“The Destruction and Dangers of the Past”

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**Abstract**

There is a natural tendency towards remembrance of the past and a need to preserve traditions in order to ensure the stability and normality of the present; however, Alfred Hitchcock challenges that idea in his film *Rebecca* by depicting the past as dangerous and the refusal to move on as destructive. Hitchcock creates a dreadful feeling of isolation for the heroine, Mrs. de Winter, as she, and the audience, villainize the film’s hero, Maxim, due to her own insecurities about his late wife due to the fact that the heroine allows her own recollection of the past to affect her. However, the heroine eventually gains a sense of identity and individualism as she finally rejects the past and earns the title “Mrs. de Winter” as her own by realizing that ghosts in the past cannot harm her. Hitchcock implies that the past is dangerous because it implants anxiety, consumes lives, then ultimately leads to an extermination of the self. He illustrates the damage that the past inflicts on the present through his representation of dysfunctional relationships that has been consumed by old memories. However, Hitchcock also seems to imply at the end of the film that once there is a complete destruction and rejection of this retrospective outlook, his characters have a chance for future prosperity and happiness. Through the destruction, then redemption, of his characters, Hitchcock shows that dwelling in memories for too long is dangerous, and only when his characters can break free from old traditions will there be capacity for peace and progression in their lives.

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