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# SUSAN HILL'S MRS DE WINTER AND SALLY BEAUMAN'S REBECCA'S TALE: "RE-VISIONS" OF DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S REBECCA?

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**Resumen:** Este artículo examina dos tipos de textos transficcionales que parecen desafiar muy poco el final y, por consiguiente, el discurso de sus fuentes textuales. Después de intentar definir los mecanismos y el alcance de las novelas–secuela que continuaron estos textos, así como otras novelas compañeras de los mismos, vamos a considerar dos ejemplos extraídos de la fértil vida posterior de Rebecca, de Daphne De Maurier, después del éxito de su publicación en 1938: Mrs de Winter, de Susan Hill (1993) y Rebecca's Tale, de Sally Beaman (2001), que interactúan con el final y el discurso de Rebecca de maneras diferentes y con resultados distintos.

**Palabras clave:** Rebecca, Daphne du Maurier, novela–secuela, novela compañera, transficción, final, Susan Hill, Mrs de Winter, Sally Beaman, Rebecca's Tale.

**Abstract:** This paper examines two types of transfictional texts that appear little challenging to the ending and, consequently, to the discourse of their source–texts. After attempting to define the workings and scopes of sequels and companion novels, we shall consider two instances provided by Daphne du Maurier's Rebecca's rich afterlife since its publication and success in 1938: Susan Hill's Mrs de Winter (1993) and Sally Beaman's Rebecca's Tale (2001) that engage with Rebecca's ending and discourse in different ways and with diverse results.

**Keywords:** Rebecca, Daphne du Maurier, sequel, companion novel, transfiction, ending, Susan Hill, Mrs de Winter, Sally Beaman, Rebecca's Tale.

As famously stated by Julia Kristeva, “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (1986: 37). The retrieval of characters and diegetic elements is as old as literature itself, featuring in a large variety of hypertexts (see Genette). The phenomenon, in its deliberate and self–conscious form, appears to be thriving. For instance, “trans–contextualization”, when a character reappears in another context, in another period (see Hutcheon 7–12) is at work in the Austen Project that recently solicited best–selling novelists for reworkings of Austen's characters and plots for the modern world.<sup>1</sup> The process of rewriting is a major feature of contemporary postmodern and/or postcolonial fiction: in writing back to the hypotext, these hypertexts challenge and

1 The first in the series was *Sense and Sensibility* (2013) by Joanna Trollope.

transform elements of the diegesis to eventually “pre-empt [...] the possibility of closure” (Letissier 2009: 4) and/or, at least, negate the original conclusion reached to challenge the source text. Sequels, on the other hand, are not supposed to challenge the ending but to incorporate it. This form of writing—that enjoyed a remarkable revival in an allographic form in the 1990s, with Jane Austen’s novels proving favourites again<sup>2</sup>—“continues a work not in order to bring it to a close but, on the contrary, in order to take it beyond what was initially considered to be its ending” (Genette 1982: 206). For their part, companion novels, coquels or parallel expansions reinvest an existing story and take some of its characters for a step aside, developing a minor character or element but without interfering with the ending of the hypotext.<sup>3</sup>

All these novels engage with their source-texts in different ways and this paper proposes to examine these last two types of transfictional texts that appear less challenging to the ending and, consequently, to the original discourse: after attempting to define the theoretical workings and scopes of sequels and companion novels, we shall consider two instances provided by Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca*’s rich afterlife since its publication and success in 1938:<sup>4</sup> Susan Hill’s *Mrs de Winter* (1993) and Sally Beaman’s *Rebecca’s Tale* (2001), both commissioned by the du Maurier estate and both making explicit reference to the hypotext in their title, that engage with *Rebecca*’s ending and discourse in different manners.

