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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction: New Critical Perspectives

L'attrait durable de la fiction de Daphne du Maurier – nouvelles perspectives critiques

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Sous la direction de
Nicole Cloarec, Anne Hall et Xavier Lachazette



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Français

Alors que nombre des auteurs contemporains auxquels on la comparait sont tombés dans l'oubli depuis des décennies, l'intérêt suscité par Daphne du Maurier (1907-1989) et ses œuvres ne s'essouffle nullement, plus de trente ans après sa disparition. Non seulement les contradictions de sa vie privée continuent à titiller et intriguer puissamment ses biographes—on n'en veut pour preuve que les cinq études biographiques parues dans les années 2010—mais sa fiction ne cesse d'inspirer de multiples adaptations, comme l'ont prouvé, entre 2012 et 2020, *The Scapegoat* (Charles Sturridge), *Le Général du roi* (Nina Companeez), *Jamaica Inn* (Philippa Lowthorpe), *My Cousin Rachel* (Roger Michell) et *Rebecca* (Ben Wheatley). Les neuf articles et la toute première bibliographie critique des œuvres de du Maurier publiés dans ce numéro de la *Revue LISA/LISA e-journal* ambitionnent tout d'abord de placer en perspective *Rebecca*, au succès international, et de souligner le pouvoir que cette œuvre continue d'exercer, à la fois sur ses lecteurs et sur les écrivain.e.s. Les articles se penchent ensuite sur des œuvres plus ou moins connues de du Maurier (trois nouvelles, une pièce et quatre romans) pour éclairer leur riche sous-texte thématique et leur savoir-faire technique. Le gothique, le genre, la psychanalyse, l'art de l'écriture et la politique sont abordés dans cette seconde partie, qui met en lumière la nature complexe et problématique de l'identité dans la fiction de Daphne du Maurier.

English

While many of the contemporary writers to whom she was compared sank into literary oblivion decades ago, the interest in Daphne Du Maurier (1907-1989) and her works shows no sign of abating over thirty years after her demise. Not only do the powerful and provocative contradictions in her personal life continue to intrigue biographers—witness the five biographical studies published about her in the 2010s alone—but her fiction keeps inspiring adaptations of all kinds, as amply shown between 2012 and 2020 by Charles Sturridge's *The Scapegoat*, Nina Companeez's *Le Général du roi*, Philippa Lowthorpe's *Jamaica Inn*, Roger Michell's *My Cousin Rachel* and Ben Wheatley's *Rebecca*. The nine articles and the first-ever full-length critical bibliography of Du Maurier's works published in this issue of *Revue LISA/LISA e-journal* first aim at placing her enduring international bestseller *Rebecca* in perspective, and at underlining the power it still exerts on readers and writers alike. The articles then move to diversely known works of fiction by Du Maurier—three short stories, a play, and four novels—to highlight the rich thematic subtext and the technical skill at work in them. Issues related to the Gothic, gender, psychoanalysis, fiction writing, and politics will be addressed in that second part, thereby foregrounding the troublesome complexity of identity in Du Maurier's fiction.

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction

Introduction

Introduction

Nicole Cloarec, Anne Hall et Xavier Lachazette
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Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, critique littéraire, Rebecca, gothique, genre, identité, psychanalyse, politique
Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, literary criticism, Rebecca, gothic, gender, identity, psychoanalysis, politics

Texte intégral

1 Entrenched in her adopted home of Cornwall, detached from literary trends and schools, avoiding media glare and appearing only rarely on radio or television programmes, Daphne Du Maurier owes her uninterrupted popularity to her works and her personality alone.[1]

2 Few works have given rise, as her bestselling novel and her play Rebecca have done, to so many radio, television and film adaptations, to an opera, a musical comedy, an original film score and a pastiche, in addition to various prequels and sequels. Of very few writers can it be said that, for four decades, their next book was so eagerly awaited that it made them "a phenomenon, one of the best-selling authors in the world and one of the best paid."[2] Even after their death, few authors can boast of inspiring not only the erection of a statue on publicly owned land (*The Rook with a Book*, 2018) but also an increasing number of film adaptations, like Charles Sturridge's *The Scapegoat* (2012), Roger Michell's *My Cousin Rachel* (2017) or Ben Wheatley's latest take on *Rebecca* (2020). And a testament to the power of her paper-

and-ink creations, a festival called The Fowey Festival of Arts and Letters convenes annually in the town where she resided almost exclusively after she left the London of her youth, in part to discuss her stories while guided walks give inquiring readers a behind-the-scenes look at the sceneries and historically charged locales which she so often transcribed into her fiction.

3 In spite of all this, Du Maurier's relationship with literary criticism has been conflictual ever since the runaway success of *Rebecca* and the condescending perception of its author as "romantic." One of the reasons for this recurrent, but far from universal, critical contempt has been that, in the eyes of some reviewers, a work's popularity necessarily implies its lack of value. Also, beginning with *Gerald: A Portrait* (1934), her new publisher Victor Gollancz ran aggressive marketing campaigns which made available to the general public many inexpensive – but equally unflattering – editions of her works, sporting drab yellow dustjackets and printed tightly on second-rate paper. Moreover, women's magazines soon vied with each other to carry her latest novels and short stories, starting with the one-instalment publication of the first few chapters of *Rebecca* in the August 1941 issue of *The Ladies' Home Journal*, to be soon followed by the serialization of most of her works on both sides of the Atlantic. Usually lumped together as superficial organs of middle-class idleness and vapidity, even though some of them made a point of educating the modern woman and prided themselves on being in tune with their time, these magazines did not help Du Maurier's reputation, though they did bring her considerable sums of money.

4 Fortunately, in 1962, a full-page, four-column article published in the influential *Times Literary Supplement* contended that "two of Miss Daphne du Maurier's immensely popular novels do provide great literary interest" and "form part of an interesting stream of English-language fiction."[3] The two novels thus selected for distinction were *Rebecca* and *The Scapegoat*, the latter work being described as "a good original novel" for which "Miss du Maurier deserves far more credit [...] than she has so far received."[4] In spite of some scathing comments also made in the same review, this marked a change in how the intelligentsia viewed Du Maurier's fiction. One may therefore regret not only that this article left her brilliant shorter fiction out of the discussion, but also that it came out before Du Maurier released both her major novel *The House on the Strand* (1969) and her riveting collection of stories *Not After Midnight* (1971).

5 A few "serious" articles started to crop up in the 1980s. Mostly, these focused on the treatment of romance in Du Maurier's narratives, or on a comparison between so-called popular and canonical fictions, or on how she addressed key topics like class, female psychology, or female sexuality. It is also in the late 1980s that Richard Kelly wrote the first monograph devoted to Du Maurier, "in the hope that it may stimulate further discussion on her works" and to evaluate "her character as a writer and her unique contribution to literature and popular culture."[5] The critical attention paid to her escalated after that. Beginning in the 1990s, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik breathed new life into the field of Du Maurier criticism by addressing various aspects of Du Maurier's fiction, not only its connections with feminism and female Gothic, but also its representation of issues related to identity, the body, or incest. They also laid stress on a macabre streak in her shorter fiction, on her rapport with France, and on the question of regional writing. Then, in the next decade, Helen Taylor undertook a couple of major critical initiatives when she edited two series of articles: one meant for the mainstream market, *The Daphne Du Maurier Companion*, published by Virago in 2007; the other for publication in an issue of the academic-oriented *Women: A Cultural Review* (2009). All told, as the two-hundred-plus-strong bibliographical list at the end of this issue amply demonstrates, academic scrutiny of Du Maurier's fiction is alive and well, and constantly conquering new territory.

In a novel like *Rebecca*, for example, critics have underlined, in a sometimes contradictory manner, the presence of a mimetic class conservatism, a form of Gothic

in the tradition of the Brontë sisters, a liberating feminism, a lesbian subtext, or additional proof of the incest motif supposedly central to Du Maurier's fiction. In other words, the sheer number of articles now devoted to Du Maurier means that the wealth of interpretations to which her works lend themselves cannot be ignored anymore – that the time has come to officially expel Du Maurier and her literary production from the sort of middlebrow purgatory to which they were formerly consigned. Such is the aim of this issue, which will provide readers with new critical insights into Du Maurier's original and multifaceted works while placing them within broader perspectives thanks to contextual analysis.

7 To give honour where honour is due, the first part is entitled "'Je Reviens', or the Eternal Return of Rebecca." This is a reference to the name of the dead protagonist's boat in Du Maurier's bestseller, whose two French words literally translate into "I'll be back", thus sounding like a promise or a threat, as if the fictional boat in question powerfully asserted its perpetual presence or the imminent revelation of repressed truths. This part focuses on the enduring popularity of the novel, on its rivetingly protean ability to capture the imagination, and on its legacy over eighty years after its first publication.

8 As one might remember, Margaret Forster explains in her biography that Du Maurier was weary of being just the "author of Rebecca":[6]

> She was tired of it all, and especially of Rebecca. Never a month went by without someone informing her they were writing a sequel to Rebecca or asking her detailed questions about it which she could not answer. The most popular question was why the heroine had no name, which even Agatha Christie (with whom she enjoyed a short correspondence, though always refusing to meet her) wished to know.[7]

9 It seems, however, that readers and critics alike will never tire of asking such questions or of probing into what makes *Rebecca* such a fascinating work. As testified not only by Ben Wheatley's recent adaptation for Netflix but also by a new book on Hitchcock's 1940 adaptation,[8] Du Maurier's novel has become both a modern classic and an unfailing popular success – still selling about 4,000 copies a month, as Olivia Laing noted on the eightieth anniversary of its publication.[9] Appropriately for a novel obsessed with the motif of return, its enduring power has proved to have a lasting aesthetic impact. Likewise, although the latest rendition of the timeless classic claimed to revert to the source material, the critical failure of Netflix's new take on *Rebecca* has once again underscored the canonical status of Hitchcock and Selznick's adaptation as a masterpiece in its own right.[10]

10 Xavier Lachazette starts by highlighting the unfailing popularity of *Rebecca*, which was an immediate bestseller and has spawned countless adaptations in a wide array of mediums in the eight decades since the novel's publication, giving it a special status in European literature. Lachazette examines some lesser-known adaptations before detailing Du Maurier's own reaction to her bestseller. Looking more specifically at two 1962 reviews of her literary production and at various academic articles, Lachazette argues that the difficulty of "categorizing" Du Maurier's novel is precisely the source of her enduring success with readers and critics alike.

11 Jean-Loup Bourget, the author of a book-length study of Hitchcock and Selznick's adaptation of *Rebecca*,[11] examines the film along with the other two adaptations that Hitchcock made of Du Maurier material, *Jamaica Inn* (1938-39) and *The Birds* (1962-63). He then proceeds to analyse the complex network between Hitchcock and three generations of Du Mauriers, which comprises the friendly and professional relationship between Hitchcock and Daphne's father, the stage and occasionally film actor Gerald Du Maurier, and the possible thematic connections between Hitchcock and Daphne's grandfather George Du Maurier, the illustrator and author of *Trilby* and *Peter Ibbetson*. Bourget contends that this intricate network of relationships testifies to the director's abiding English roots and inspiration even while working in

Hollywood.

12 Milan Hain's article focuses on the production stage of Hitchcock and Selznick's canonical film, more specifically on the lengthy process of casting the unnamed female protagonist, by integrating adaptation considerations with star and performance studies. Drawing on archival documents, Hain first considers the convictions which guided independent producer David O. Selznick's art of literary adaptation. He then compares the surviving screen tests of several candidates for the main role to analyse how the casting of Joan Fontaine affected the characterization of the second Mrs. de Winter.

13 Finally, if *Rebecca* has been the subject of countless transmedial adaptations, Armelle Parey discusses a few examples of its "afterlife" in English-language literature to show that, like other classics, it is regularly submitted to literary rewritings of all kinds. From Antonia Fraser's "Rebecca's Story" (1976) to Lisa Gabriele's *The Winters* (2018), transfictions either change the novel's narrative perspective and focalisation, or offer narrative and temporal expansions – they can even transpose its plot and characters to contemporary America. As Parey demonstrates, all of these transfictions, while "preserv[ing] the traditional canon's centrality",[12] participate in the ongoing critical reassessment of the source text.

14 The second part is entitled "'Adieu Sagesse', or Troubled Identities in Du Maurier's Fiction." This time, the reference in the title is to the name of an earlier boat featured in a short story that Du Maurier first published in the October 1930 issue of *Cassell's Magazine*.[13] In the story, a sixty-year-old man grows so dissatisfied with the narrow-minded bourgeois life he is leading that he suddenly decides to refurbish his old boat and set sail for good, leaving his wife and three daughters right behind. This boat, whose French name literally means "Farewell to Wisdom", thus comes to symbolise all the hidden feelings and half-conscious desires pent up in the protagonist's innermost being, as is made clear in the following passage:

> Half-a-minute... wait... he'd nearly got it... it swung before him out of the mist, the first moment that the queer feeling was to come upon him. He had been sitting one evening long ago, last summer, in his favourite haunt. He must have dropped asleep because in his sleep he had heard a challenge. A challenge, a call, a summons from the depths of his being, clutching at his heart, seizing his mind.[14]

15 It also comes to symbolise the moment when a character has no choice but to give vent to inner struggles that can no longer be kept in check, thus creating a psychologically unsettling state which makes them throw caution, or "wisdom", to the wind.

16 Likewise, as the second part will show, Du Maurier's work is often disturbing, undermining as it does many a certainty or any fixed sense of identity. For their part, these articles mostly focus on lesser-known and relatively critically neglected works, such as her dramatic output or her very last novel, *Rule Britannia*, so often decried by Du Maurier fans themselves but which enjoyed a kind of renaissance when critics started to see it as foretelling Brexit. They also purport to reconsider the image of Du Maurier as a reclusive writer removed from contemporary life in the sense that her work shows her engagement with contemporary political issues, such as gender politics at the end of the Second World War or also Cornish identity during the rise of Celtic nationalism.

17 Building on comments by Alison Light and Nina Auerbach, Gina Wisker argues that Du Maurier's horror develops from the insidious undermining of the security of both the everyday normality of life and the inner narratives by which we construct and interpret our worlds. She shows how influenced Du Maurier was not only by Gothic horror but also by existentialism and its questioning of the relationship between words and things, self and world. To that end, Wisker focuses on *Rebecca* and on three short stories that are emblematic of internal narratives of self-deception

using liminal places where the familiar and the unfamiliar get inverted.

