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DOROTHY F. SCHMIDT COLLEGE OF ARTS & LETTERS

Re-Constructing the Past: Women, Time, and Inanimate Objects in Virginia Woolf's *The Years* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*

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My research focuses on two important woman authors of the twentieth century: Virginia Woolf and Daphne du Maurier. Both authors attempt to redefine the role of women in patriarchal society during the 1930's. The domestic role women had to fill within a masculine household constrained their ability to form an independent "self," apart from fathers/husbands. This thesis explores the possibility of gaining freedom from patriarchal inscription by focusing on the domestic objects in/of the house. Throughout history, women were, and still are, associated with being valued as a desirable "commodity." According to Luce Irigaray, "the passage into the social order, into the symbolic order, into order as such, is assured by the fact that men, or groups of men, circulate women among themselves" (174). In order for women to find their place in the symbolic, they must adhere to the demands of patriarchal society. Moreover, "socially, they are 'objects' for and among men and furthermore they cannot do anything but mimic a 'language' that they have not produced" (Irigaray 187). Since women have no choice but to work within the symbolic order and are already labeled as "object," women writers have manipulated the system by exploring the relationship women have with inanimate, and particularly domestic, objects. In the literary texts of Woolf and du Maurier, women have a unique relationship with material objects in relationship to subjectivity. By examining "objects," women are able to construct themselves as free "subjects" in a male dominated world.

Virginia Woolf.



Woolf offers a connection with the Past

"Re-Constructing the Past: Women, Time, & Inanimate Objects in Virginia Woolf's The Waves & Daphne Du Maurier's Rebecca"

Thesis: Though their work, Virginia Woolf and Daphne Du Maurier offer a means to challenge the pre-inscribed roles of women designated by men through which a deconstruction of that identity is necessary in order to redefine what it means to be a woman in Twentieth Century culture.

Both authors invoke the domestic environment in order to explore ways in which a new subjectivity is created outside of patriarchal inscription which can only be achieved by destruction and/or re-organization of the past.



Manderley Estate from Rebecca



'A woman must have money and a room of her own', said Virginia Woolf

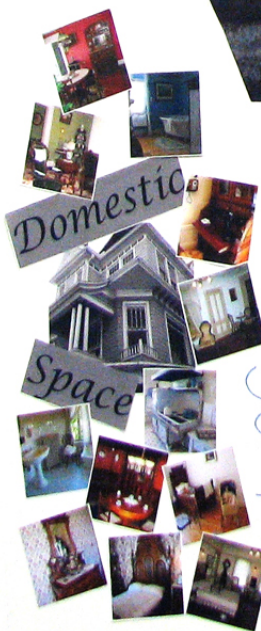
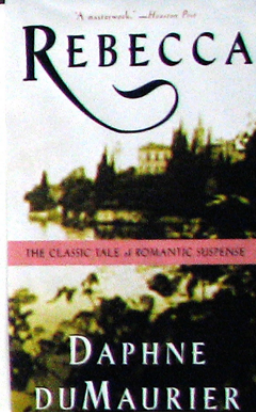
PERSONAL SPACE

Du Maurier offers a complete destruction of the Past

"If only there could be an invention that bottled up a memory, like scent And it never faded, and it never got stale. And then, when one wanted it, the bottle could be uncorked, and it would be like living the moment all over again."

*Quoted from Rebecca (39) memories represent a "Moment of Being"

Daphne Du Maurier



Domestic Space

Interior Belongings of the house (cannot power & deception)

THE House = Female Suffrage