#### TRANSGRESSIVE TRANSFICITION: AN OXYMORON?

Both companion novels and sequels can be considered through the prism of transfictionality, as defined by Richard Saint-Gelais, which entails “a relation of migration (with the changes this inevitably entails) of diegetic elements” (2011: 10–11, my translation), among which the characters who must be the same and not a mere reference. Such is the case of both *Mrs de Winter* and *Rebecca’s Tale*, as each picks up identifiable characters from du Maurier’s *Rebecca*.

Transfictionality is a feature of sequels and companion novels which expand an already existing novel on the temporal level and/or diegetic level (Saint-Gelais 2011: 71). These texts re-open a narrative that already reached an ending or a finite form (as opposed to unfinished novels) by infusing new dynamics, in the manner propounded by Catherine Belsey: “The only way to sustain the reader’s desire would be to continue the narrative, and this in turn would be to tear the lovers apart again, to reintroduce the absences which are the necessary condition of desire, or the impediments on which narrative depends” (1994: 39, italics mine). As suggested by the word “absences”, and independently from the

2 See, for instance, *Pemberley* (1993) and *Emma in Love* (1996) by Emma Tennant. On this topic, see Lynch’s ‘Sequels’ and Stoneman’s ‘The Sequels syndrome’ (234–252) in *Brontë Transformations*.

3 Recent examples include *Longbourn* (2013) by Jo Baker which focuses on the servant world of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and Jane Gardam’s novels, *The Man in the Wooden Hat* (2009) and *Last Friends* (2013), companion pieces to her own *Old Filth* (2005).

4 The novel was first adapted to the screen by Alfred Hitchcock in 1940 and later in several TV adaptations: a BBC-TV series (directed by Simon Langton and starring Jeremy Brett) was aired in 1978 followed by a Portman Production for Carlton UK Television in association with WGBH/Boston and Tele-München in 1997 directed by Jim O’Brien and starring Charles Dance and Diana Rigg. A remake of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rebecca* by Dreamworks and Working Title Films was announced in 2012.

possible open-endedness of a novel, fictional worlds can be considered as fundamentally incomplete because they cannot possibly give every single detail about a given character.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, there is always a blank or an absence to be filled by an interpretation in sequels—or in companion novels, *ad infinitum*. Transfiction uses these blanks to ask the “macro-questions” that preside over the structure of the text (Carroll 2007: 5), the answers to which will provide the reader with a (new) sense of closure.

In theory, because the addition of new adventures denies the original ending its status, the sequel necessarily implies alterations: “the terminal quiescence of the end” (Brooks 1984: 103) reached by the characters is indeed turned into a mere episode so that a new ending is offered with the characters reaching a subsequent stage. Temporal progress suggests possibilities of change in the characters. Technically, sequels go “beyond the ending” but, as Patsy Stoneman rightly asks when looking at follow-ups to the Brontës’ works, does this crossing from one text to the next have the challenging or constructive dimension that Rachel Blau du Plessis implies when she uses the phrase, i.e. “express critical dissent from dominant narrative” (1985: 5)?

Stoneman states that ‘sequels in themselves imply a revisionist intention’ because ‘the act of looking back [...] to a text from a previous age provides a double perspective which does not simply reinscribe the original’ (1996: 240). Indeed, in Adrienne Rich’s words,

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is [...] an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves [...]. We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (1971: 35)

A number of rewritings, or “appropriations”, to use Sanders’s term, put this “re-vision” in practice: “(m)any appropriations have a joint political and literary investment in giving voice to these characters or subject-positions they perceive to have been oppressed or repressed in the original” (2006: 98). As aptly put by Chantal Zabus, “Since rewriting aims at redressing certain wrongs, it may be equated with its homophonic counterpart and be read as a re-righting gesture” (2001: 191). One may however wonder if sequels (and companion novels) fulfil this objective since they remain within the confines of a set text, committed to a diegesis and, possibly, style.