18 Nicole Cloarec's article deals with a lesser-known aspect of Daphne Du Maurier's work, i.e. her foraying into the dramatic genre, and with the film adaptation of her first original play. Although partly autobiographical, *The Years Between* tackles an uncharacteristically topical issue, documenting the profound upheavals that World War II was bringing about in Britain as a whole. Though retaining the surprisingly bitter tone of the play at a time when VE-Day was being celebrated, the film is very much a product of producer Sidney Box and his wife Muriel, who cowrote the screenplay. Cloarec contends that, unlike other adaptations of Du Maurier's works, the Boxes do not so much sentimentalise Du Maurier's play as give it a feminist and socialist agenda, underscoring both the wife's perspective and the social ramifications of Du Maurier's drama.

19 Helena Habibi's article examines *The Flight of the Falcon*, one of the relatively critically neglected novels in the Du Maurier canon. After highlighting how the motif of bird-men haunts Du Maurier's fiction, Habibi argues that this constant rewriting of the classical myth of Icarus finds its climax in this later novel, where the main characters reflect Du Maurier's interest in Jungian symbology as well as in the "Icarus complex", as identified by psychologist Henry A. Murray.

20 For her part, Eva Leung turns to an unusual feature in Du Maurier's fiction, namely the use of prologues and epilogues in two of her fictionalised family biographies, *Hungry Hill* (1943) and *The Glass-Blowers* (1963). She examines the plausible rationales for this narrative choice, in terms of contextualisation and characterisation, and how this aesthetic feature ultimately involves the readers. Leung concludes that far from being accidental, this narrative specificity is evidence of Du Maurier's narrative experimentation.

21 Finally, Ella Westland examines Du Maurier's last novel, *Rule Britannia*, which acquired uncanny resonance in post-2016 Brexit referendum discourse. She returns the work to its own political, geographical and biographical contexts and shows that the 1960s campaign to take Britain into the European Common Market had a clear bearing on the book, as did the rise of Celtic nationalism and Daphne's own autobiographical circumstances. Westland demonstrates that *Rule Britannia* actually marked a reorientation of Du Maurier's relationship to contemporary Cornwall just as she was about to retire from writing fiction.

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Notes

1 “Daphne Du Maurier” is the English spelling we have opted for in this issue, except in quotes where other writers chose not to capitalise the particle *du*. Likewise in French, our preferred spelling is “Daphne du Maurier”.

2 Liz McManus, “The Phenomenon of Du Maurier”, *The Sunday Tribune*, 11 August 1991, Books 1, 2.

3 Marghanita Laski, “Archangels Ruined”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 October 1962, 808.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Richard Kelly, *Daphne Du Maurier*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987, n.p.

6 In her memoir, Daphne’s daughter Flavia recalls that during the war the huge success of *Rebecca* “had brought many fans in the shape of American GIs to Menabilly”: “the peace of the gardens became spoilt at weekends by curious Yanks in groups of a dozen at a time, coming right up to the house and saying ‘Say, does the author of *Rebecca* live here?’” Flavia Leng, *Daphne Du Maurier: A Daughter’s Memoir* [1994], Edinburgh & London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007, 67.

7 Margaret Forster, *Daphne Du Maurier*, London: Arrow Books, 2007, 391.

8 Patricia White, Rebecca, BFI Film Classics, London: British Film Institute, 2021.

9 Olivia Laing, “Sex, jealousy and gender: Daphne Du Maurier’s Rebecca 80 years on”, The Guardian, 23 February 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/feb/23/olivia-laing-on-daphne-du-mauriers-rebecca-80-years-on>, accessed on 8 July 2021.

10 Netflix’s *Rebecca* has been found to suffer considerably in comparison to Hitchcock and Selznick’s adaptation. For example, Sheila O’Malley argues that “the new adaptation for Netflix [...] highlights the strengths of the 1940 version, and underlines its own lack, in terms of style, atmosphere, and general understanding of the story itself.” (Sheila O’Malley, “*Rebecca*”, 16 October 2020, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/rebecca-movie-review-2020>, accessed on 7 November 2021). Likewise, as Joshua Rivera asserts in *The Verge*, “It’s hard to live up to Hitchcock, but the new film falls short in more ways than one.” His unflattering conclusion goes as follows: “Good art is often determined by what is left unsaid. Filmmakers working in Old Hollywood dealt with a tremendous amount of industry-imposed limitations and still managed to create enduring art. Liberated as the new Rebecca may be, it falls into an old trap: telling too much when showing will do. In a world where it is free to say whatever it wants, Netflix’s Rebecca fails to communicate anything of substance.” (Joshua Rivera, “Netflix’s *Rebecca* flattens a classic”, 24 October 2020, <https://www.theverge.com/2020/10/24/21531089/netflix-rebecca-review-hitchcock-disney-remake>, accessed on 7 November 2021).

11 Jean-Loup Bourget, Rebecca *d’Alfred Hitchcock*, Paris: Vendémiaire, 2017.

12 Jeremy Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day: Genre and the Contemporary Literary Marketplace,* New York: Columbia UP, 2016, 5.

13 Daphne Du Maurier, “Adieu Sagesse”, *Cassell’s Magazine*, October 1930, no. 223, 116+. Later reprinted in Daphne Du Maurier, *Early Stories*, London: Todd Publishing, 1954.

14 Daphne Du Maurier, “Adieu Sagesse”, *Early Stories*, London: Todd Publishing, 1954, 60.

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Gender and Generic Clashes in *The Years Between* (Compton Bennett, 1946) [Texte intégral]
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The Secret Life of Secret Agents: Alan Bennett and John Schlesinger’s *An Englishman Abroad* (1983) and *A Question of Attribution* (1991) [Texte intégral]
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Paru dans *Revue LISA/LISA e-journal*, vol. XIV-n°2 | 2016

Tous les textes...

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After Comparative Literature and French studies, Anne Hall taught French at the University of California at Berkeley and later, English at the Facultés of Tours and Aix-Marseille. She is the author of *Sur les pas de Daphné du Maurier* (Cherche-Lune, 2010), *The Du Mauriers Just as They Were* (Unicorn, 2017) and *Angela Thirkell: A Writer’s Life* (Unicorn, 2021). She is currently researching various novelists’ holidays in France.

Xavier Lachazette
A member of his University’s research unit (3LAM) and an associate member of the University of Angers’ CIRPaLL (with a focus on short forms), Xavier Lachazette teaches 19th- and 20th-century English literature at Le Mans University. Besides being the coeditor of this issue and the convener of the first Daphne Du Maurier conference in France, he is currently coediting an issue devoted to Du Maurier’s short stories, to be published in Spring 2022 in the *JSSE*. He has already published five articles on Daphne Du Maurier, together with other contributions on works by W. Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and Charles Darwin.

Articles du même auteur

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
'Je Reviens', or the Eternal Return of *Rebecca*

'Other Books Like *Rebecca*? Are There Any?': The Singular Fate of a Novel

« Des livres comme Rebecca, y en a-t-il d'autres ? » : le destin singulier d'un roman

Xavier Lachazette

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Résumés

English Français

Daphne Du Maurier's international bestseller, *Rebecca*, has always puzzled readers, reviewers, and critics alike. Often hard put to define why the novel has them in its thrall and what genre or category it can be said to fall under, they resort to explanations which are both numerically impressive and strikingly contradictory. To underline the exceptional singularity of such a work, the unique literary and historical status of Du Maurier's fifth novel will first be analysed. Du Maurier's surprisingly unperceptive assessment of her own work will then be studied, both before its publication and after it became a runaway bestseller. Finally, we will have a look at some of the critical attention it has recently received, in the press and in academic articles, to show that assessing or categorising *Rebecca* has always been a contentious issue, not just for its author but also for critics at large.

Rebecca, le phénomène international de librairie, a toujours mystifié lecteurs et critiques. Souvent bien désarmés au moment de définir l'emprise que ce célèbre roman de Daphne du Maurier exerce sur eux, ou quand il s'agit de déterminer à quel genre ou quelle catégorie il appartient, ils recourent à des explications au nombre impressionnant et aux arguments bien contradictoires. Afin de souligner la singularité exceptionnelle d'une telle œuvre, le statut littéraire et historique sans pareil du cinquième roman de du Maurier sera tout d'abord analysé. Le jugement étonnamment peu perspicace de l'auteure sur cette œuvre précise sera ensuite étudié, aussi bien avant sa publication qu'après son succès planétaire. Enfin, nous nous pencherons sur la critique littéraire qu'il a suscitée récemment, aussi bien dans la presse que dans les cercles universitaires, pour montrer que son évaluation et sa catégorisation ont

toujours été problématiques, non seulement pour son auteure mais aussi pour les critiques de tous bords.

Entrées d’index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, Rebecca, histoire littéraire, critique littéraire, genres, succès de librairie
Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, Rebecca, literary history, literary criticism, genres, bestseller

Texte intégral

1 Between 20 January and 1 March of an unspecified year, seventeen members of Goodreads, the self-styled “site for readers and book recommendations”,[1] exchanged a total of fifty-six messages on the following topic: “Other books like *Rebecca*? Are there any?”[2] “Meghna”, the initiator of this discussion thread, wrote, “Rebecca is my all time favourite. Are ther [sic] other books like that? So much in one book...” (message 1). Her virtual friend “Renee” advised her to read other Daphne Du Maurier books, but since Meghna had already read them all, Renee suggested that she try modern Gothic writers. As other Goodreads members joined in the discussion, writers like Paul Bowles, Jack Cady, Johanna Lindsey, Ruth Rendell, Catherine Gaskins, Victoria Holt, Charlotte Brontë or Wilkie Collins got mentioned, among others, for belonging to the same or to related genres, like horror and mystery. Meghna further explained, “When I first read *Rebecca* as a very young woman, I wanted to read other books like it. Well, I am no longer a young woman and I have never found another book quite like it. There are other genre novels but *Rebecca* is unique. None of DuMaurier’s [sic] other books are as good as this one” (message 36). To this, “Susan” wholeheartedly assented: “I totally agree, *Rebecca* is in a category all by itself” (message 53).

2 As these exchanges show, Du Maurier’s best-known work causes paradoxical reactions in its readers. On the one hand, they feel *Rebecca* to be similar to a number of other works in the Gothic romance, the thriller, or the psychological novel genres, for example, and they use it as a model against which to compare classics or more recent productions, fatally deemed inferior. On the other hand, they are of the opinion that it is unique, in a class of its own: a novel that has marked them for the rest of their lives and whose thrilling equivalent they have never been able to find. That they never stopped searching for such a treasure cannot be doubted, though. As Meghna further comments, “Warning: *Rebecca* is one of the best of this particular genre, so if you find something you feel is better, please let us all know!” (message 35).

3 This article analyses such a paradoxical impression and highlights the unique literary and historical status of Du Maurier’s fifth novel, of which only a very few equivalents must exist in Western history. Du Maurier surprisingly expressed unperceptive assessments of her own novel, both before its publication and after it became an instant bestseller. If some critics were mystified by *Rebecca*, others (including recent academics) have found much to praise in it, for cumulative reasons which are both complementary *and* contradictory, so much so that no clear consensus is easily reached as to why the novel has been such a success. Indeed, two reviews published in the general press in 1962 show that assessing and categorising *Rebecca* has always been a contentious issue for reviewers or critics at large, who rarely seem to see eye to eye on critical aspects of the novel, whether those relate to generic issues or to character interpretation. It is precisely these critics’ imperious desire *and* their unfailing inability to place Du Maurier’s bestseller under any viable

category that distinguishes it from other classics.

Rebecca's Unique Place in Literary History

4 Even though one may not be quite aware of it, *Rebecca* holds a unique status in Western literature. Of which other novels (or novel, in the singular?) can it be said that they have inspired such an array not only of prequels, coquels and sequels,[3] but also of cinema, TV, radio and stage adaptations? Which other novel has made such a place for itself in popular culture that the mansion at the centre of it, like Manderley in the case of *Rebecca*, has acquired such a universal power of evocation – surpassing even Jane Austen's Pemberley (*Pride and Prejudice*) or E.M. Forster's eponymous Howards End? Which other opening line gets quoted for its hauntingly glum quality as often as "Last night I dreamed I went to Manderley again", except perhaps Proust's "*Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure*" or Camus' "*Aujourd'hui, maman est morte*"? Or which other novel can claim to include three female antagonists who have become not only household names but also fictional types? To highlight such a privileged status, I will focus on lesser-known facts and less often quoted sources of information than Margaret Forster's (still unparalleled) 1993 biography.

5 As it happens, two of the numerous adaptations which the novel has inspired span the years from the publication of the novel to the very recent past. Indeed, one might remember that on 9 December 1938, that is to say a mere four months after its publication, The Campbell Playhouse, sponsored by Campbell's Soup, aired the first adaptation of *Rebecca* – in that case, a live radioplay directed by Orson Welles, with a youthful Margaret Sullavan and Welles as the two protagonists, Maxim de Winter and his second wife. As a tongue-in-cheek, carefully scripted and technically brilliant finale to the show, Du Maurier herself placed a long-distance phone call from London. In an assured tone, she congratulated the cast before answering one of the two burning questions on the lips of many an American fan, namely "if there is anywhere in England a house or an estate like Manderley?"[4] Though she spoke on a jocular tone and mischievously shrouded the unnamed locale in vagueness, Du Maurier replied earnestly to that query by actually revealing to listeners how to get to Menabilly, the Cornish estate near Fowey with which she had been in love since the mid-1920s, but of which she would only become the tenant five years later, in 1943:

> When you next come to London, Miss Sullavan, get into a train at Paddington Station, and travel West. When you've been 250 miles, get out of the train and walk southeast for half an hour. You'll come to an iron gate and lodge, and a narrow swifting drive. If you ever find your way to the end of that drive, you may discover Manderley.[5]

6 But when Sullavan put her *second* question, taking up again the subject raised by Welles a few minutes before when he alluded to "the major literary mystery of the year"[6] – in other words, when Sullavan asked about the name of the young heroine, so intriguingly kept secret in the novel, Du Maurier pretended not to hear, and instead repeated her thanks to both actors before hanging up abruptly. It was thus left to a cryptogram, supposedly sent by carrier pigeon, to put a temporary end to the conundrum as the actress finally read the following message: "Inter-office memo from Daphne Du Maurier to Margaret Sullavan: 'The name of the heroine of *Rebecca* is Mrs. Max de Winter.'"[7]

7 At the opposite end of that span, in 2020, yet another feature-length adaptation, directed by Ben Wheatley this time, was aired on Netflix, the online streaming platform, a long time after various newspapers had eagerly reported the shooting of

the opening scenes of the film in Monaco's Exotic Garden, or at L'Excelsior Regina Palace, a luxury hotel in an exclusive neighbourhood of Nice, France.

