plausible at first sight, Philip senses a hidden purpose as he asks himself, “And yet... Why did this Italian watch my eyes?” (CR 46). It were those same “veiled, deep-set eyes” that seemed to follow Philip as he left his house, instilling in the reader that they will yet come to haunt Philip (CR 49). Convinced of the dubious nature of Rainaldi’s story and filled with hatred towards Rachel whom he believes to be responsible for the death of Ambrose, Philip makes a vow beside the Arno to repay his cousin Rachel, a vow that will lie at the basis of the story until the very end (CR 50).

Now that du Maurier has terrified the reader with the happenings in Italy, she takes Philip back home where he feels instant relief. Du Maurier pacifies the reader by presenting them with the sight of idyllic English countryside with its “shocks of corn” that are “golden in the last rays

of the sun” and the seas that are “very blue, almost purple where it [covers] the rocks” (CR 54). This image is in such a great contrast with the terror inspired by the Italian surroundings that for a moment Philip, and the reader, almost forget the monstrous images of Rachel conjured in his mind with her “eyes black as sloes”, “aquiline” features, moving “about those musty villa rooms sinuous and silent, like a snake” (CR 53). However, du Maurier uses this moment to lull the reader only to shake them the next moment with the sight of Philip’s godfather who has “a curious look upon his face, baffled, ill at ease” (CR 61). His disturbance shows that something alarming is about to happen. And indeed, when he says the fateful words, “[s]he has arrived by boat in Plymouth” (CR 61), the reader knows it is Rachel, the foreign threat, that is about to disrupt all the foundations of the English country house life which Philip has been used to. In order to heighten the dark mood, du Maurier creates an atmospheric scene of raging weather on the day Rachel arrives:

A moody, fitful sort of day, with gusts of wind. [...] The clouds were low, scudding across the sky from the south-west, threatening rain before the evening. [...] One of our true downpours, with maybe a gale thrown in for further measure. (CR 70)

This was “a west country welcome” as opposed to the clear “Italian skies” (CR 70), which seems to suggest that the very nature of England is in disruption, predicting an enormous calamity to come. The feeling of anxiety is further emphasised when Philip steps into the future room of Rachel, in which he casts his eyes upon a portrait of Ambrose he had never seen before:

There was nothing very striking in the portrait, or in the face. Only one thing. It was strangely like myself. I looked in the mirror, and back again to the portrait, and the only difference lay in the slant of his eyes, something narrower than mine, and in his darker colouring of hair. We could be brothers, though, almost twin brothers, that young man in the portrait and myself. (CR 72)

This sudden realisation instantly creates an uncanny feeling in the reader, predicting that the similarity between Philip and Ambrose might prove to be fatal. Indeed, when the reader is first presented with the real image of Rachel, her eyes, too, widen “in sudden recognition”, noticing

the striking resemblance (CR 77). Nevertheless, du Maurier instantly tricks the reader with Philip's stupefaction that Rachel is "so small", barely reaching his shoulder (CR 77). This instantly subtracts from the terror of the image the readers have already created in their minds. Furthermore, contrary to the horrifying imaginings of her, she appears to be so humble and kind, which by the end of the evening has charmed both Philip and the reader in a way that neither of them are given the assurance whether the day "had turned to [their] advantage or gone against [them]" (CR 85).

Throughout the next scenes du Maurier continues to confuse the reader as to the exact nature of Rachel, vacillating between her English domesticity and Italian foreignness. While Philip still believes he is completely unaffected by her presence, the servants, on the other hand, already regard Rachel as a completely domesticated figure, the "mistress" of the house (CR 88). However, as Philip goes riding with Rachel, du Maurier instantly reminds the reader that Rachel is a foreign element in England:

She was talking to Wellington, her profile turned to me, and for some reason or other I remembered what she had said the night before about Ambrose teasing her, how he had told her once that she reeked of old Rome. I think I knew now what he meant. Her features were like those stamped on a Roman coin, definite, yet small; and now with that lace shawl wound about her hair I was reminded of the women I had seen kneeling in that cathedral in Florence, or lurking in the doorways of the silent houses. As she sat up on Solomon you could not tell that she was so small in stature when she stood upon the ground. The woman whom I considered unremarkable, save for her hands and her changing eyes and the bubble of laughter in her voice upon occasion, looked different now that she sat above me. She seemed more distant, more remote, and more – Italian. (CR 92)