Indeed, as far as Chantal Zabus is concerned, because they “overall engage with the original text in the latter’s own terms” (page), “sequels fail to dismantle narrative authority and priorities in the circulation of knowledge” (2001: 205). This can be linked to Saint-Gelais’s admission that transfiction, when nothing endangers nor challenges the fictional world in which the characters evolve, is distinct from parody which establishes and maintains a gap between hypotext and hypertext (see 2011: 55). Indeed, parody, Linda Hutcheon tells us, is “imitation characterized by ironic inversion”, “repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity” (2000: 6). This lack of parodic dimension may imply the absence of actual re-vision, of transgression in transfiction. Even pastiche, understood as the serious, yet always perceptible, imitation of a writer’s style (Genette 107), hardly finds

5 On this point, see Saint-Gelais (49–53).

its place in transfictional texts. For their part, companion novels do not even attempt to go beyond the ending but stay within the frame of the world originally established, merely developing a secondary character or an undeveloped episode, and for Lynch looking at coquels to Austen's novels, they "play up the comforts of familiarity" (2005: 165). Yet, since they too, like Saunders's "appropriations", give a voice to figures previously ignored or dismissed, might they not "dismantle narrative authority"?

#### LOCKED IN A SEQUEL: *MRS DE WINTER*

Susan Hill's *Mrs de Winter* was clearly marketed as a sequel, its back cover reading "Rebecca was Daphne du Maurier's most famous and best-loved novel. Countless readers wondered: what happened next?" In Hill's novel, twelve years have elapsed since the ending of *Rebecca* and we meet the de Winters back from the exile that followed the burning down of Manderley. With its two endings—the burning of Manderley in the last pages of the novel and the epilogue displaced to the opening ones—, du Maurier's *Rebecca* may not strike one as being incomplete.<sup>6</sup> However, despite the narrator's professions of hers and Maxim's happiness, there are cracks in the couple's domestic harmony during their exile. For Helen Taylor, the novel "ends not with conjugal bliss but middle-aged resignation and exile" (2007: 78).<sup>7</sup> The narrator notably contradicts herself when, for instance, she insists on the unity of the couple and the absence of secrets while laying the stress on the unsaid (6–7) and on the facts that their drama is over: "Well, it's over now, finished and done with" (8) nevertheless coming after

We have conquered our [devil], or so we believe.

The devil does not ride us any more. We have come through our crisis, not unscathed of course (1938: 5–6, my italics).<sup>8</sup>

Hill ensconces herself in these cracks to prise open du Maurier's novel. She chooses to retain the same first-person narrator, which implies a number of constraints such as the pursuing of the same style for coherence purposes: an element that suggests that the sequel is also a "homage" pastiche (see Genette 1997: 98) deprived of satirical intention. The same contradictions reappear in the narrator's discourse, such as "There had been no secrets. Yet the past still held secrets" (Hill 1993: 6–7). Continuity is also established with references to the narrator's shyness and poor physical appearance. Difference is however introduced through a major change in the second *Mrs de Winter*'s perception of events. Whereas du Maurier's narrator condoned Maxim's murder (which was explained away as Rebecca's ultimate manipulation<sup>9</sup>), Hill's now considers her husband a murderer: "I saw

6 Reviewers and scholars indeed seem to agree on the fact that the story is closed. See for instance Jagose and Walter.

7 One thinks also here of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* the pattern and ending of which *Rebecca* echoes.

8 None of this appears in Hitchcock's *Rebecca* which stresses the romantic aspect of the story by keeping only the dream and the incipit as a starting-point: only one ending, the couple is reunited while the house burns down (even though the last shot is on a pillow marked with R, suggesting the extinction of the character while giving the latter prominence).

9 "She wanted me to kill her. She foresaw the whole thing. That's why she laughed." (du Maurier 1938: 374)

a stranger, a man who had nothing to do with me, a man I did not know" (1993: 36) – a textbook example of Belsey's suggestion "to tear the lovers part" in order to re-dynamise a tale (see above). The character of Maxim is thus defamiliarised and the (albeit dubious) harmony previously established is negated. The same event now has opposite narrative consequences: the secret that brought them together in *Rebecca* is now to be their downfall.