8 In-between those two dates, the novel unwittingly found itself drawn into the Second World War, on *both* sides of the conflict. As biographer Jane Dunn informs us, Daphne's sister Angela was told by one of Neville Chamberlain's daughters that, on his way to Munich to meet Hitler and hopefully prevent a war, her father "had packed a copy of *Rebecca* in his luggage, to take his mind off the momentous business he had to conduct."[8] Later on in 1942, on the Axis powers side this time, a spy for the *Abwehr*, the German Secret Service, used the Gollancz edition – that is to say the original English-language edition of the novel – to try and infiltrate British Army Headquarters and thus discover the Eighth Army's movements and battle plans in North Africa. The Germans also had their eyes on any kind of information related to the Suez Canal. The *Abwehr* spy was supposed to send back coded reports of his findings, just as novelist Ken Follett shows in his 1980 spy novel *The Key to Rebecca*. As Mark Simmons explains in his historical study, *The Rebecca Code*:

> *Rebecca* was to be used as a code book by the agents. Using the book, or any book, as a code was fairly straightforward. Sentences were made using single words in the book, referred to by page numbers, lines and position in the line. Page numbers changed every day. It was a secure method of communication so long as no one else knew the title of the de-code manual, or book.[9]

9 Back on the Allied front, *Rebecca* and two other Du Maurier novels (*Jamaica Inn* and *The King's General*) were published for the U.S. military as "Armed Services Editions", a colossal government-supplied provision of 120 million pocket-sized books handed out for free to American soldiers. These complete and unabridged versions of classics or best-sellers of the day sported an easily recognizable rectangular format, owing to the fact that they were designed to fit nicely into soldiers' uniform pockets. As Molly Guptill Manning comments in her study of those wartime publications, entitled *When Books Went to War: The Stories that Helped Us Win World War II*:

> Whenever a soldier needed an escape, the antidote to anxiety, relief from freedom, a bit of laughter, inspiration, or hope, he cracked open a book and drank in the words that would transport him elsewhere. Every soldier and sailor abided by a strict policy of swapping and exchanging books, no matter how worn. [...] With books in their pockets, American GIs stormed the beaches of Normandy, trekked to the Rhine, and liberated Europe.[10]

10 In 1940 Du Maurier herself had dramatized her novel for the stage, this first play of hers enjoying a tremendously successful run during World War II, in no mean part thanks to the casting of a frightening Margaret Rutherford, of Miss Marple fame, as Mrs. Danvers. The Alfred Hitchcock film came out that same year, garnering two Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Cinematography (Black-and-White) in 1941, out of a total of 11 nominations, unquestionably helping Du Maurier's bestseller to attain the modern classic status that it has carried for decades. Indeed, in quick succession, Du Maurier's bestseller went on to spawn a spate of mostly made-for-TV dramatizations, not only in the United States but also in England and Italy: in 1947 (for the BBC), 1948 (Philco Television Playhouse, US), 1950 (Robert Montgomery Presents, US), 1952 (Broadway Television Theater, US), 1954 (BBC Sunday Night Theatre), 1962 (NBC), 1969 (Rai, Italy), 1978 (BBC), 1997 (ITV), and 2008 (Rai 1), among others.

11 On the lighter side, on 12 September 1972, a two-part, fourteen-minute spoof of Hitchcock's 1940 film adaptation of Du Maurier's novel was aired in the United States in one of Carol Burnett's epoch-making variety shows, which combined film parodies, character pieces, songs, and dances. In that parody, entitled *Rebecky*, the name of the protagonist played by Burnett is "Daphne" while her suitor, "Mr. de

Wintry" (Harvey Korman), is introduced as the owner of "Roundelay", a stately mansion. In Part 1, De Wintry falls in love with "a certain marvelous child-like quality" in Daphne – a quality that she is more than eager to demonstrate to him by seductively, so she thinks, sucking at her thumbs.[11] In Part 2 of the spoof, "Mrs. Davvers" (Vicki Lawrence), the housekeeper, hates Daphne from the word go, and even tries to strangle her after a minute or so, though Daphne's husband comments, "I think she likes you!" The skeleton in the closet at Roundelay is also the first Mrs. de Wintry, though not the *femme fatale* one expects from reading Du Maurier's novel, but rather Max's own mother, played by Harvey Korman in drag, in a final twist reminiscent of "Norman Bates" (Anthony Perkins)'s schizoid impersonation of his dead mother in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960).

12 Even as far as musical adaptations are concerned, the novel has inspired notable composers and librettists alike. In the 1980s Opera North, a national opera company based in Leeds, England, commissioned its very first work for the stage, to be composed by Wilfred Josephs. That work, *Rebecca*, was produced in October 1983, with Gillian Sullivan as "The Girl." Moreover, a German-language musical called *Rebecca* was created by Michael Kunze (lyrics) and Sylvester Levay (music), the successful pair who had already produced *Elizabeth*, *Mozart!* and *Marie-Antoinette*. The musical was such a hit for three years from 2006 that the libretto was translated into Japanese, Korean, and a whole array of European languages (like Finnish, Hungarian, Swedish, Russian, Romanian and Czech), for productions in those other countries. An English-language translation of Kunze and Levay's musical was months away from being staged on Broadway in 2012 when the show suddenly fell through: an FBI investigation revealed that four of the production's alleged investors were actually fictitious, the middleman behind the fabrication of those investors being charged with fraud.[12]

13 Nor was it the first time that a whiff of scandal had surrounded *Rebecca*. Indeed, between November 1941 and January 1948, Du Maurier had to live with hints or veiled accusations that her bestseller had been copied from, or inspired by, any of three works written by two women: Brazilian author Carolina Nabuco's Portuguese-language novel *A Sucessora* (literally, "The Successor", Rio de Janeiro: Olympio, 1934) and American Edwina Levin MacDonald's story "I Planned to Kill My Husband" (*Hearst's International Magazine*, October 1924), later expanded into a full-length novel titled *Blind Windows* (New York: Macauley, 1927). In a 16 November 1941 article, *The New York Times* Book Section was the first to underline similarities between Nabuco's novel and Du Maurier's, implying (though never claiming) that such "literary coincidence"[13] could constitute a case of downright plagiarism. Interestingly, before two weeks had elapsed, Harrison Smith, an editor at Doubleday, Doran & Co. (Du Maurier's publisher in the United States), defended Du Maurier on the ground that "a creative writer" like her had no need "to steal a plot."[14] He also argued that parallels are inevitable between works with similar plots, and that literature hinges on a small enough number of themes:

> Human minds, even though separated by circumstance and distance, will insist on conceiving the same mechanical inventions, the same ideas for biographies or novels at the same moment. And when you reflect that there are only seven basic themes in all literature, the surprise is not that so many charges of plagiarism fill the air, but that, everything considered, there should be so few.[15]

14 While Nabuco never went to court over such allegations, Du Maurier had no choice but to sail to New York City in November 1947 to deny the charges pressed by MacDonald, her other accuser, even though the latter had died in 1946, five years after the commencement of her action. Fortunately for Du Maurier, in spite of the forty-six "parallelisms" submitted by the plaintiff, District Judge Bright deemed the differences between the works under scrutiny to be greater than their similarities when he gave his verdict on 14 January 1948. Moreover, he saw eye to eye with the

opinion expressed by another judge during a previous appeal, which highlighted the singularities of Du Maurier's novel, both in terms of literary merit (readability, page-turning quality) and of technical know-how (plot progression, characterization, efficacy and focus):

> In my opinion, not only is the handling of the plot or theme different, and the characters and incidents unlike, but also the readability of the two books inducing interest and a desire to finish, demonstrate the entire failure to show any literary piracy. Judge Clark has much more capably expressed what is in my mind. He comments in his dissenting opinion upon the sharp differences between the two stories in "intended objective and type of reader appeal, in fashioning of the plot and in its progression, in the inception and delineation of characters, in the climax of the story and denouement of the plot, and in the effectiveness and, certainly in part at least, in the literary skill with which the chosen objective is reached."[16]

Du Maurier's Intriguing Imperception of Her Novel's Uniqueness

15 This is praise indeed – from an unexpected quarter, too, and at an awkward moment in Du Maurier's life.[17] What's more, that a work of fiction should have continued to be appropriated transnationally and transposed over eight decades into such an impressive array of mediums clearly indicates it has become a part of our Western literary heritage.

16 Nevertheless it seems that Du Maurier herself never saw the success of her fifth novel coming, and never quite understood the lasting favour it found with readers and critics alike. Several reasons might account for this surprising lack of insight. For one thing, though she started the novel in Egypt where she hated the barracks life of a soldier's spouse, it is in Hampshire that she completed it, in the midst of great "domestic disruption", as Forster remarks.[18] Being reunited with her young children unsettled her at first, not only because of their calls upon her precious time and her affection, but also because Greyfriars, near Fleet (Hampshire), was a new house to her, one in which she had had no time to establish the stable "routes"[19] which she required to write. Then, though she finally adapted and was able to write at great speed, she kept finding fault with her own work. In a letter to Victor Gollancz, her publisher and friend, she claimed she was afraid he would find it "stupid, overdone." She warned him that "It's a bit on the gloomy side" and that "the psychological side may not be understood."[20] Though flattered when Gollancz rolled out one of his signature advertising campaigns for the novel, she let her apprehension get the better of her and wrote him: "I am worried that you and Norman Collins are taking so much trouble over the book, and I only hope it's not an awful flop, because you'll all lose a lot of money."[21]

17 Moreover, as shown by a 1962 letter written to her friend Oriel Malet, Du Maurier believed that the dreamy tone in the novel marked it as completely outmoded. In her eyes, the roles and functions fulfilled by the imagination in bygone days were irrelevant to twentieth-century men and women, a modern development which must have pained her and made her feel obsolete since, as she often claimed, her whole life had been spent in a world of make-believe.[22] In that letter to Oriel, she states:

> Of course it was old-fashioned in 1938 when it was written—I remember critics saying it was a queer throwback to the 19th-century Gothic novel. But I shall never know quite *why* it seized upon everyone's imagination, not just teenagers and shop girls, like people try to say now, but *every* age, and *both* sexes. It certainly would not today, which shows how the world has gone ahead in the past twenty years, into a much more scientific, realistic sort of approach. I feel it myself. One terribly wants to get at the *truth*.[23]

18 It could also be that Du Maurier never anticipated the phenomenal reception of *Rebecca* because she knew quite well the novel might never have become the work we know today. As readers were thrilled to learn when *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories* was published in 1981, that is to say over three decades after its initial release, the characters and events cursorily planned out in Du Maurier’s notebook seem to have acquired a life of their own in the actual writing stage of the novel. A few of the characters’ names were modified, including that of the male protagonist, whose original appellation, Henry, may finally have struck her as overly dull.[24] Also, the name of Rebecca’s boat was turned from the nomadic or free-spirited *Gypsy* to the more ghostly *Je Reviens*. More importantly, as Du Maurier reveals, “the housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, had become more sinister. Why, I have no idea. The original epilogue somehow merged into the first chapter, and the ending was entirely changed.”[25] No fire broke out at Manderley in the planning stage, and Henry was simply injured in a car crash. To cap it all, whatever the merits of this other idea for an opening line, it is unlikely that the sentence in the draft epilogue would have captured the imagination of millions of readers, going as it then did: “If you travel south you will come upon us in the end, staying in one of those innumerable little hotels that cling like limpets to the Mediterranean shore.”[26]

19 There is therefore no reason to believe that Du Maurier’s misgivings about her novel were anything but sincere, or mere fishing for compliments. This is further proved by a forgotten essay, entitled “A Writer is A Strange Creature”,[27] which she wrote for the October 1938 number of *Wings* – an American monthly published by The Literary Guild – and which was designed to accompany the release of *Rebecca* in the United States. In it, she claims that though her family often beg her to “write something cheerful for a change”, she does not actually choose her own subjects (“they choose themselves”), and they often turn out to have a gloomy streak to them. “What would I give to make people split their sides with mirth”, she regretfully adds. “But it does not happen. The laughter will not come”).[28] Interestingly, she blames her alleged moodiness on a heredity issue which she associates both with her grandfather George, who was “melancholy and gay by turn”, and with an actor father, Gerald, who never was himself, she asserts, but rather “a thousand different people.”[29] She concludes, “Small wonder the result is a little distorted.”

20 It is intriguing to see that by claiming to be *distorted*, that is to say by pretending to share an essential difference with the prestigious ancestors in whose artistic footsteps she gladly follows, Du Maurier contradicts the whole surface message that her essay is supposed to deliver. Indeed, as she contends in her opening remarks, her purport in those few pages is to show how wrong the layman is in believing that writers are any different from regular people:

> Why should the artist, be he writer, actor, painter, composer, be considered as though he were a species apart from his fellow men, a rare being, dreamy and temperamental, who works when he chooses and when the spirit moves him, living in another world from road menders and plumbers? [...] We hear nothing of the temperamental plumber, though a twisted pipe must require very much more planning than a sentence gone awry. No, the fact is that the writer continues to be a “type” in the mind of the non-writer, in the same way as the stage person, the servant who drops her aitches, and the red-faced colonel from India.[30]“

21 The need to be *unlike* the common run of human beings, to *not* belong to the uncreative or unimaginative portion of humanity, thus insinuates itself at the centre of an essay officially meant to put to rest widespread misrepresentations about the alleged superiority or difference of the artist. In other words, it could be argued that, consciously or not, de-categorising and re-categorising herself was a personal issue with which Du Maurier had to contend, in the sense that the hereditary argument she makes use of in this article (the imprint on her of her father’s and her grandfather’s legacies) really points to essential variances between herself and the world at large, or

to identity claims that do not get substantiated in the article.