This image of Rachel as an embodiment of the foreign immediately alarms the reader again. Du Maurier further emphasises her foreignness when they are going to church by stating that Rachel was "bred a Catholic" (109). This inspires further suspicion since the Protestant distrust of Catholicism is deeply rooted in that corner of England. As the mysterious Rachel enters the church, "a dark mantle around her shoulders" and "a veil from her hat [concealing] her face" in the typical Catholic manner, the curiosity of the villagers is piqued, for all they know is that

Rachel comes from “outlandish parts”, thus marking a crucial difference between them (CR 109). However, du Maurier makes certain that the reader would not perceive her as an unquestionable threat. When the reader witnesses the utter charm of Rachel by the dinner table, speaking with enchanting ease to the families Philip has invited (CR 118-119), there is no doubt that du Maurier has bewitched not only Philip and the surrounding families, but also the reader, so much so that it feels like Rachel has securely established her power over the English country life.

Now that Rachel has managed to ensure her influence over the English, she deepens her roots by manipulating further. In this stage, she is jovial and kind, making a profound impact on most of the characters, especially Philip who is so much under Rachel’s spell that he decides to provide her with an allowance, extremely generous in amount. To Philip’s utter confusion, Rachel is furious at this and claims that Philip has made her “feel utterly ashamed” (CR 139). Just a little while later, however, Rachel invites the baffled Philip to her room, accepting the allowance and offering him a kiss (CR 146). This shows how her manipulation works in a pull and push method, which she employs throughout the novel and to which Philip is especially susceptible because of his inexperience.

In the next scene, Rachel retains her joyful and comfortingly domestic conduct that serves, however, as a deceptive prologue for another moment of terror which makes Philip and the reader question Rachel’s character. Despite Rachel’s alarmingly good “continental” knowledge of herbs (CR 177), which Philip regards as “witchcraft” (CR 150), Rachel manages to converse with the locals with such remarkable ease and tact that, although having been “brought up in Italy to a very different life”, she seems to be in unison with the English life (CR 149). This seeming victory of domestic over foreign once again instils trust in the reader, the sentiment which du Maurier decides to undermine for the creation of terror. For this, she lets

the characters explore the belongings of the dead. The scene is set with heavy rain which is “lashing at the windows” (CR 157). This melancholy weather makes it a particularly fitting day for organising the boxes filled with the possessions of Ambrose, which inspires real dread as if they had “opened up his coffin and looked upon him dead” (CR 158). Du Maurier’s intention of heightening the suspense is evident when Philip very conveniently finds a piece of paper that “had Ambrose’s handwriting upon it” (CR 159). In order to obscure the knowledge the reader obtains, it seems to be a “middle scrap of a letter, torn from its context and forgotten”, suggesting that no indisputable intelligence could be derived from it (CR 160). The contents of it are alarming, however, even if only to frighten the reader:

It’s a disease, of course, I have often heard of it, like kleptomania or some other malady, and has no doubt been handed down to her from her spendthrift father, Alexander Coryn. How long she has been a victim of it I cannot say, perhaps always; certainly it explains much of what has disturbed me hitherto in all this business. This much I do know, dear boy, that I cannot any longer, nay I dare not, let her have command over my purse, or I shall be ruined, and the estate will suffer. It is imperative that you warn Kendall, if by any chance ... (CR 160)

Du Maurier uses a typical Gothic element of the letter to create fear, breaking off the sentence as if Ambrose had wanted to add something of crucial importance. The knowledge that can be obtained, however, is especially disquieting for the reason that Philip had just provided Rachel with a rather generous allowance. This worry is partly confirmed when Rachel orders expensive coverings from Italy, leaving Philip indecisive as to the opinion he should have of Rachel’s conduct (CR 163-165). To magnify the suspicion, du Maurier reminds the reader “how little of her [they] really knew, and how little of that past life of hers [they] would ever know” (CR 166). This adds to the anxiety du Maurier has been building up little by little, leaving the reader in complete confusion as to the character of Rachel.