Questions are planted to summon an interest in the reader, with the mention of "all the unspoken questions, hanging in the air" (Hill 14), alluding to "a period of calm between storms" (27). In an imitation of the first chapters of *Rebecca* in which it was impossible for the reader to place the narrator and the mysterious past events alluded to, the narrator attending a funeral in chapter 1 of *Mrs de Winter* now tantalises the reader with the identity of the body in the coffin. As a matter of fact, the sequel sets its own questions and answers them but the blanks left by du Maurier remain unfilled, such as the narrator's undisclosed "lovely and unusual name" (1938: 24) that puzzled *Rebecca*'s readers and prompted them to write to the author (Taylor 2007: 77). Likewise, coming across *Rebecca*'s photograph fails to reveal anything because "Everyone had talked about her, everyone had described her. I had known what she looked like in every detail [...]" (Hill 1993: 146). The picture—supposedly a new element—does not add or change anything but only brings confirmation to what the narrator (and the reader) already know, defeating the avowed purpose of a sequel.

The paradox is that whereas a sequel purposefully aims at continuing the story and therefore at moving forward in time, developing characters evolving in new episodes, a text like *Mrs de Winter* seems to be mostly trapped in the diegesis of du Maurier's novel: not only are there numerous analepses, reminders of what happened in *Rebecca* (such as de Winter first inviting the narrator to his table in Monte Carlo, the postcard from Manderley, the traumatic Manderley ball, the night of the fire, to name but a few) but a number of episodes in Hill's novel duplicate previous scenes. For instance, the catastrophic Manderley ball is echoed by the disastrous party at Cobbet's Brake, visiting *Rebecca*'s bedroom with Mrs Danvers is repeated in the housekeeper's new abode, and echoing *Rebecca*'s last days, the narrator secretly consults a doctor in London about her chances of getting pregnant.

Moreover, Hill chooses to summon most of du Maurier's characters. In doing so, she increases the number of fictional elements that must migrate from *Rebecca* to her own novel, which implies a number of analepses and repetition. In keeping with this, there are hardly any new characters<sup>10</sup> and when the ones from *Rebecca* are reintroduced, the passing of time is signalled only with physical and social changes.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, on their return to England, the protagonists in *Mrs de Winter* revert to their old selves, before the plot of *Rebecca* unfolded. Thus, Maxim de Winter is again a figure haunted by his past, actually afraid of returning to England, back to the same state as he was in Monte Carlo when first meeting the narrator. The passing of time inherent to a sequel implies a certain amount of change brought about by maturity but *Mrs de Winter* seems to pick up the characteristics of

10 Giles and Beatrix's son now appears as a brave veteran from the Second World War, which embodies the passing of time and offers the occasion to anchor the plot in post-war Britain. One new character, Bunty, who appears in the last part of the novel, merely reincarnates Beatrice who disappeared in the beginning: a sort of circularity is set up, suggesting that the story is not moving forward.

11 Colonel Julyan is now retired, Franck Crawley, Max de Winter's agent, is now married and managing an estate in Scotland, Jack Favell looks seedier and both Mrs Danvers and Mrs Van Hopper now merely look older.

the narrator when very young, as if disregarding the development enacted in du Maurier's novel. Indeed, the narrator, who had become more assertive once assured she had no reason to be jealous of her husband's love for his first wife, behaves again like a child (Hill 1993: 91–92). Rather than going beyond the ending, it seems that Hill's sequel actually ignores the outcome reached in *Rebecca* and privileges instead the characters' original salient features: the narrator's clumsiness, her shyness, her lack of dress sense. For most of the novel, Hill does not challenge in any way du Maurier's conclusion (namely that Rebecca is evil) but she inflates what was already there. All this suggests regression and sterility both at intradiegetic level—the narrator is paralysed by the past—and at extradiegetic level, foregrounding the representation of the sequel as a genre feeding off the past.<sup>12</sup>