22 As we know, *Rebecca* never ran the risk of flopping, though. In spite of its author's apprehensions, the novel was The Book Society's choice for August 1938[31] even before booksellers had received their first copies. Soon, it was expected to sell quite well in the first few weeks,[32] and it finally went on to become a runaway bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world. True, a few negative or strangely appreciative reviews will inevitably be found. For instance, one reviewer called the book "a glorified novelette" and explained this was meant as "a term of high praise" because "Miss du Maurier has taken a plot as sentimental and melodramatic as anything out of Shakespeare or Dickens and literally glorified it by a spontaneously lovely use of words and a high degree of story-telling craftsmanship."[33] Another critic blamed the work for the "unreal characters and stage situations" it allegedly contains, and asserted that "'human nature, at least in England, is not to be looked for [in it]'", before likening it to "one of those 'horrid' romances which Catherine and Isabelle Thorpe devoured", in reference to characters and sentences from Jane Austen's parodic *Northanger Abbey*.[34] In 1940, yet another reviewer wrote that the success of not only the novel, but also the play and the Hitchcock film totally mystified him and that the only explanations he could find were Du Maurier's "lush emotionalism" and her "creating the stock characters of Romance, with a capital 'R.'"[35]

23 But many other reviewers sensed that the romantic surface of the novel was a lure which the discerning critic had to overlook in order to get to more demanding depths. As one of them explained in her review:

> I complained somewhat bitterly last week of the absurd and sensational outpourings of romantic women novelists, but I had not then begun to read *Rebecca*. Immediately I was confounded. For Miss du Maurier's book is romantic and sensational, and could quite easily have been absurd. Instead, it is a really brilliant piece of work: the most impressive novel of its kind which I have read for years. It is astounding, and very interesting to find a young writer with the courage to tackle a romance in the old-fashioned grand manner, and turn out not merely a best-seller, but a story which will be equally enjoyed by the discriminating and critical reader.[36]

24 Academics have obviously agreed with such a take on *Rebecca*, as amply proved by the sheer number of in-depth articles generated by the novel.[37] The task of going through them all is naturally of too vast proportions to be attempted here, but focusing instead on one particular instance will easily demonstrate some of the reasons for the critical appeal of the work.

25 When analysing Du Maurier's works as striking instances of popular fiction, critic Nicholas Rance starts by underlining the affinity of *Rebecca* with works by Bram Stoker, Arthur Conan Doyle and John Buchan in whose texts, he argues, the same "paranoid conservatism about women"[38] can be found. What he means is that one possible reading of the novel can be "relatively placid"[39] and be content to see the plot as the triumph of a demure, respectably monogamous young woman over her husband's malignant and oversexed first wife, in keeping with the moralising attitude prevalent in the 1930s. Such an interpretation, however, is blatantly contradicted by the palpable fascination which the allegedly evil first wife holds for her replacement, in whom "libidinous tendencies and the threat which they pose are repressed, to be merely obliquely acknowledged in an overtly gratuitous childlessness."[40] Whether in Genesis (the Eve episode), in Freudian psychoanalysis, or in the case of the nameless narrator in *Rebecca*, Rance reminds us that "the paradigm of curiosity is sexual curiosity", so that the second wife "does not re-emerge as a separate entity from Rebecca"[41] but potentially poses the same threat to the patriarchal order as did her predecessor.

2 No clearer or more consensual conclusion can be drawn from critical discussions about *Rebecca* and its portrayal of upper-class or "aristocratic" lifestyles – permitted by a third type of reading of the text. As Rance reminds us, the novel has been

construed as the demise of a world made archaic by modernity "within a historical context of aristocratic compromise and stooping to class alliances in the era from the National Government in the 1930s to the Conservative Government under Harold Macmillan in the late 1950s and early 1960s."[42] But the protagonist's childlessness directly echoes her enemy's malformation of the uterus, thus pointing to a dead-end future for the kind of social compromise which the de Winters are supposed to embody.[43] A fourth entry into the novel, from the female Gothic perspective this time, does allow Rance to unequivocally state that the "presiding fear in gothic fiction [...] is of the return of a malign past"[44] and that Du Maurier takes her cue from Ann Radcliff's kind of Gothic, which purports to offer rationalist explanations at the end but "barely dispels the mood of paranoia about a possibly intruding past."[45] And certainly, Du Maurier's narrator does seem to provide an unduly optimistic ending which readers can only disbelieve, haunted as the de Winters are by the infernal powers of the deceased first wife, by the arson which consumed Manderley, and by their exile from an Eden-like estate where an unnatural kind of vegetation has metaphorically been allowed to run riot.

27 Finally, the Gothic leading seamlessly to psychological considerations, Rance draws a parallel between *Rebecca* and Freud's reading of Ibsen's play *Rosmersholm*. In his essay titled "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work", Freud argues that, in certain cases, a patient's neurosis or illness can be psychosomatic and stem not from failure, but from what is felt to be an unjustifiable degree of success, thus causing an acute sense of guilt. In the play, "Rebecca West" has not only succeeded in supplanting Rosmer's first wife (who committed suicide) but also her own mother, many years before, by sleeping with her father at a time when she only believed herself to have been adopted by him. Rance then concludes: "Moved to a half-confession by guilt, she [Rebecca West] is also prevented from displacing the dead Beata as the wife of Rosmer, sufficiently her senior to be a father-figure, as Maxim is sufficiently senior to the heroine of *Rebecca*."[46] By centre-staging the mature adult/immature child relationship at the core of the novel instead of seeing it as an anodyne quirk of Du Maurier's narrative, Rance thus paves the way for an interpretation in which incest,[47] or taboo more generally, actuates the characters and could really account for their expulsion from the Happy Valley or the Manderley of their dreams.

The Problematic Categorising of a Unique Novel

28 Undoubtedly, one can only be impressed by the fact that a novel should lend itself to such a wide spectrum of interpretations. What is also striking in the case of this highly popular work of fiction is that some reviewers or critics keep on calling it a *novelette* or a *romance*, as we have seen, or also, perhaps more creatively, "not exactly a classic of literature" but a "Cornish thriller" with "a rattling good story."[48] Nevertheless, some thirty years ago already, Alison Light powerfully demonstrated why such a moniker as "romantic novelist" – or even "the last of the great romantic writers" – does not fit Du Maurier at all. In her study of the Cornish writer's fiction, Light convincingly asserted that "If *Rebecca* is a novel about the perfidious nature of romantic projection, then it is not so much anti-romantic as post-romantic, no longer trusting that the freedom to imagine will bring an escape from self."[49] Three decades ago, therefore, Light already insisted on the kind of modernity which Du Maurier staringly evinces when, not content to skim the textual surface of her works, one truly fathoms their depths. She even went so far as to assert:

> Du Maurier, like Agatha Christie, made entertainment out of modernist

> anxieties; *Rebecca* is not *Nausea*, though arguably du Maurier's novel shares more than the year of publication with Sartre's, and to suggest that an existential 'anguish' at the instability of subjectivity is at the heart of *Rebecca* is not as preposterous as it might first sound.[50]

29 In her eyes, Du Maurier is modern, or a modernist, in a number of ways: she is post-Freudian because she portrays "sexual desire as an overpowering unconscious force in all humans, but one necessarily repressed by convention."[51] In spite of the mournful nostalgia in which *Rebecca* bathes, Light describes her imagination as modernist in its "unequivocally evoking a sense of exile as an irremediable condition of subjective life."[52] And though, as we have seen, the make-believe world in which Du Maurier liked to live – some would say take refuge – has sometimes been construed as artificially disconnected from both social and worldly realities, Light sees such daydreaming as a fount of intimate and potentially tormented knowledge when she writes: "Such an interior life of fantasy is a kind of modern oracle, seeming to tell us what we want to hear but delivering us unwittingly to more buried, often dangerous desires."[53] In other words, the lazy stereotyping at work when critics occasionally classify Du Maurier as a romantic writer misses the mark by not realising that, while satisfying the reader's needs or expectations in terms of generic pleasure, a parodic counter-discourse inscribed in the text negates or subverts that self-same pleasure.

30 What's more, as Light reminds us, the totality of Du Maurier's writings cover an impressive number of different genres, so that summarising her as the spearhead of a mere couple of them (the Gothic tale or the romantic novel, for instance) is necessarily sketchy, not to say inadequate. Indeed, when one thinks for instance that *Frenchman's Creek* can count as a swashbuckling tale; that *Hungry Hill*, *Mary Anne* and *The Glass-Blowers* are family sagas or fictionalised family biographies while *Rule Britannia* is set in a dystopian near future; or that "The Breakthrough" stands as a science fiction short story while "The Archduchess" is written in the Ruritanian vein in vogue in the late 19th- and early 20th centuries, one can but agree with Light when she writes:

> certainly her work must be a nightmare for the eager compiler of 'genre studies' compendia, containing as it does (according to one authority) the already blurred categories of 'gothics, romances and family sagas', to which we might cheerfully add 'mysteries', science fiction and ghost stories (leaving aside her 'non-fiction').[54]

31 Finally, one intriguing case of critical divergence about Du Maurier's works and the generic assumptions to which they give rise is provided by two articles printed a mere few months apart. In the first of these articles, dated 20 April 1962, a critic called Ronald Bryden openly lashes and laughs at Du Maurier's fiction in *The Spectator* on the occasion of the release of her latest opus, *Castle Dor*. More than that, he argues that her whole family "have purveyed for a century a glossy brand of entertaining nonsense, because that is all they and their huge audiences have ever found literature to be."[55] Though such a remark clearly demonstrates a marked prejudice by equating superficiality with the less affluent or educated classes of British society, Bryden sneers at Du Maurier for supposedly showing exactly the same kind of preconceptions in all her novels. He writes:

> She gratifies one's most secret social ambitions. Each novel is a country-house weekend in fancy dress, in which you are ushered understandingly into the world of crenellated façades and minstrel galleries. Gently, you are initiated and calmed: shown that the servants will not bite, told where to go after breakfast (the morning-room, to write letters), tutored in ordering meals or firing housemaids, warned who in the county hunts or has mad aunts. Mildly, the aristocratic discomforts and formalities of the house are mocked, together with the gaffes that they may lead to—you are instructed while made at home and equal. [...] And what she holds out is social redemption, forgiveness even for

> our prawning nets and spurious origins, if we will recognise our own vulgarity and change sides.[56]

32 Bryden thus blames *Rebecca* for being comparable, as he sees it, to one of those fashionable or "silver fork" novels of yore, a genre which flourished especially in the second quarter of the 19th century. He also claims that the novel simply copies *Jane Eyre*, "even to the fire necessary to liberate the gloomy hero and his mousy beloved from the dead hand of the wife in the west wing."[57] Finally, he is irritated by what he calls the novel's "pre-war gimmicks", which, he says, include "that nameless heroine, the hints of lesbianism, the middle-aged couple mysteriously exiled on the Riviera, so like the Windsors."[58]

33 Published in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 19 October of the same year, another review takes direct issue with the previous article, and basically contradicts every major argument Bryden had made six months before. Refusing to brush aside popular novels because of the low-browed readership for which they are supposedly reserved, Marghanita Laski begins her review as follows:

> All literature of great popularity is worth examining, even if the results prove of psychological or sociological rather than of literary interest. It is however the contention of this review that two of Miss Daphne du Maurier's immensely popular novels do provide great literary interest, and that these, together with others recently published in Penguin editions, form part of an interesting stream of English-language fiction.[59]

34 Concerning the narrator's painful discovery of upper-class etiquette at Manderley, this second reviewer does not refute Bryden's charge that Du Maurier's novel is fascinated with upscale manners and mores, and therefore is meant to shame us for the vulgarity of our own upbringing – though, as has already been shown, this runs counter to other interpretations of *Rebecca* (like Rance's) which conversely see the novel as upholding the need for social compromise (albeit faulty), not aristocratic contempt. Rather, Laski argues – somewhat surprisingly – that Bryden is wrong in mocking descriptions of upper-class social practices because "social insecurity is not necessarily trivial and may be the proper stuff of nightmares"[60] for those who find themselves inadequate in social contexts other than their own. Moreover, she claims that "[t]he use of the social matter in *Rebecca* is, in fact, deliberately anti-romantic" and "very clever." Finally, the idea that the destruction of Manderley liberates the protagonists is refuted, and it is implied that Bryden is guilty of the "common error to assume that popular novels invariably have happy endings."[61]

35 In the eyes of the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer, *Rebecca* belongs to a different category, related to the Gothic genre, for which Laski coins the phrase "demoniac novels" and provides the following definition:

> Their characteristic, for the purpose of this classification, is that the protagonist is possessed of almost preterhuman forcefulness in seeking his or her own ends, both the ends, and the means taken to achieve them, being, if not positively evil, at least in conflict with those conventionally considered good and proper. He or she possesses great powers of attraction, often, though not necessarily, including sexual attraction, and dominates all others encountered, often against their reasonable wills.[62]

36 Whether or not one finds helpful Laski's creation of this new subcategory, her inclusion of the character of Rebecca in a genre she defines as revolving around protagonists who are "possessed of almost preterhuman forcefulness" is naturally supported by the Gothic atmosphere of the novel, partly created for instance by the ghostly reappearance of Rebecca's boat just in time to wreck the second wife's marriage to Maxim, or by the final destruction of Manderley. Likewise, in Du Maurier's later story "The Apple Tree" (1952), the dead wife seems to find supernatural (or "preterhuman") ways of wreaking revenge on a grumpy, ne'er-do-

well husband who made her life miserable through constant depreciation. But even though Laski's generic considerations prompt her to place some of Du Maurier's works under her "demoniac novel" category, one may wish to underline that such a melodramatic interpretation of these stories will mostly appeal to readers receptive to tales of paranormal happenings or of revenge from beyond the grave. More rational readers might prefer to construe these "happenings" as the self-inflicted pangs of guilty consciences unable to shake off the burden of their blameworthy, immoral, or even downright criminal past. In that sense, Maxim and his second wife are only the victims of their own wrongdoing. As for Rebecca, instead of standing as a modern avatar of the goddess Nemesis "demoniacally" punishing her husband beyond death, she can be seen more pitifully as the outpowered victim not only of her husband, but also of the Greek deity who enacted retribution against those who succumbed to *hubris*, that is to say overconfidence and arrogance. Such a reading is bolstered by Madeleine Keane's tongue-in-cheek eighty-four-word summary of the novel, published in Dublin's *Sunday Independent*:

> Last night I dreamt I read *Rebecca* again. It seemed to me that the shadow of that bitch lingered stronger than ever over my strange but sexy husband. But how could plain, quiet, mousy no-name me compete with the memory of that promiscuous creature? And as for that dyke Danvers—a spooky presence in every corner of this brooding house. Manderley. Someone should burn it and all its ghosts down.
>
> "And the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea."[63]

37 The same complexity or ambivalence at work in Du Maurier's handling of genres and categories is therefore visible in her treatment of her trio of female protagonists, thereby leading readers in different (hardly reconcilable) directions. Indeed, as has just been said, Rebecca's protean powers can be construed at will as those of a goddess righting wrongs in supernatural fashion or as those of a mere "bitch" whose ambitions for worldly and sexual success are pitilessly dashed for daringly flying in the face of social, moral, or patriarchal expectations. Moreover, as noted earlier by the *TLS* reviewer, her "great powers of attraction" are indeed central to the novel – *and* of an unmistakably sexual nature in this case, though not limited to the sexual appeal that she had over her husband and her male lovers. By referring to Rebecca as "that promiscuous creature" and to her housekeeper as "that dyke Danvers", Keane underlines the titillating ambiguity that has intrigued readers and critics alike, namely the powerful lesbian subtext that constantly emerges from the triangular network of desire at play between the three female protagonists, thereby casting a different light on Maxim's pronouncement that his wife was "not even normal."[64] As Light explains, the meaning of the word *romance* grew "more narrowly specialised between the wars" and came to define "only those love-stories, aimed ostensibly at a wholly female readership, which deal primarily with the trials and tribulations of heterosexual desire, and end happily in marriage",[65] so much so that the shades of lesbianism of the novel and its far-from-happy ending not only ran counter to 1930s mainstream ideology but were also ill-suited to Du Maurier's alleged target audience, who nevertheless went out in droves to purchase the novel – and relished it.