However, du Maurier is certain not to provide too definite knowledge of Rachel’s possibly sinister character and intentions, for the reason of which she creates a scene of a tranquil and monotonous late autumnal routine in the Ashley estate to pacify the reader. Rachel has

completely charmed all the household, everyone calling her “the mistress” now (CR 175). Rachel’s ostensibly complete harmony with the English life manifests itself most strikingly during Christmas, by the time of which Philip is utterly enamoured by Rachel, so much so that even his godfather’s alarming suggestion that Rachel might be sending money out of the country does not affect him (CR 192). Although this news comes as such a gust of wind that makes the Philip along with the reader “go cold” (CR 192), du Maurier does not place great emphasis on it, arousing only such slight suspicions that when the tranquil winter life has passed and the first days of spring come, the reader does not explicitly expect to be presented with another moment of terror. Du Maurier, however, takes advantage exactly of this tranquillity to present the readers with a deceptively lovely spring day with “blackbird and chaffinch [singing] beneath [their] windows” and the air that has “a zest to it”, on which Philip is urgently asked to go and see a tenant, Sam Bate, who has “something of importance to give to [him]” (CR 201). Now that the reader’s interest is aroused, du Maurier builds the suspense by hinting that Ambrose had written yet another letter of supposedly alarming contents. The tenant voices his sentiment that when he found the letter in Ambrose’s coat he had been gifted, looking “suitably concerned and solemn”, it seemed to him as if he had “come upon a message from the dead” (CR 202-203), thus building suspense like a Radcliffean servant. Du Maurier heightens the fear by leading Philip to the semi-darkness of woods where there is a tombstone intended for Ambrose (CR 203-204). As Philip opens the letter, clouded with worry in reflection of the weather that had suddenly lost the glory of the day, it seems as if Ambrose is warning Philip from beyond the grave by anxiously referring to Rachel’s habit of spending money and confiding in the frightening figure of Rainaldi who seems to have a “pernicious influence” upon her and with whom she seems to be plotting something (CR 206-207). After du Maurier has taken the reader to the height of apprehension, she terrifies them with the last sentence of the letter, “One thought

possesses me, leaving me no peace. Are they trying to poison me?" (CR 208). This ignites the boldest suspicions the reader has yet dared to entertain, which makes it almost a relief when Philip hides "[his] head like an ostrich in the sand" (CR 205) by burying the letter "deep in the dark earth" (CR 209), thus sheltering him from most terrible suspicions. With this du Maurier offers the reader an opportunity to find a certain relief, but at the same time heightening the suspense by not providing them with definite knowledge which prolongs the state of anxiety.

This letter, however, serves as a prelude to another moment of terror, greater than before. Disregarding Ambrose's warning, Philip is so much under the influence of Rachel that he decides to realise Ambrose's will he mentioned in the letter, but which the latter had not signed for the reason of the aforementioned worries. In order to prevent Rachel from leaving, he hastens to draw the will that would grant her the property and its fortune the moment Philip becomes of the legal age in three weeks' time (CR 218). As Philip rides back home full of happiness for the successful completion of his design, surrounded by the glory of spring with its "honeyed mass of golden gorse in bloom", nothing seems to prepare him for the sight of a post-chaise, the wheels of which are "dusty, as if from a long journey on the road", indicating that someone from a distant land must be visiting them (CR 220). And indeed, when Philip enters the house he is petrified by the sight of Rainaldi, the frightening figure du Maurier introduced to the reader in Italy (CR 221). From this moment onwards the happenings in the house begin to appear more and more suspicious. As Rachel and Rainaldi exchange words about the happenings in Rome, at times breaking into Italian which Philip does not understand, Philip feels so "out of place", as if the foreign power had taken over his own house (CR 226). Furthermore, the suspicion is heightened when each time Philip unexpectedly enters the room where they are "talking their inevitable Italian", they would suddenly cease speaking, as if they had something to hide (CR 230). At times, the agitated Philip hears "the murmur of their voices", recognising the

mentioning of his own name and that of his godfather's, as if they were plotting something against them (CR 236). All of this creates an almost intolerably suspenseful atmosphere of terror, as if Philip along with the reader were trapped in a sinister building dominated by suspicious foreign figures, in the hands of whom he feels helpless, just like Ambrose had felt before him.