Hill does however operate a significant reversal—and eventually goes beyond the ending—when the narrator, previously the victim of the unsaid, is now the holder of secrets, the one who keeps things away from Maxim. Where the unspoken nearly brought the relationship to an end, it actually does in Hill's novel. These secrets have a lethal impact on Maxim, yet without directly empowering the narrator. Indeed, as suggested by Michèle They, her silences make her the agent of her husband's death and the instrument of Rebecca's revenge (1995: 23). With Maxim de Winter's death in a car accident, Hill brings du Maurier's story to a different ending, one in which the murderer is punished for his crime. Following the emphasis on repetition that permeates Hill's sequel, justice—in the guise of punishment—eventually appears as what was needed to bring both *Rebecca* and *Mrs de Winter* to a close. In other words, a sort of divine justice, by way of Maxim's death, brings resolution. The narrator appears to have been held in a sort of purgatory, condemned to repetition and stagnation, until Maxim was punished for Rebecca's murder. Hill's sequel thus provides du Maurier's story with a moral close that it did not have.

#### REBECCA'S TALE: A TALE OF EMPOWERMENT?

Beauman's novel picks up *Rebecca's* famous incipit: "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again". Only the very first sentence is borrowed and it is now attributed to another character, announcing that Beauman's take on du Maurier's novel is more openly radical both in theme and in form. *Rebecca's Tale*, situated twenty years after Rebecca's death, offers a postmodern piling up of texts or palimpsest as it takes in the addition made by Hill's sequel and goes beyond its ending. To a certain extent, it is a sequel to a sequel, a case deemed quite rare by Saint-Gelais.<sup>13</sup>

Like du Maurier's title, Beauman's is slightly deceitful: firstly, it hints at a first-person narrative by the first Mrs de Winter (when in fact there are several narrators), and secondly, it plays on the polysemy of the word "tale" which evokes fiction, not truth. The title may

12 As propounded by Genette.

13 « La transfiction qui remet en cause la clôture narrative d'un récit s'expose à ce qu'une autre lui fasse subir le même sort, même si dans les faits, cette possibilité demeure largement théorique: il existe en effet bien peu de 'suites de suites' » (Saint-Gelais 76). One can however find examples: D.M. Thomas's *Charlotte* (2000) that built on *Jane Eyre* as well as on Rhys's prequel to Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Emma Tennant also wrote a sequel to her own sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: *Pemberley* (1993) was followed by *An Unequal Marriage: Or Pride and Prejudice Twenty Years Later* (1994).

lead the reader to expect Rebecca to give her own version of events but the word “tale” immediately implies that this is just another narrative with no special claim to veracity. Nevertheless, the title definitely empowers the character by seemingly attributing the whole story to her, signifying she is the mistress of her tale... The novel originates indeed in Beauman’s wish to give a voice to a character she believed had been utterly silenced (Taylor 2007: 88), to look at *Manderley* from Rebecca’s point of view in the manner of Jean Rhys giving a voice to the madwoman in the attic from *Jane Eyre* (Beauman 2001). *Rebecca’s Tale* is thus intended to offer Adrienne Rich’s “re-vision”.<sup>14</sup> From the outset, the title posits the new narrative *on a par with, alongside* du Maurier’s novel. It offers a different “version”, here used in Saint-Gelais’s meaning which includes the notion of interference, when, to a higher degree than mere parallel expansion, the new narrative has a retroactive effect on the first one (2011: 140), illustrating the concept of refraction thus described by Christian Gutleben and Susana Onaga: when “reading a refracting text leads automatically to a new reading, that of the canonical, refracted text” (2001: 10).