38 Du Maurier's novel is therefore a borderline case in the sense that seemingly irreconcilable readings are permitted, or even encouraged, by the text. As Light puts it,

> Rebecca's Manderley may be a Tory symbol of an older, grander England, the little Eden from which the new Mrs de Winter and her husband are expelled, but it is also a place in the imagination where a freer and a more independent sexuality might have been possible.[66]



As far as the narrator is concerned, feminist or queer studies have stressed her patent fascination with Rebecca's phallic femininity and her deviant sexuality. For

instance, Jaime Hovey has argued that one can regard the novel as an attempt to teach the tantalised protagonist "to feel horror at sexual perversity" in order to "initiat[e] her re-education as a proper wife."[67] In that sense, "the text's careful refusal to speak the sexuality that the narrator herself cannot know"[68] comes across as a lesbophobic attempt to crush forbidden desires. On the other hand, the pitiful lethargy surrounding the exiled couple at both ends of the novel hardly gestures towards the victory of "normality" at all. As Hovey concludes,

> However, because the narrator's desire for Rebecca eventually becomes not only a desire for Manderley but a recurring and insistent desire for Britain itself, the novel ultimately suggests that ideological belief can never completely write over the promise of inclusion that the nation offers to all its subjects, nor can it completely control the terms of that inclusion.[69]

40 In that sense, if *Rebecca* is "a study in jealousy", as Du Maurier herself famously called her novel,[70] and if one must assume that she meant "a study in *heterosexual* jealousy", it is *also* much more than that. Indeed, the novel may well show how one's own sense of inadequacy – be it social, intellectual, aesthetic, psychological, or other – allows monsters of "almost preternatural forcefulness" to exist and to continue to exert their power beyond death, either directly or vicariously, for instance through the agency of some vestal who makes it her lifelong mission to keep her (same-sex) idol's sacred fire burning. But it is also a study in homosexual longing, one in which heteronormative dictates are simultaneously supported and subverted.

By Way of Conclusion

41 In 1938, in an attempt to come to terms with "this very unusual book", so full of "unusualnesses", contemporary reviewer Alan Seymour added one of the first bricks to the mystery of *Rebecca*'s power when he laid stress on a sort of paradox. Indeed, he felt on the one hand that the novel qualified as "a most *distinguished* piece of writing" and that it demonstrated "a complete mastery over the characters and atmosphere which comprise its ingredients." On the other hand, he saw its "deliberately *undistinguished* phraseology"[71] as a truly potent characteristic because the reader, he claimed, remains unaware that all the "wit, pathos, insight, and compassion [displayed] on every page" stems from Du Maurier's deliberately unassuming prose.

42 One might therefore argue that *Rebecca*'s sway over readers arises in part from the discrepancy between its low-key narrator and the high stakes she has to face in the midst of disturbing events. That discrepancy might be of a different nature where critics are concerned: some of them might feel jolted out of their generic assumptions that popular novels are perforce monolithic, that they cannot possibly lead to such a variety of discourse/counter-discourse or text/subtext analyses, with potential ramifications into philosophy or queer studies, as previously noted. Also, as indicated in the general introduction to this issue, three main factors played against Du Maurier all her writing life. Critics never forgave her for the success of *Rebecca* (as prophesied by Arthur Quiller-Couch), so that her books were often reviewed with "sniffy contempt."[72] Moreover, the publication of her novels and short stories in various women's journals seemed to confirm their negative opinion of her literary output on account of the superficiality too readily associated with such publications. Lastly, Du Maurier's reputation suffered somewhat from the revolution introduced by Gollancz into the world of English publishing, a revolution which many must have regarded as vulgarly ostentatious. As Fredric Warburg explains:



> With the foundation of his firm [...] the revolution may be said to have begun. Then we saw the shape of things to come. Instead of the dignified advertisement list of twenty titles set out primly in a modest space, there was

> the double or triple column, with the title of one book screaming across it in letters three inches high. The forces of modernity had been loosed, the age of shouting, the period of the colossal and the sensational had arrived.[73]

43 So much so that on one occasion at least, Du Maurier is recorded as asking Gollancz to please go easy on the publicity: “It’s awfully funny, really,” she wrote, “how the attitude to books has changed. Imagine fifty years ago, or even twenty-five, an author writing to her publisher and saying, ‘Please don’t advertise my book as selling well!’ Or ‘Don’t suggest my book may be a popular success!’”[74]

44 Besides, not only did Seymour see a deceptive simplicity at work in Du Maurier’s bestseller, but he also confessed his own confusion after reading it, seeing that he now felt incapable of deciding to which category a novel had better belong:

> I have yet to make up my mind whether extraordinary ideas expressed in ordinary language or ordinary ideas expressed in extraordinary language make the better book. *Rebecca* comes uncompromisingly into the former category, but so original are the many twists which distinguish this little masterpiece —particularly in the second half of the book—that one does not realise how much of her effect Miss du Maurier creates by the use of deliberately undistinguished phraseology.[75]

45 Many critics and readers have undoubtedly seen eye to eye with Seymour on *Rebecca*’s ability to express “extraordinary ideas [...] in ordinary language”, though quite a few also have described Du Maurier’s prose as powerful or even haunting, which certainly does not concur well with the assertion that the language used in the novel is simply “ordinary.” Be that as it may, as shown in the foregoing pages, most readers *have* enjoyed it and its mysterious quality ever since its publication, while Du Maurier herself never quite understood the uniqueness of her own novel. For the rest of her life, she had to politely answer letters sent by people asking for her permission to write a sequel to *Rebecca*, or from readers who wanted to know why the female protagonist remained nameless to the end – even Agatha Christie penned a message to ask.[76] For that reason, there is something poignant in the fact that, among the lots sold during the April 2019 auction of items that belonged to the late Maureen Baker-Munton, a family friend to Du Maurier and her husband, was a single sheet of paper on which, just two years before her death and at a time when she had become a mere shadow of her former self, Du Maurier had enigmatically written down the opening line of the novel which had mystified her and escaped her control all those years. That single sheet of paper went for £2,200.

46 One thing is for sure, though: the novel’s appeal is unabated over thirty years on, and the inspiration that writers and artists of all kinds draw from *Rebecca* is in no danger of running dry. A book of poems by Rebecca Wolff, entitled *Manderley*, with an epigraph from the first chapter of the novel, even brought it wonderfully into the next millennium, demonstrating some of the symbolism now potentially attached to it in Western culture. Indeed, in one of those poems, the blood-red rhododendrons in the path leading to the grand house are construed as images of a writer’s fecund imagination while Rebecca’s transgressive nature is portrayed as an emblem of triumphant womanhood. As for Manderley itself, it is synonymous with the “poetry world”[77] of love, permanence and security that the poet hopes to create in the face of possible loss and destruction. In a poem titled “The world is my cloister”, Wolff writes:

> Is it not meet
> that you should make of my home a home
> for you and yours? It transforms unduly the deck, the flower
> garden, the peach
> tree, my god, the peach tree becomes
> you. You have grown to reach its height
> and are never alone now, in due process. The cat beats
> her tail in time with your attention, your two

feet extend off the edge of the bed. At home
last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.[78]

47 One might thus argue that the themes developed in *Rebecca* tap into universal fears and desires, or into unconscious patterns of thought that are collectively inherited. For that reason, fitting the novel nicely into one category can never work. Simultaneously a conservative *Bildungsroman*, a daring psychological thriller, a whodunit, a Gothic romance, an anti-romantic fantasy, a post-romantic coming-of-age narrative, a rewrite of popular fairy tales, a radically modernised version of a 19th-century literary classic, a demoniacal novel, *and* a study in sexual (dis)orientation, it transforms and subverts all the characteristics of the categories or genres that it makes use of, but under which it eventually refuses to fall.

48 All things considered, we may as well come to the conclusion that *Rebecca* belongs to simply one category: that of Literary Masterpieces.

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3 One can quote Susan Hill’s *Mrs. de Winter* (1993), Maureen Freely’s *The Other Rebecca* (2000), and Sally Beauman’s *Rebecca’s Tale* (2001), for instance. For a detailed analysis of some of those prequels, coquels and sequels, see Armelle Parey’s discussion in this issue (Chapter 4).

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18 Forster, *Daphne Du Maurier*, 135.

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20 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories*, London: Arrow, 1994, 11.

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26 *Ibid.*, 11.

27 Daphne Du Maurier, “A Writer is a Strange Creature”, *Wings*, October 1938, 4-8.

28 *Ibid.*, 8.

29 *Ibid.*, 8.

30 *Ibid.*, 4.

31 See Alan Seymour, “Between the Book-Ends” (Book Section), *Britannia and Eve*, October 1938, 90.

32 An unsigned contemporary review states that “Miss Du Maurier’s *Rebecca*, now being serialized by a London newspaper, is expected to sell at least 100,000 copies” (*The Cornishman and Cornish Telegraph*, 15 September 1938, 3).

33 “S.F.”, “Ghost Goes West” (Books of the Week), *The Daily Herald*, 11 August 1938, 15.

34 Lettice Cooper, “Holiday Fare: Grave and Gay” (Book Review), *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 10 August 1938, 6.

35 George Campbell, “Films of the Day: What is there About *Rebecca*?”, *The Bystander*, 10 July 1940, 41. Campbell’s mystification expresses itself in the following manner: “The obvious conclusion is that, whatever her technical merits as a writer, Daphne du Maurier must have something. / But what? [...] And the question is not rhetorical. I have no idea of the answer, and I really would like to know.” As one will note, that Du Maurier’s maternal uncle William Comyns Beaumont edited *The Bystander* in 1903, its foundation year, and again in 1928-32, did not muzzle Campbell’s review in the least.

36 Helen Cockburn, “Daphne du Maurier’s Brilliant Novel”, *The Burton Observer*, 18 August 1938, 9.

37 The first full-length bibliography of Du Maurier criticism will be found at the end of the present series of articles.

38 Nicholas Rance, “Not Like Men in Books, Murdering Women: Daphne Du Maurier and the Infernal World of Popular Fiction”, *in* Clive Bloom (ed.), *Creepers: British Horror and Fantasy in the 20th Century*, London: Pluto Press, 1993, 86.

39 *Ibid.*, 86

40 *Ibid.*, 87.

41 *Ibid.*, 91.

42 *Ibid.*, 88.

43 As Rance observes, “the confounding of distinctions of rank in *Rebecca* is not suggestive of a new dawn” (88).

44 Rance, “Not Like Men in Books, Murdering Women”, 89.

45 *Ibid.*, 89.

46 *Ibid.*, 93.

47 For a recent attempt at understanding the thematic importance of incest in Du Maurier’s

work, see Teresa Petersen, *Daphne Du Maurier: Looking Inward*, London: Austin Macauley, 2017.

48 Paul Whitington, "Great Film, shame about the book" (Weekend Review), *The Irish Independent*, 21 April 2007, 21.

49 Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars*, Oxon: Routledge, 1991, 190.

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55 Ronald Bryden, "Queen of the Wild Mullions", *The Spectator*, 20 April 1962, 515.

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63 Madeleine Keane, "The 100-Word Novel: Madeleine Keane encapsulates Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*", *The Sunday Independent*, 16 July 1995, 8L. (The Irish newspaper carried this feature over a number of issues, with Aine O'Connor "encapsulating" V. Nabokov's *Lolita*, or Mary Ellen Synon summarising R. Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely* that same month.)

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65 Light, *Forever England,* 160.

66 *Ibid.,* 178.

67 Jaime Hovey, "In Rebecca's Shoes: Lesbian Fetishism in Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*", in Shari Benstock and Suzanne Ferriss (eds.), *Footnotes: On Shoes*, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers UP, 2001, 170.

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70 Christian House, "Daphne Du Maurier always said her novel *Rebecca* was a study in jealousy", *The Telegraph*, 17 August 2013 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10248724/Daphne-du-Maurier-always-said-her-novel-Rebecca-was-a-study-in-jealousy.html>. Accessed 20 September 2021.

71 All the quotes in this paragraph are from Alan Seymour, "Between the Book-Ends", *Britannia and Eve*, October 1938, 90. The italics are mine.

72 Sheila Hodges, *Gollancz: The Story of a Publishing House, 1928-1978*, London: Gollancz, 1978, 94.

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76 Christie's letter to Du Maurier is held in the Special Collections Archives of the University of Exeter, under the following reference: EUL MS 207/6/4/5.

77 Rebecca Wolff, *Manderley*, Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2001, 35.

78 *Ibid.*, 34.

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Articles du même auteur

Introduction [Texte intégral]
Introduction
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Daphne Du Maurier: a Critical Bibliography [Texte intégral]
Daphne du Maurier : bibliographie critique
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vol. 19-n°52 | 2021
The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
'Je Reviens', or the Eternal Return of *Rebecca*

Enter Sir Alfred, or Hitchcock's Three Du Mauriers

Les trois du Maurier de Sir Alfred

JEAN-LOUP BOURGET

https://doi.org/10.4000/lisa.13412

Résumés

English Français

The paper first focuses on the three adaptations by Hitchcock of Daphne Du Maurier's material, *Jamaica Inn* (1938-39), *Rebecca* (1939-40) and *The Birds* (1962-63). It summarizes the very different circumstances of the films' production, which help explain why *Rebecca* is much closer to its novelistic source than the other two and why the writer was happy with *Rebecca* and dissatisfied with the other two. It then proceeds to a brief examination of the friendly and professional relationship between Hitchcock and Daphne's father, the stage and occasionally film actor Gerald Du Maurier, and speculates about possible thematic connections between Hitchcock and Daphne's grandfather George Du Maurier, the illustrator and author of *Trilby* and *Peter Ibbetson*. It concludes that the complex network between Hitchcock and three generations of Du Mauriers is evidence of the Hollywood director's abiding English roots and inspiration.