After Rainaldi leaves, Philip's exhilaration returns as his birthday is approaching rapidly. Coming back from his godfather's after having signed the previously drawn will, he is once again in a state of euphoria at the thought that Rachel could not leave him now (CR 246). The weather is accordingly splendid, but this time it does not merely reflect Philip's elated mood but predict a catastrophe:

In three weeks full spring had come about the countryside and it was warm like May. Like all weather prophets, my farmers shook their heads and prophesied calamity. Late frost would come, and nip the buds in bloom and wither the growing corn beneath the surface of the drying soil. I think, on that last day of March, I would not have greatly cared if famine came, or flood, or earthquake. (CR 246)

This statement serves as a prelude to all the happenings to follow, preparing the reader for a moment of terror. Philip, however, does not sense this, being caught up in his "mood of exultation" that reaches its zenith during his birthday night by the time of which he has acquired the right to gift to her his family fortune and the estate (CR 250). As Philip is advancing Rachel's window, he is treading on a "ghostly path, [...] shadows, eerie and fantastic, [lurking] behind the trees" and smells "rank vixen smell, [...] tainting the very leaves under [his] feet" (CR 250). This seems to suggest that he is moving towards a danger, one of which he is warned. Philip regards it as nothing, however, and reaches Rachel's window, climbing up the creeper wire and gifting Rachel the family jewels, after which they share a most intimate moment, Rachel letting Philip closer than ever before (CR 253). The following morning, however, du Maurier presents Philip with a shock. As he enters Rachel's room, being of the firm opinion they will soon be a

husband and wife, he is startled at Rachel's cold conduct, bidding him to go away (CR 256). Du Maurier emphasises this sentiment further when Rachel comes back from Philip's godfather in order to enquire as to the exact meaning of the will, which makes her frosty demeanour especially significant (CR 260). Du Maurier lets "all the worries and perplexities, safely buried in the depths" come to surface with full force while observing the "steady" and "unmoved" eyes of Rachel that seem to "[have] been out upon a matter of business and settled it in satisfaction" (CR 260). This suggests that Rachel had no other purpose than to coax Philip into signing the estate to her name, having come to England only for that reason.

Having created the previous scene as a way to alarm the reader, du Maurier magnifies this effect with the following happenings without soothing the reader anymore. During the dinner with Philip's godfather and his daughter, Louise, Philip declares in his desperation that he and Rachel are going to marry, which evokes the most strikingly astonished reactions (CR 267). As Rachel says, "Have you quite lost your senses, Philip?" the reader along with Philip is startled at such a sudden reaction, observing with dread her face which is like "a frozen mask" (CR 267). Benumbed by this sight, Philip tries to reason with Rachel, only to understand that they had completely misunderstood each other, Rachel having merely thanked him for giving her the fortune while Philip had thought it was an acceptance of marriage (CR 270). This demonstrates the utter difference between them, du Maurier having only tricked the reader with the domestic part of Rachel. As Philip confronts her, he observes that "[they] were strangers, with no link between them. She came from another land, another race" (CR 270). With this statement du Maurier reminds the readers that she has always been a foreign element in the English environment despite her apparent synchrony with the local people and accommodation to the English life. Du Maurier further emphasises the dread of the foreign as Philip realises that Rachel had the same effect upon him as she had had on Ambrose:

I think I knew, upon this instant, all that Ambrose had known too. I knew what he had seen in her, and longed for, but had never had. I knew the torment, and the pain, and the great gulf between them, ever widening. Her eyes, so dark and different from our own, stared at both of us, uncomprehending. Ambrose stood beside me in the shadows, under the flickering candlelight. We looked at her, tortured, without hope, while she looked back at us in accusation. Her face was foreign too, in the half light. Small and narrow, a face upon a coin. (CR 270)