Beauman’s novel blurs the lines. Even though Beauman herself claims the novel is not a sequel,<sup>15</sup> it opens like one, picking up threads of the story twenty years after Rebecca’s death and giving a follow-up to what happened to some of the characters. As it takes in Maxim de Winter’s death as told by Hill in *Mrs de Winter*, the second wife and original narrator is now a widow. We learn early on that she now lives in Canada from which she actually reappears in the very last pages of the story, and, significantly, not in a narrative of her own. Yet, even though she is now apparently relegated to a secondary role, it turns out she is the one who has been sending parcels containing Rebecca’s objects to the survivors of the story: she is thus partly at the origin of the characters’ quest. Here, as in *Rebecca* and *Mrs de Winter*, she is instrumental in keeping Rebecca’s memory alive.

As promised in the title, Rebecca is given a voice: one part of the novel effectively consists in her notebook. However, *Rebecca’s Tale* is mostly concerned with minor or secondary characters from du Maurier’s novel: characters with a peripheral vision of the drama and still trying to come to terms with Rebecca’s personality and the inconsistencies surrounding her death. *Rebecca’s Tale* therefore openly dwells on past events (rather than on what happened next). Whereas *Mrs de Winter* scarcely departed from the original novel and was confined to one storyline, Beauman opts for a complex plot, develops secondary characters and invents new ones. The novel is indeed divided into four first-person narratives. Apart from Rebecca addressing the foetus she believes she is carrying in a diary-cum-memoirs, *Rebecca’s Tale* features two minor characters from du Maurier’s novel—Colonel Julyan, the magistrate from Kerrith and his daughter Ellie—along with a new one, Tom Galbraith, alias Terence Grey, a Cambridge historian leading his personal investigation into Rebecca’s death. With these characters, Beauman is free from the necessity to pastiche set styles. These new focalizers

14 Antonia Fraser had already done it in “Rebecca’s Story” (1976) which consists in a few pages written by Rebecca while waiting for Max at the boathouse. In Fraser’s version, Rebecca is her husband’s victim: Max is a pervert, adept of child-wives and Rebecca naturally consoled herself with her true love Jack Favell. Aware of her incurable disease, she is going to ask Max to let her spend her remaining months with Favell. This brief narrative has a retroactive impact on Rebecca as Maxim de Winter appears as a liar and a murderer with no mitigating circumstances.

15 <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/sep/12/fiction.daphnedumaurier>



also open huge narrative vistas, which Beaman makes the most of. The novelist does not contradict anything that happened nor that was said about the characters in *Rebecca* but she makes additions by filling in the gaps (or the absences) left by du Maurier: for instance, she develops a childhood with parents for Maxim and for Rebecca, and contextualises the latter's relationship with Mrs Danvers (whose youth and old age are now revealed)<sup>16</sup> and with her cousin Jack Favell. All this enables the creation of new characters and peripetiae. Beaman indeed multiplies elements to re-initiate the story and keep it going: there is Julyan's feeling of guilt towards Rebecca for not denouncing Maxim as a murderer as well as Terence Grey's (personal) interest as he suspects he might be related to Rebecca. The arrival of new documents in relation to Rebecca initiates new mysteries. In this manner, secondary questions or "micro-questions"<sup>17</sup> are asked and provide a sense of closure when answered. Such is the case with the mystery of the marriage certificate that is nowhere to be found. Yet, when it comes to the macro-question, which is, *as it was* in du Maurier's novel, 'what was Rebecca like?', closure is replaced by competing versions of facts and people.