Cet article est consacré principalement aux trois adaptations d'ouvrages de Daphne du Maurier réalisées par Alfred Hitchcock, soit successivement *Jamaica Inn* (*La Taverne de la Jamaïque*, 1939), dernier film de la période anglaise, *Rebecca* (1940), premier film de la période hollywoodienne, et beaucoup plus tard *The Birds* (*Les Oiseaux*, 1963), considéré comme un des derniers « grands films » de Hitchcock. Il revient sur les conditions très différentes des trois productions, conditions qui expliquent que *Rebecca* soit beaucoup plus fidèle au roman-source et que l'auteure se soit déclarée satisfaite de cette adaptation alors qu'elle était mécontente des deux autres. Il examine ensuite les relations amicales et professionnelles que Hitchcock a entretenues avec Sir Gerald du Maurier, le père de Daphne, acteur de théâtre et occasionnellement de cinéma. Il s'interroge enfin sur les rapports possibles entre l'œuvre de Hitchcock et les romans de George du Maurier, le grand-père de Daphne, dessinateur et auteur des best-sellers *Trilby* et *Peter Ibbetson*. Il conclut que les liens divers

qui unissent Hitchcock et son œuvre à trois générations de du Maurier attestent parmi d'autres sa fidélité à diverses sources d'inspiration anglaises ou plus généralement britanniques même après son départ pour Hollywood.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : Hitchcock Alfred, adaptation littéraire, La Taverne de la Jamaïque, Rebecca, Les Oiseaux, Sir Gerald du Maurier, George du Maurier, du Maurier Daphne
Index by keywords: Hitchcock Alfred, Jamaica Inn, Rebecca, The Birds, Sir Gerald du Maurier, George du Maurier, du Maurier Daphne

Texte intégral

1 The purpose of the present article is threefold. It will focus first and foremost on the three film adaptations which Hitchcock did of two novels and a short story by Daphne Du Maurier: *Jamaica Inn* (1939), his last film in England before he took up Selznick's invitation to come to Hollywood; *Rebecca* (1940), the first film he shot in the United States under Selznick's close supervision; and *The Birds* (1963), made much later when Hitchcock was at the height of his Hollywood career.

2 The choice of these three films is self-evident. While the great majority of Hitchcock-directed films are based on pre-existing plays and/or novels or short stories, few of them can be described as "prestige" adaptations of recognized writers, the most obvious exception being *Juno and the Paycock* (1930), a rendition of the play by Sean O'Casey that is not rated very high in the Hitchcock canon. That Hitchcock chose to make films based on Joseph Conrad's *Secret Agent* (*Sabotage*, 1936) and, more loosely, on John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935), owes less to their sources' literary qualities than to their suspenseful plots. The remark probably also applies to the three Du Maurier-based films, a unique instance in Hitchcock's fifty-year-long career of his adapting to the screen three pieces of fiction by the same writer.

3 Part of the motivation was certainly due to Du Maurier's status as a best-selling novelist, a status shared by two other women writers whose works fuelled Hitchcock's inspiration: Marie Belloc Lowndes, the author of *The Lodger* (1913), the source of Hitchcock's film of 1926-27, and much later Patricia Highsmith, whose *Strangers on a Train* was turned into another highly regarded Hitchcock film in 1950-51. The traditional, often predictable or pedantic, exercise of comparison between the novel and the book is nevertheless usually instructive, both because it sheds light on the specific qualities and shortcomings of the respective forms of expression, and because it reveals the frequent misunderstanding between writer and filmmaker. In most cases the film director, especially a "popular" director aiming at a mass audience like Hitchcock, feels that with the adaptation rights he has bought a popular piece of "property", a popular title, possibly a clever plot, and that he has also acquired the "right" to make any changes, deletions, additions and modulations he sees fit to introduce in order to make the film more "visual" and attractive. The writer, for his or her part, while happy with the financial benefit of the rights, expects the filmmaker to be respectful of the original work, and is often dissatisfied with the result. As we shall see, this was the case with Du Maurier's reaction to two of the three adaptations of her work by Hitchcock.

4 The article will then proceed to sketch out the connection between Hitchcock and Daphne's father Gerald Du Maurier, the actor, and with her grandfather George, the Victorian visual artist who late in life turned to writing and became a bestselling author. The conclusion will aim at broadening the perspective, reflecting on the great extent to which Hitchcock, in some ways the archetypal Hollywood director or *auteur*, simultaneously remained, in several senses, a British subject. As such, his

culture and references, both literary and pictorial, were rooted in his English education and training, and several of his Hollywood pictures openly treated British subject matter (as in the case of *Rebecca*) or transferred to an American setting plots and motifs which Hitchcock had previously dealt with during his English career. In that light, *North by Northwest* can be described as both a reprise of the "double pursuit" plot of *The 39 Steps*[1] and a spectacular travelogue of the United States.

The Three Film Adaptations

Rebecca

5 One is immediately struck by the wide difference in the mode and status of the three Hitchcock adaptations under study. This can be accounted for by the conditions of their production but also by the distinct mode and status of their literary sources. We shall begin with *Rebecca*, for several reasons: it is the best documented case as well as that which has attracted the most attention, stirred the most debate, not to say controversy, and inspired the most contradictory assessments.[2] To sum up: *Rebecca*, the novel, was an immediate bestseller when it came out in 1938. Both Hitchcock and Selznick, then an independent Hollywood producer much occupied by the making of *Gone with the Wind*, were interested in acquiring the film adaptation rights. Selznick eventually bought them with the understanding that Hitchcock would direct the picture, although according to the original plan Hitchcock's first Hollywood film was to be a version of the Titanic story rather than *Rebecca*. Hitchcock, still in England, worked with Joan Harrison, Michael Hogan and Philip MacDonald on a "treatment"[3] of *Rebecca* which the producer rejected, calling it "a distorted and vulgarized version of a provenly successful work."[4] He castigated the introduction of humorous touches, particularly in the Riviera opening, which he found in very poor taste and (rightly) felt ran counter to Maxim's supposed melancholy aloofness as a recently widowed husband still in love with his deceased wife. He objected to Hitchcock's odd invention, reminiscent of *Jane Eyre*, of "a lunatic grandmother in a tower of Manderley."[5] He specifically resented Hitchcock's tampering with some of the novel's basic features. Selznick argued that "[n]ext to the fact that the title character Rebecca never appeared, one of the most talked-about things in connection with the book was that the principal character had no name. [...] We certainly would be silly to give her a name in our picture. This is not a point of storytelling but simply of showmanship."[6] Hitchcock, whose treatment jokingly referred to the heroine as "Daphne de Winter",[7] had no choice but to comply with Selznick's requirements, so that the screenplay was largely emended by the original writers to mirror the novel more closely: no flashbacks now showed Rebecca, while the title character became omnipresent in solely indirect or ghostly ways, through the agency of Mrs. Danvers, through the symbolism of the West Wing of Manderley and the ubiquitous initial R, or through "I"'s (justified) interiorized conviction of her own inferiority and her (mistaken) feeling that Maxim is still in love with his first wife. Later additions and revisions were made by Robert E. Sherwood, while Du Maurier turned down Selznick's repeated invitation that she work on the script.

6 The fidelity of Selznick's adaptation is not absolute, though, the most obvious example being that "I" does not go to London with Maxim at the end in search of Rebecca's physician. Selznick himself was well aware that it could not be absolute on a specific point, Maxim's murder of Rebecca: the Hays Office[8] had very early on pointed out that specific obstacle, at the same time as it had obligingly suggested the slight change that would make it acceptable, i.e. the turning of the novel's deliberate murder into accidental manslaughter, triggered by Rebecca's Machiavellian and

suicidal revenge plot. Selznick took great care to point this out to Du Maurier and to assure her that in every other respect the film had followed the book as closely as possible.[9] The author, who had been upset by the liberties taken by Hitchcock's *Jamaica Inn* and worried about a similar treatment being inflicted on *Rebecca*, expressed her satisfaction, but did not go so far as to play the "collaborative" game she had played for Orson Welles's radio adaptation of *Rebecca* for CBS, aired in December 1938.[10]

7 *Rebecca* met with great public success and favourable (but not enthusiastic) critical success; and it earned Selznick his second Academy Award for best picture after *Gone with the Wind* the previous year. Hitchcock's rising reputation in later years led to what amounted to a rewriting of history. Chabrol, who co-authored (with Éric Rohmer) the very first book devoted to Hitchcock, wrote that *Rebecca* demonstrated the director's mastery in dealing with what was essentially a very inferior novel,[11] and Hitchcock himself followed suit when he told Truffaut that *Rebecca* was based on an outmoded Victorian-type novelette.[12] Nevertheless, unlike Chabrol and other Hitchcock admirers, Hitchcock also told Truffaut that *Rebecca* "was not a Hitchcock picture."[13] Later still *Rebecca* was reclaimed for Hitchcock by a number of feminist critics, notably Tania Modleski, who argued that the film was a turning point in Hitchcock's career because for the first time the director had espoused the heroine's point of view,[14] a point of view he was to endorse repeatedly in such films as *Suspicion*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Spellbound*, *Notorious*, *Under Capricorn*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Psycho*, *The Birds* and *Marnie*. The reassessment implied (or should have implied) a reassessment of the novel's contribution, via its Hitchcock/Selznick adaptation, to the "first person singular" narrative technique, which became extremely widespread in Hollywood in the wake of *Rebecca* and of Philip Dunne's adaptation of *How Green Was My Valley*.[15] That the reassessment did not really take place can probably be accounted for by a combination of factors: first, the abiding feeling widespread among cineastes, particularly devotees of the *auteur* theory and Hitchcock admirers, that cinema being essentially different from literature, great films are often based on relatively "inferior" sources, and in any case resort to entirely different tropes and techniques; secondly and more subtly, the fact that while she talked about Hitchcock's identification with his female characters, Modleski ultimately did so in psychoanalytical and thematic rather than narratological and technical terms, as evidenced by her description of *Rebecca* as "a film which adopts a feminine viewpoint and allows the woman's voice to speak (if only in a whisper), articulating her discontent with the patriarchal order",[16] a description that effectively collapses "I" and Rebecca into a single, chimerical character.

Jamaica Inn

8 It is understandable that of the three Hitchcock adaptations of her work, Du Maurier should have expressed satisfaction only with *Rebecca*.[17] The earlier adaptation, that of *Jamaica Inn*, followed close upon the publication of the novel in 1936, and is notorious for the wide liberties which Sidney Gilliat, Joan Harrison and Hitchcock took with the novel's plot. Indeed, Selznick insisted that with *Rebecca* he and Hitchcock should "do the book and not some botched-up semi-original such as was done with *Jamaica Inn*."[18] These liberties would appear to be due less to Hitchcock's usual desire to give the story a more visual turn than to the casting of Charles Laughton as the film star, opposite Maureen O'Hara as Mary Yellan, the young heroine through whose consciousness all the action is perceived and filtered, although unlike *Rebecca* the novel is narrated in the third person. On the whole Maureen O'Hara's rendition of Mary Yellan is true to the character devised by the novelist: a twenty-three-year-old woman with much imagination, prone to flights of fancy and misconceptions like the narrator in *Rebecca*, but also endowed with

unusual physical, moral and intellectual strength, a much "stronger" character than "I." Only the heroine's nationality has been changed to fit in with O'Hara's Irish accent, and the technique of the "restricted narration" is not strictly adhered to, which means that the spectator is better and earlier informed than the various characters, including Mary.[19]

9 Of more obvious import is the metamorphosis which turns Francis Davey – the strange albino vicar of Altarnun, who late in the novel reveals himself to be a worshipper of the pagan gods and the secret leader of the gang of wreckers and smugglers – into Sir Humphrey Pengallan, the squire and local magistrate ("Bassat" in the novel), who is introduced quite early on in the film as a Regency rake who quotes Byron and lusts after Mary Yellan. The part was completely redefined and custom-made for Laughton (who coproduced the picture with Erich Pommer), effectively putting him centre stage, with the added benefit of pre-empting the objection which the Hays Office would predictably have raised to the portrayal of a singularly deviant clergyman.[20] Immediately after making the film Hitchcock explained that the "mastermind" character was so strong in the final part of the narrative that it was necessary to cast a big star (such as Laughton) in the role and that, as a consequence, it had been necessary to rewrite the "middle part" of the story to justify the star's presence. This was an early example of the director's distinction between surprise and suspense, or between mystery and suspense: whereas the novelist had had recourse to surprise by revealing the vicar's true personality very late in the narrative, Hitchcock, the "master of suspense", had early on made it clear that Pengallan was the real ringleader and preferred to emphasize suspense, leaving the audience in doubt as to when Mary Yellan and Jem would become wise to the secret leader's identity.[21] Later Hitchcock would often return to this distinction, arguing for the superiority of "suspense" because it is an "emotional process" taking hold of the spectator whereas the solving of a "mystery", as in an Agatha Christie "whodunit", is an "intellectual process", and playing down his own fairly frequent resort to a combination of "mystery" and "suspense" (as in *The Lodger*, *Murder!*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Paradine Case*, *Stage Fright* or *Psycho*, to mention but a few instances).[22]

10 The substitution of Pengallan – an entirely new character except in his function as the mastermind behind the gang of wreckers and smugglers – for Francis Davey entailed much reshuffling of the plot and the invention of new characters or situations around the flamboyant squire. Of the main characters besides Mary, only Uncle Joss Merlyn and his wife Aunt Patience are relatively unchanged, while some of the smugglers are recognizable from the novel. "Jem" retains his first name and his role as Mary's love interest, but instead of being a romantic rogue and horse thief who eventually betrays his elder brother Joss to the authorities, he becomes Jem Trehearne, a navy officer and government spy who has infiltrated the gang and is unrelated to Joss. At the end of the film, Pengallan takes Mary hostage and plans to escape to the continent with her. Though the incident is really featured in the novel, the setting has been moved from Bodmin Moor and its strange rock formations, reminiscent of *Wuthering Heights*, to the deck of a ship. From the shrouds Pengallan throws down his pistol and shouts, "What are you all waiting for? A spectacle? You shall have it! And tell your children how the great age ended. Make way for Pengallan!" before plunging to his death. In this particular case it is tempting to conclude that Hitchcock was in agreement with, or responsible for, the more dramatically spectacular setting, a setting more in accordance with Laughton's histrionics.