Completely agitated by this realisation, he confronts Rachel in a desperate manner and then flies to his room, his “own shadow on the wall, a monstrous thing, without shape or substance” following him in his mind (CR 271). As Louise offers the next day to console Philip, the atmosphere acquires an even more menacing character as “great clouds with dragging tails, black-edged and filled with rain, came scudding from the west” (CR 273). The atmosphere of darkness deepens as Philip and Louise step into the church, which seems “dark and peaceful”, yet it is permeated with a “chill so unmistakable, oppressive, heavy, and the mouldering churchy smell” (CR 273-274). This atmosphere is perfectly suitable for disclosing the sinister intentions of Rachel as Philip looks into the very English “simple and direct” blue eyes of Louise who reasons, “Why did she come here last September? Why did she travel all this way to seek you out? It was not sentiment that brought her here, or idle curiosity. She came to England, and to Cornwall, for a purpose, which she has now accomplished” (CR 274). Du Maurier uses this sentiment, expressed by one of the most clear-headed characters in the novel, to alarm the reader, bringing to surface all the suspicions that she has carefully instilled in the reader little by little.

As the story rapidly progresses towards the end, du Maurier terrorises the reader to the core by seemingly confirming all the doubts but at the same time not leaving the reader with a definite conclusion. As Philip is still “so blind to everything”, even after talking to Louise (CR 275), du Maurier uses the effect of illness to purify his mind and see the situation in a different light. However, the way towards this end is of a ferocious nature. Du Maurier makes the reader witness Philip’s utter agony of mind, which seems suspiciously similar to that of Ambrose’s. His feverous delirium culminates with a dream where Philip sees himself once again by the river

Arno in Italy, making a vow to destroy Rachel (CR 287). This foreshadows the fate of this foreign character. Although after conquering the illness Philip has forgotten that he and Rachel are not married and that she decides to leave, the knowledge is soon presented to him (CR 295), which inspires a most terrible feeling of distrust in him at last. As he observes Rachel, he thinks of the Villa Sangalletti he had visited in Italy. A house which had then presented him only with mystery and perplexity has acquired a different character now, since “[i]nstead of the shuttered darkness [he] had seen on that one visit [he] saw it now as brightly lit, with all the windows wide” (CR 299). By making such a statement, du Maurier demonstrates that in Philip’s mind the character of Rachel is now unveiled. This is further confirmed when Philip observes Rachel’s secretive behaviour and finds out she had been seeing Rainaldi (CR 306). This inspires him to reread Ambrose’s letter, discovering that his symptoms of illness and Rachel’s behaviour with Rainaldi were far too similar to the experience of Ambrose (CR 314-316). Du Maurier magnifies the tension when Philip slips into Rachel’s room in the middle of the night and finds an envelope that contains poisonous laburnum seeds, which he had glimpsed in Rachel’s courtyard in Italy (CR 318). This leaves Philip in no doubt as to the malevolent character of Rachel, ascertaining him that she had indeed endeavoured to poison them. Du Maurier reminds the reader of Philip’s vow made beside the Arno to repay his cousin Rachel, warning them that “the time was come” (CR 320). To do this, du Maurier reflects the first Sunday Rachel had accompanied Philip to church, a day on which her charm over Philip and the local English people became apparent, with the only difference that now Philip was not blind to her intentions anymore:

Once more I was seated at the head of the table and Rachel at the foot, my godfather and the vicar on either hand. Once more there was talk and laughter, even poetry. I sat, much with the same silence that I had at first, and watched her face. Then, it had been with fascination, because unknown. [...] Now, I knew all the tricks. [...] It was a little game that she enjoyed, and we were all of us, with our dull Cornish ways, so easy to handle, and to fool. (CR 326)

By making such a statement, du Maurier exhibits how Rachel, the foreign element, had fascinated everyone with her continental ways while being comfortingly English at the same time, little by little seizing power over the English estate. When Philip realises this, he decides to take over his estate again by indirectly causing Rachel's death by not warning her of the danger that an unfinished bridge posed (CR 330, 335). This serves the purpose of restoring the established order in the Ashley estate by exorcising the menacing atmosphere Rachel had brought with her. While this offers a certain relief of tension, du Maurier does not leave the readers with a definite conclusion as she does not proclaim whether Rachel was indeed either innocent or guilty. By not providing the readers with an unquestionably clear ending, du Maurier leaves the readers "haunted [...] by doubt" like Philip (CR 4), thus magnifying the lingering sensation of terror she has created throughout the novel.