Two versions of Rebecca already existed in du Maurier's novel: what was generally thought of Rebecca by the likes of Mrs Van Hopper versus what Maxim and close friends thought and this second point of view seemed to eventually prevail as the true one in du Maurier's novel. In *Rebecca's Tale*, the narrators give their own approach and reaction to what they know or learn of Rebecca's story. The overall result is discordance and disagreement between the characters over who Rebecca was and what happened in the end. Each narrator's limitations are stressed and played against one another so that no version prevails. A child of postmodern times, Beaman's novel knows better than to impose a definite new version<sup>18</sup> and privileges doubt instead. The characters in *Rebecca's Tale* go over the same facts covered by du Maurier but from different angles. Like du Maurier's narrator, Beaman's strive to find out who Rebecca was and their findings and conclusions are to come *alongside* the ones reached in the hypotext. Indeed, like a companion novel, *Rebecca's Tale* travels alternative routes to reach the same end. The paradox is that if Beaman's additions do not contradict what du Maurier wrote, they nevertheless change the overall picture: *Rebecca's Tale* thus seems a good example of the concept of refraction, when the ending provided by du Maurier is now part of a bigger picture and is thus necessarily modified.

Unlike a companion novel, however, it has a double time frame that forces distance from the diegesis. Through the character of the historian, Terence Grey/Tom Galbraith who tries to have a scientific approach, a commentary is offered on the very enterprise the characters are engaged into, granting the novel a self-reflexive dimension. The "new" characters from 1951 focus on Rebecca but their own stories (past and present) are also developed, accommodating the concerns of a 2001 novel, for instance with the undisguised

16 Now living in Rebecca's London flat, she keeps a shrine to Rebecca, as she did in the previous two novels. While adding elements that go along with du Maurier's story (273), Beaman however propounds that Mrs Danvers's adoration was not reciprocated.

17 Noël Carroll calls this a "micro question": "a question "whose answer will contribute eventually to answering presiding micro-questions but which does not, on its own, answer the relevant presiding question directly and completely (2007: 6)

18 as done in D. M. Thomas's sequel to *Jane Eyre*. See Gutleben & Onega 11.

presence of homosexuals in the characters of Aunt Rose and Tom/Terence.<sup>19</sup> Overall, *Rebecca's Tale* displays a revisionist approach in which Rebecca survives as a *femme fatale* who sees herself as the avenging angel of generations of Mrs de Winters: "I speak for a long line of dispossessed" (327). Repossession of the self is put forward with the novel ending on Ellie's rejection of marriage and departure for Cambridge to prepare a degree.

As sequels or/and companion novels, Hill's and Beauman's transfictional texts are expected to return and/or remain within the confines of the source-text, either by picking up the same characters or by keeping the limits of the ending. Yet, when re-opening du Maurier's narrative, these supposedly tame sequels and companion novels follow varying devices and approaches to the ending and achieve different effects, turning out to be more challenging than expected. As part of the refracting process, transfictions usually build on the reader's memory of the canonical text to modify it, which may be considered as problematic: "Several reasons for the sequel's bad press are its tendency to impose upon interpretation, to infringe upon the memory of the original, and because it prescribes a memory in replacement of that memory" (Jess-Cooke 2009: 9).<sup>20</sup> Hill's faithful sequel in *Mrs de Winter* partly ignores *Rebecca's* final picture and first reactivates the reader's memory of unchanged characters and events, leading to numerous repetitions and inviting therefore confirmation of views like Genette's that sequels only live off their source texts to which they remain subservient. The homodiegetic narrator is eventually enabled to move on, released by Maxim de Winter's death. With the addition of this moral episode—Rebecca's murderer is punished—Hill's sequel offers a correction, rather than a "re-vision", of du Maurier's novel. For its part, Sally Beauman's merging of sequel and companion novel in *Rebecca's Tale*, by developing Maurier's characters and taking them on untrodden paths, challenges the reader's perception of the original characters and text, and thus enacts Rich's "re-vision".

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19 I am thinking here of Christian Gutleben's claim that under cover of challenge to images of the Victorian era, neo-Victorian novels are most politically correct and suited to present times when rewriting the past.

20 See also Daunais : « La transfictionnalité est certes un acte de mémoire (le propre du personnage transfictionnel, comme du personnage intertextuel, est d'être conservé par la mémoire), mais elle en est aussi la suppression » (2007: 353).

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