11 When she saw the film Daphne Du Maurier deemed it "a wretched affair",[23] and in later tepid assessments pointedly refrained from even mentioning Charles Laughton:

> [*Jamaica Inn*] was made at a time when British films were not very good, and exterior shots would have helped—particularly if they had been taken on

> Bodmin Moor. I thought that the opening scenes captured the flavour of the story but the elimination of the albino parson and the disproportionate role of the squire proved to the detriment of the film as a whole. . . . I thought that Leslie Banks (Joss) was good, and the rest of the cast adequate.[24]

The Birds

12 The film is less an adaptation than a transposition and a fleshing-out of the basic enigmatic plot of Du Maurier's short story, originally published in the 1952 collection entitled *The Apple Tree*, whose film rights were purchased by Hitchcock, who felt that "The Birds" was "strong on atmosphere but weak on plot and character."[25] While unfair to the short story as such, the judgment is understandable from the perspective of expanding it into a Hollywood feature film that would eventually become a big budget production implying an all-star cast and extremely elaborate special effects. Whereas the short story is located somewhere on the English coast during the Cold War, with memories of World War II and the Blitz still very vivid, Hitchcock's film takes place on the Northern California coastline, a landscape not unlike the original Cornish setting, in a kind of ahistorical present. The film's plot and characters are much more developed than in the original, with model "Tippi" Hedren making her screen debut as Melanie Daniels, a rich and spoiled San Francisco socialite who gradually becomes interested in, and involved with, Mitch Brenner (Rod Taylor) and his family. Melanie's unexpected visit pleases Mitch's little sister Cathy but greatly upsets their possessive widowed mother (played by Jessica Tandy). In a key scene in a local restaurant a younger but even more hysterical mother goes so far as to blame the birds' attacks on the strange woman's sudden arrival in Bodega Bay and her supposedly evil influence.

13 From Du Maurier's short story, Hitchcock retained essentially two elements: the gradual mounting of tension due to the increasing violence of the birds' attacks, a pattern which fits in with the preoccupations of the master of suspense; and the apparent lack of explanation for these attacks, one of the story's strongest points. Other retained elements include the focus on a nuclear family whose cottage is stormed by the birds; the deliberate and organized nature of the birds' onslaughts and the fact that these come in waves, with lulls in between; the fact that different species coordinate their actions; the suicide attacks, the attack via the chimney, the birds going for the eyes and almost silently invading the children's bedroom; the children running across the field; the presence of a telephone booth, whose dramatic function is heightened in the picture; and the neighbours—farmers and postman—found slaughtered. Conversely, as a logical consequence of the story's relocation to California, what is *not* retained is the initial link established between the sudden cold spell of "black winter" and the birds' odd behaviour, the obvious parallel with the Blitz, the topical references to World War II and to the Cold War, the general feeling that the birds are attacking all over the country, perhaps all over Europe.

14 In the previously mentioned restaurant scene a number of tentative explanations for the birds' odd aggressive behaviour are suggested. Melanie's alleged "evil" influence may be dismissed as a hysterical woman's fantasy, though it hints at a possible antiracist parable in line with Joseph Losey's *Boy with Green Hair*.[26] But its combination with both the incredulous, then hopeless, reaction of the woman ornithologist and the drunken prophet's announcement of the "end of the world" may be taken as an oblique reference to the risk of a nuclear holocaust or, more convincingly, at least for the present-day spectator, of an ecological catastrophe, the birds taking their revenge on man's systematic exploitation of the natural world.[27] Elsewhere in the film these "political" explanations, in the broadest of senses (antiracist, nuclear, environmental), make way for a "psychological" or "psychoanalytic" interpretation which, beyond the hysterical mother's accusations,

lead to the repressed and repressive nature of Jessica Tandy's castrating mother figure and to the ominous presence of the dead father's portrait. But in the final analysis no clear-cut reason is given, and while vaguely hinting at some such logical explanation Hitchcock wisely stuck to Du Maurier's lack of it. Thus the free association of ideas works in similar ways for the short story's reader and for the film's spectator.

15 What was much debated by Hitchcock and screenwriter Evan Hunter (a.k.a. Ed McBain) was the film's ending, which at some stage was slated to show the Golden Gate Bridge covered with birds and San Francisco in ruins. The actual ending eventually differed from the short story by offering a (very ambiguous) modicum of hope, with the four major characters – Mitch and Melanie, shocked and injured, accompanied by Mrs. Brenner and Cathy, carrying the two love birds in their cage – managing to leave their half-destroyed house and to drive away through the bird-filled landscape. Hunter described the mood of the film (especially its ending) as "apocalyptic", an apt description which is borne out by the final shot, a composite matte shot[28] combining two separate lower layers of live birds and an upper layer of painted landscape in the "Apocalyptic" style of the 19th century artist John Martin,[29] suggesting that the birds have taken over not just Northern California but the whole world. Hitchcock himself in conversation with Peter Bogdanovich referred to this ending as "Judgment Day."[30]

The Other Two Du Mauriers: Gerald and George

16 Daphne Du Maurier's reaction to Hitchcock's adaptations and Hitchcock's summary dismissals of Du Maurier mirror each other as classic cases of misunderstanding between writer and filmmaker. Du Maurier's appreciation of *Rebecca* was an exception, though in Hitchcock's eyes it only went to confirm that the work was "not a Hitchcock picture" but a Selznick picture. Another point on which they tended to agree was their dislike—for different reasons – of *Jamaica Inn*.[31] As a rule Daphne Du Maurier declined to be associated with the writing of the films based on her works. It is sometimes assumed that because Hitchcock knew her father, he must have been on friendly terms with her, but such does not appear to be the case. However it is worth examining Hitchcock's connection with both Du Mauriers of the previous generation.

Sir Gerald Du Maurier

17 Daphne's father (Sir) Gerald Du Maurier (1873-1934), a famous theatre actor, is routinely mentioned as Hitchcock's "cordial acquaintance"[32] or even a "good friend of Hitchcock's"[33] but the actual evidence is rather scanty. Hitchcock's biographer Daniel Spoto mentions that Hitchcock saw Du Maurier on the stage in the early 1920s and that the actor was later the butt of two of the film director's bizarre practical jokes.[34] More interestingly Hitchcock explained that Sir John's character in *Murder!*[35] was modelled on Sir Gerald, the archetypal "actor-manager" who was "king" at the time on the London stage: "That's why I dressed Herbert Marshall, who plays the hero, in black coat and striped pants, like a cabinet minister."[36] In his conversations with Truffaut Hitchcock refers to Du Maurier in 1932 as "the leading actor in London" —indeed, "the best actor anywhere."[37] This is borne out by a 1939 interview in which Hitchcock, on the verge of leaving London for Hollywood, praises American actors and specifically Gary Cooper, whom he compares with the late Gerald Du Maurier:

> Cooper has that rare faculty of being able to rivet the attention of an audience while doing nothing. In this respect he is very much like the late Gerald Du Maurier, who could walk on a stage, flick a speck of dust off his shoulder, study his fingernails for a whole five minutes, and do it all so dramatically and with such accurate timing that he held an audience spellbound.[38]

18 However the only direct professional association between Hitchcock and Du Maurier is the largely forgotten "quota quickie"[39] *Lord Camber's Ladies* (1932), which Hitchcock produced but did not direct.

19 Neglected or forgotten until Kerzoncuf and Barr's *Unknown Hitchcock*, *Lord Camber's Ladies* is routinely reputed to be "the low point of Hitchcock's career", an appraisal which Hitchcock did nothing to contradict, having entrusted the film's direction to Benn W. Levy with whom he quarrelled and broke during the shooting. Essentially an adaptation of H. A. Vachell's play *The Case of Lady Camber*, the film is far from being a masterpiece but nevertheless raises a modicum of curiosity, not only because of some of the actors involved but also because of its convoluted ending. Indeed, the melodramatic situation soon gives way to its debunking and to an unlikely romantic conclusion, in a vein which Hitchcock was to exploit to better effect in *The Trouble with Harry*. Top billing is given to Gerald Du Maurier and to Gertrude Lawrence (one of the actor-manager's numerous mistresses, on whom Daphne was later to have a crush), secondary billing to Benita Hume (Janet King), and third billing to Nigel Bruce, cast against type as the eponymous Lord.[40] Camber has two mistresses: Janet, a florist, and Shirley, a temperamental actress and singer whom he has promised to marry. He apologizes to Janet and marries the singer (Gertrude Lawrence). A year later the Cambers return. Janet has become a nurse and works under Dr. Napier (Du Maurier), who treats Lady Camber for exhaustion and depression. While he protests that he loves his wife, unrepentant Camber wants to revive his relationship with Janet. Eventually Lady Camber finds out about her husband's infidelity, has a seizure and dies. Janet is suspected of having poisoned Lady Camber. Napier demonstrates that Janet is innocent: Lord Camber did try to poison his wife, but Janet substituted water for the poison. In turn, Lord Camber tries to poison himself, believing he has been found out, but this time it is Napier who has filled the "poison" vial with plain water. Lady Camber has died of natural causes while Napier and his assistant are now at liberty to love one another.

20 Visually the film is fairly pedestrian, with only a few shots which may be described as Hitchcock touches: the opening shot of a long kiss which will be repeated with variations in several of Hitchcock's Hollywood movies, including *Notorious* and *Dial M for Murder*; a side view of a line of chorus girls from backstage, recalling Hitchcock's constant interest in the insider's view of the music hall and other theatricals; and Lady Camber falling flat on her face, toward the spectator.

George Du Maurier

21 Sketching the virtual links between Hitchcock and George Du Maurier can only be based on largely hypothetical, indirect evidence. To quote Daphne Du Maurier in her presentation of her grandfather, George Du Maurier (1834-1896) as an illustrator "met all the leading figures of artistic and social London: Frederick Leighton, Millais, William Morris, Burne-Jones, and Whistler", and when he turned to writing he became the author of *Peter Ibbetson*, "the novel that was to be so greatly loved by the *fin de siècle* Victorians in England and the romantic Yankees across the Atlantic."[41]

22 One can assume that Hitchcock (born in 1899) was familiar with Victorian literary and visual culture, an assumption which is borne out by his interest in Jack the Ripper and by his film adaptation of Mary Belloc Lowndes's "The Lodger" (1911). *The Lodger*, which Hitchcock himself regarded as "the first true 'Hitchcock movie'",[42] shows a reproduction of Millais's *Knight Errant*, which provides a discreet clue to the

true nature of the Ivor Novello character—a righter of wrongs rather than a serial killer.[43] Comparisons between a number of Hitchcock shots and several symbolist or more specifically Pre-Raphaelite paintings have become a matter of course since the pioneering exhibition *Hitchcock et l'art: coïncidences fatales* held in Montreal and Paris in 2000-01. While many of these parallels appear justified and illuminating,[44] their exact *function* remains to be probed, and Spoto's attempt to throw light on the symbolism of *The Birds* by referring to Burne-Jones's *Love and the Pilgrim* can be found far-fetched and unconvincing.[45]

23 Besides, Hitchcock must have been at least vaguely familiar with George Du Maurier's *Punch* illustrations, with his bestselling novel *Trilby* and perhaps with *Peter Ibbetson*. When shooting *The Birds* in 1962, Hitchcock explicitly described himself as Tippi Hedren's "Svengali" because he had discovered, remodelled and refashioned her in order to make her into a great film star: "I brought her to Hollywood. I changed everything about her. Svengali Hitch rides again."[46]

24 One may also suggest that the Hitchcock film that is today almost universally regarded as the director's masterpiece, i.e. *Vertigo*, is thematically linked to both Du Maurier's novels. Beyond the Boileau-Narcejac material that is its ostensible source (*D'entre les morts*), it has long been known that the plot of *Vertigo* is a modern transposition (and complication) of Georges Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892) from late nineteenth-century Bruges to mid-1950s San Francisco. In both narratives a man who has lost the beautiful woman he loved finds another woman who, although more vulgar, looks very much like the first. He endeavours to make the resemblance complete, with tragic consequences. This tragic variation on, and reversal of, the Pygmalion theme, in which Galatea dies instead of coming to life, is also the core of Du Maurier's *Trilby*: around 1850, a young Irish model in Bohemian Paris is loved by a trio of British painters. Although she has no musical training and is tone-deaf, Trilby has a beautiful natural voice and can sing in an extraordinary fashion under the hypnotic control of Svengali, an evil character who is also a musical genius. The strain on Trilby eventually proves too much and she dies.

25 To return to *Vertigo*, if we put aside the film's elaborate plot of crime and deception, we are left with the sublime and oneiric illusion of Madeleine as a reincarnation of Carlotta, with a love affair that transcends the limitations of time and place, and with a variation on the theme of *amour fou* comparable to that which we find in a handful of movies, such as *The Portrait of Jennie* and *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, or indeed in Du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson*. While *Trilby* is a remarkable and very personal variation on the Pygmalion motif, uniting as it does the pictorial (plastic) model and the musical, set against the familiar backdrop of Bohemian Paris in the mid-19th century, *Peter Ibbetson* is more original, indeed uncanny. It combines both the ancient belief in reincarnation and the idea that "love is stronger than death" with contemporary theories—like Darwinism, antenatal memories, or the subconscious—and technological intuitions, like the dawning realisation that both sounds and pictures could be recorded and broadcast not just across space, but also across time. In several passages Du Maurier, writing in 1891, i.e. just before the "official" birthdate of cinema (1895), appears to view the human brain as a sort of *laterna magica* and/or *camera obscura* which fulfils the same duties as Edison's various inventions and allows for a form of telepathic communication between such kindred spirits as Peter Ibbetson and the Duchess of Towers.

26 As early as 1878 one of Du Maurier's cartoons had imagined and depicted a version of Skype, called "Edison's Telephonoscope", an "electric camera-obscura" which "transmits light as well as sound" and allows for a daily conversation between the parents at home in England and their children "at the Antipodes."[47]

27 Apart from this "romantic" theme, circumstantial evidence pointing to possible kinship or shared preoccupations between George Du Maurier and Hitchcock is their common interest in museums and galleries, an interest apparent in several passages

from *Peter Ibbetson* (some referring specifically to the Pre-Raphaelites, notably Millais) and in several well-known scenes from three Hitchcock films: *Vertigo*, *Blackmail* and *Torn Curtain*.[48] These references to museums, and more generally to works of art, apparently fulfil a quite different purpose in Du Maurier's novel, where they contribute to the feeling that the jailed hero finds solace in dreams and in an imaginary life preferable to "real" life, and in Hitchcock's films, where they serve various dramatic and/or narrative functions, providing spectacular or picturesque settings for scenes of pursuit or trailing (as in *Blackmail*, *Vertigo* and *Torn Curtain*) or offering ambiguous, sometimes misleading clues to either character or spectator or both (as in *The Lodger*, *Rebecca*, *Vertigo* and *Psycho*). Nevertheless many of these "ornaments" prove fascinating and enjoyable in themselves, being self-sufficient and relatively independent of the plots, which they tend to show up as elaborate excuses for scenes of spectacle (*North by Northwest*), sensation (*Psycho*) or oneirism (*Vertigo*).