## CONCLUSION

Although Daphne du Maurier's fiction has for a long time been seen as simply romantic fiction written for female audiences, the recent years have seen a revaluation of her works as part of the Gothic genre. The aim of this thesis was to further contribute to the examination of her novels as specifically Gothic by analysing how du Maurier creates the atmosphere of terror in her novel *My Cousin Rachel*.

Notwithstanding the numerous possible interpretations this novel may have, the present thesis focused on presenting the leading character Philip as a version of an inexperienced and motherless Gothic heroine who is threatened by a foreign, manipulative character who brings with her a menacing atmosphere. Throughout the novel, he is presented with various moments of terror that he magnifies as a result of his inner anxiety.

This thesis analysed how du Maurier employs various Gothic stereotypes and elements in order to create this kind of an atmosphere. By choosing to locate her characters in semi-isolated mansions which present danger, du Maurier inspires dread in the reader both by presenting the house itself as a menacing character, as the Villa Sangalotti, or by disrupting the established order in the house, as in the Ashley estate. Du Maurier presents the danger that threatens to disturb the peaceful atmosphere in the form of foreign Rachel who seems to have sinister intentions along with her friend, Rainaldi, both of whom bring the ominous atmosphere presented to Philip in Italy with them to England. However, du Maurier does not present her as unquestionably evil, thus confusing her readers so that the moments of terror that this foreign character creates are the more striking. What makes the threat especially frightening is that du Maurier displays the leading characters Philip and Ambrose as doubles which anticipates that the same fearsome happenings experienced by Ambrose will be repeated in Philip's life. Du

Maurier accentuates this fear by constantly allowing Philip to find Ambrose's writings that warn him of the foreign danger. What makes the atmosphere in this novel especially striking is that du Maurier instils suspicions little by little, going from little moments of terror to greater ones, while alternatively raising and easing tension. This allows for an especially frightening effect since the reader is presented with a moment of terror when they least expect this, although the anxiety is always present and ever-growing.

Therefore, it may be inferred that du Maurier has successfully managed to create a dark and mysterious atmosphere of terror that has an overpowering effect upon the reader, evoking feelings of unease and suspense.

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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Carmen Treu**

**The Creation of the Atmosphere of Terror in Daphne du Maurier's *My Cousin Rachel*  
Hirmu õhkkonna loomine Daphne du Maurier' romaanis "Rachel, mu piin"**

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Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva bakalaureusetöö eesmärk on uurida, kuidas Daphne du Maurier kasutab erinevaid gooti elemente, et luua hirmu õhkkond oma romaanis "Rachel, mu piin". Põhieesmärk on tekstinäidete põhjal välja selgitada, milliseid gooti elemente du Maurier on sellise õhkkonna saavutamiseks kasutanud ning mis mõju see nii tegelastele kui ka lugejale avaldab.

Töö koosneb sissejuhatusest, kahest sisupeatükist ning kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatuses tuuakse välja antud teema olulisus ning antakse ülevaade Daphne du Maurier' romaanist "Rachel, mu piin", millele järgneb lühike kirjeldus töö ülesehitusest. Esimeses sisupeatükis antakse ülevaate gooti žanrist ja sellele omastest tunnustest, pannes erilist rõhku nendele elementidele, mida kasutab du Maurier. Sellele järgnevas sisupeatükis rakendatakse eelmises peatükis esitatud informatsiooni du Maurier' romaani kontekstis ning analüüsitakse gooti kirjandusele omaste elementide kasutust hirmu õhkkonna loomiseks. Analüüsi tulemusena võib välja tuua, et du Maurier kasutab mitmeid traditsioonilisi gooti kirjanduse elemente – pooleldi isoleeritud mõisad, võõramaised tegelased ja ümbrus, teisikud, käsikirjad testamentide ja kirjade kujul -, et luua oma romaanis hirmu õhkkond. Du Maurier lisab pinevust pingete tekitamise ja langetamise võttega, kasvatades lugejas samm-sammult ärevust. Nimetatud järeldused on välja toodud töö kokkuvõttes.

Märksõnad: inglise kirjandus, gooti kirjandus, Daphne du Maurier, hirmu õhkkond

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