28 Let us conclude on an onomastic remark. In George Du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* the hero's cousin and literary executrix is called Madge Plunket. In Daphne Du Maurier's short story "The Apple Tree", from the same collection as "The Birds", the (implicit) narrator's recently deceased wife's name is Midge. In Hitchcock's *Vertigo* Scottie's sensible old friend and confidante (played by Barbara Bel Geddes) is also called Midge. We naturally realize that both "Madge" and "Midge" are familiar diminutives of "Margaret." Nevertheless it is worth remarking that in all three cases a similar strategy is at work: a commonplace diminutive refers to an "ordinary" character placed in an overall "extraordinary" narrative, acting as a foil to its haunted, visionary, perhaps demented, hero.

Conclusion

29 Hitchcock's adaptations of Du Maurier material bring out his ambivalent relationship both with his British identity and with his literary sources. He rightly felt that in Hollywood he would enjoy better technical, commercial and artistic opportunities than in England, yet at first he found himself under contract to Selznick, a perfectionist and interventionist producer who tended to "typecast" him as a director of Hollywood-style "English" melodramas such as *Rebecca* and *The Paradine Case*.[49] In Hollywood Hitchcock carefully maintained and publicized his calculated image of a potbellied Englishman who was fond of food and of suspense, or even horror stories, mitigated by a dry sense of humour. While obviously familiar with contemporary British popular fiction and drama, Hitchcock had always regarded these literary sources essentially as starting points for his primarily visual inventions; the working and writing methods of the "dream factory" forced him to delve deeper into his characters' psychology and to submit his visual preferences to an appearance, at least, of narrative consistency. Nevertheless it is clear that beyond the wide liberties taken and the professional glossy finish of the Hollywood pictures, Hitchcock continued to draw on English or British sources and resources, in both overt and covert ways. Overtly, but discreetly, when he resorted to English actors long resident in Hollywood for highly professional secondary or cameo parts in his films and television episodes – like Leo G. Carroll in *Rebecca*, *Suspicion*, *Spellbound*, *The Paradine Case*, *Strangers on a Train* and *North by Northwest*, or John Williams in *Dial M for Murder* and *To Catch a Thief*, Alan Napier in *Marnie* – and also when he stated that in *To Catch a Thief* and *The Trouble with Harry* he had reverted to specifically English combinations of humour and suspense, or of humour and the macabre.[50] Covertly, when he directed Bristol-born Cary Grant in several of his most suave Mid-Atlantic performances, *Notorious* and *North by Northwest*, and had Grace Kelly playfully question Grant's claim to be an American tourist from Oregon

in *To Catch a* Thief, or when he transferred the setting of Winston Graham's novel *Marnie* from London and Torquay to Philadelphia and Baltimore, or again when he set the "double pursuit" plot of Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, with its innocent hero chased by both a ring of spies and the police from London to the Highlands and back, in a series of spectacular American settings (New York, Chicago, Mount Rushmore) in *North by Northwest*.

30 To sum up: Hitchcock's connection with George Du Maurier, while only indirect, is reflected in the singular status of both the novel *Peter Ibbetson*, whose Hollywood adaptation by Henry Hathaway (1935), starring Gary Cooper in the title role, was much admired by the surrealists, and the film *Vertigo*, nowadays widely regarded as Hitchcock's masterpiece and appreciated more for its oneiric, almost mystic, qualities than for its convoluted deception plot. Secondly, Hitchcock's personal relationship with Gerald Du Maurier appears not to have been as friendly as often assumed, and their professional connection was limited to one definitely minor enterprise, but Hitchcock's admiration for the actor's technique of understatement is on record and should be kept in mind to counterbalance the often quoted provocative statement that "actors are cattle" or at any rate "should be treated like cattle."[51] Finally, we should look beyond Daphne Du Maurier's dissatisfaction with two of Hitchcock's three adaptations of her work, beyond Hitchcock's unjust disparagement of the literary quality of *Rebecca* and "The Birds", and also beyond his smarting memories of Selznick's insistence on fidelity to Du Maurier's novel. Hitchcock's *The Birds* is related to Daphne Du Maurier's short story in rather the same way as his *The 39 Steps* is related to Buchan's novel: both films may be described as largely original pieces of cinematic work in their own right, which retain only some of the basic plot and atmosphere of their literary sources while simultaneously inventing many entirely new developments, characters and emotions, specifically romance and humour. But whether he was faithful to his sources or took liberties with them, Hitchcock the showman was always acutely aware of the publicity value of the Daphne Du Maurier name, which figured prominently in all the promotional material for *The Birds*—a name which to millions of readers and filmgoers had become inseparable from *Rebecca*, the novel and the movie, a "Hitchcock movie" after all.

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Notes

1 The title of Hitchcock's film, *The 39 Steps*, is distinct from Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

2 The making of *Rebecca* is dealt with in detail in Jean-Loup Bourget, Rebecca *d'Alfred Hitchcock*, Paris: Vendémiaire, 2017, 11-43. The main English-language sources are Rudy Behlmer, *Memo from David O. Selznick*, New York: Viking Press, 1972, 249-87 and Leonard J. Leff, *Hitchcock & Selznick. The Rich and Strange Collaboration of Alfred Hitchcock and David O. Selznick in Hollywood*, New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987, 36-84.

3 A "treatment" is the first stage of a screenplay, in this case breaking up the novel's narrative into a succession of separate scenes.

4 Rudy Behlmer, *op. cit.,* 257.

5 Donald Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1983, 214.

6 Rudy Behlmer, *op. cit.*, 259.

7 Donald Spoto, *op. cit.*, 214.

8 The "Hays Office" referred to the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, chaired by Will H. Hays, whose Production Code Administration was in charge of green-lighting all successive stages of film production in Hollywood from 1934 until the mid-fifties, making sure they were not in violation of the Code.

9 Rudy Behlmer, *op. cit.*, 286-287.

10 A radio adaptation which Selznick had shrewdly sensed would publicize the as yet unmade film, and at the end of which Du Maurier, supposedly answering Welles's question about the heroine's name, confirms her "namelessness" by replying "Mrs. de Winter."

11 Éric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, *Hitchcock*, Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1957, 46-47.

12 François Truffaut, *Le Cinéma selon Alfred Hitchcock*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 1966, 93-94.

13 *Ibid.*, 93.

14 Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much. Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* [1988], London: Routledge, 2005, 41-53.

15 Jean-Loup Bourget, Rebecca *d'Alfred Hitchcock*, *op. cit.*, 95-115. To this day it is possible to find examples of the vagaries of the *auteur* theory and critics who, assigning *Rebecca*'s sole credit to Hitchcock, find it scandalous that Selznick rather than Hitchcock should have got the Academy Award for Best Picture.

16 Tania Modleski, "'Never to Be Thirty-Six Years Old': *Rebecca* as Female Oedipal Drama," *Wide Angle*, vol. 5, n° 1, 1982, 34-41, 38.

17 Charles Barr, *English Hitchcock* [1999], Moffat: Cameron & Hollis, 2003, 241-242.

18 Rudy Behlmer, *op. cit.*, 264.

19 Charles Barr, *op. cit.*, 153, 202-206.

20 It should be added that the decision to adapt *Jamaica Inn* to the screen was hastily made when there was already talk of adapting *Rebecca*, and that the relations between Hitchcock and both Pommer and Laughton were extremely strained during the shooting. Nevertheless, director and actor were to work together again on *The Paradine Case* (1946-47), like *Rebecca* a Selznick production with an English subject and setting.

21 Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Hitchcock on Hitchcock. Selected Writings and Interviews*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: U of California P, 1995, 273-274.

22 See François Truffaut, *op. cit.*, 53-55 and Donald Spoto, *op. cit.,* 504.

23 Charles Barr, *op. cit.*, 241

24 Maurice Yacowar, *Hitchcock's British Films* [1977], Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2010, 254.

25 Donald Spoto, *op. cit.*, 444.

26 A parable whose meaning would be confirmed both by an earlier version of the script, which dwells on another stranger's responsibility (Annie Hayworth's), and by the final insistence on the love birds' "innocence." My references to the making of *The Birds* and to successive stages of its writing come from Laurent Bouzereau's documentary *All About* The Birds (1999).

27 The latter hypothesis tends to be supported by the film's trailer, available as a bonus on Disc 1 of the two-disc edition of *The Birds* (Universal Studios, 2017).

28 A matte shot is a special effect, typically combining into a single image a foreground photographic image with a background painted landscape. Hitchcock made much use of matte shots in numerous films, the most familiar examples being those in *Saboteur*, *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest*, *The Birds* and *Marnie*.

29 A Romantic artist who specialized in highly dramatic scenes from the Bible and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, John Martin (1789-1854) was immensely popular in his lifetime thanks to his mezzotint engravings. His influence can be seen in the works of many directors and art directors of Biblical epics and disaster films, from D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) to Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* (2005).

30 Donald Spoto, *op. cit.*, 453.

31 Reminiscing about Charles Laughton in a BBC talk in 1966, Hitchcock referred to "*Jamaica Inn*, which I didn't care for, in fact I tried to duck the picture two weeks before we started shooting" Maurice Yacowar, *op. cit.*, 254.

32 Donald Spoto, *op. cit.*, 110.

33 Alain Kerzoncuf and Charles Barr, *Hitchcock Lost and Found. The Forgotten Films*, Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2015, 216.

34 Donald Spoto, *op. cit.*, 63, 110-111.

35 Adapted by Hitchcock in 1930 from the novel and play *Enter Sir John* by Clemence Dane and Helen Simpson, and according to the director one of his rare forays into "mystery" rather than "suspense" (François Truffaut, *op. cit.*, 54-55).

36 Maurice Yacowar, *op. cit.*, 239.

37 François Truffaut, *op. cit.*, 60.

38 Sidney Gottlieb, *op. cit.*, 91.

39 The Cinematograph Films Act of 1927 had imposed on exhibitors a minimum 20% quota of British films. Predictably, the provision "did not succeed in producing good British films [...], but just quantity" Tom Ryall, *Alfred Hitchcock & the British Cinema*, London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986, 44.

40 Best known for his "silly ass" impersonation of Dr. Watson to Basil Rathbone's Sherlock Holmes, Nigel Bruce also appears in two Hitchcock-directed films, *Rebecca* (as Maxim's brother in law) and *Suspicion* (1941), as the hero's friend Beaky.

41 Daphne Du Maurier, Preface to *Peter Ibbetson* by George Du Maurier, New York: Heritage Press, 1963, x-xiii.

42 François Truffaut *op. cit.*, 33.

43 The subject of the picture has puzzled some Hitchcock scholars. Rothman mistakes it for "a painting that depicts a scene of rape" (William Rothman, *Hitchcock–The Murderous Gaze*, Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard UP, 1982, 19), while Julia Tanski confuses it with Burne-Jones's *The Rock of Doom* (Julia Tanski, "La femme symboliste dans l'œuvre d'Alfred Hitchcock," *in* Dominique Païni and Guy Cogeval (eds.), *Hitchcock et l'art. Coïncidences fatales,* Montreal and Milan: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal/Mazzotta, 2000, 147-154, 149.)

44 Nathalie Bondil-Poupard, "'Chacun tue l'objet de son amour' (Oscar Wilde)," *in* Dominique Païni and Guy Cogeval (eds), *Hitchcock et l'art. Coïncidences fatales,* Montreal and

Milan: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal/Mazzotta, 2000, 206-243.

45 Donald Spoto, *op. cit.*, 464.

46 *Ibid.*, 457.

47 I am grateful to Gilles Delavaud for drawing my attention to this cartoon from *Punch's Almanack for 1879*, which can be found at <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/the-telephonoscope-1879/>, accessed on 5 May 2020.

48 Bourget, Jean-Loup. "Hitchcock au musée, Hitchcock musagète," in Joséphine Jibokji, Barbara Le Maître, Natacha Pernac and Jennifer Verraes (eds.), *Muséoscopies. Fictions du musée au cinéma*, Presses universitaires de Paris-Nanterre, 2018, 31-44.

49 Adapted like *Rebecca* from an English novel (by Robert Hichens, 1930), *The Paradine Case* had a partly British cast (Ann Todd, Charles Laughton, Leo G. Carroll) but Hitchcock blamed Selznick for the miscasting of American star Gregory Peck as a London barrister (Truffaut, *Le Cinéma selon Alfred Hitchcock*, 129). Not produced by Selznick, but also in Hollywood's "English style" is Hitchcock's *Suspicion*, an ambiguous thriller based on Francis Iles's *Before the Fact* (1932), with an all-British cast which included Cary Grant, Joan Fontaine, Nigel Bruce, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Leo G. Carroll (Bourget, Rebecca *d'Alfred Hitchcock*, 111-115).

50 Éric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, *op. cit.*, 132-33 and François Truffaut, *op. cit.*, 56. *The Trouble with Harry* (1955) is a faithful adaptation of an English novel (by Jack Trevor Story) whose setting has been moved to Vermont during a colourful Indian summer. In an otherwise all-American cast a major part is played by Edmund Gwenn, a veteran English actor who had previously appeared in three Hitchcock films.

51 Interviewed by Mike Scott for Granada's Cinema in May 1966 (the programme was aired in October of the same year), Hitchcock repeated his finely honed ironic rejoinder: "I did say [...] that I had been *accused* of saying that actors are cattle, but this is absolutely untrue. What I possibly said is that actors should be treated like cattle." See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Lnu8VM1LCA>, at 00:17:20, accessed on 5 May 2020.

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
‘Je Reviens’, or the Eternal Return of *Rebecca*

Looking for “I”: Casting the Unnamed Heroine in Alfred Hitchcock and David O. Selznick’s Adaptation of *Rebecca*

À la recherche du « je » : le casting de l’héroïne sans nom dans Rebecca (Alfred Hitchcock et David O. Selznick)

Milan Hain

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Résumés

Français English

Cet article examine le long processus de casting de l’héroïne anonyme en vue de la première adaptation filmique de *Rebecca* de Daphne du Maurier, à la lumière des stratégies d’adaptation employées par les cinéastes, en particulier par le producteur indépendant David O. Selznick, réputé pour ses adaptations de classiques de la littérature. S’appuyant sur des documents d’archives tirés de la collection Selznick, abritée par le Centre Harry Ransom d’Austin, au Texas, et sur les bouts d’essai parvenus jusqu’à nous de plusieurs postulantes au rôle principal, l’auteur compare les bouts d’essai de Joan Fontaine à ceux de ses « rivales » les plus immédiates – Vivien Leigh, Anne Baxter, Margaret Sullavan et Loretta Young – en les reliant au vibrant échange d’opinions entre Selznick et le réalisateur Alfred Hitchcock, qui faisait alors ses débuts à Hollywood. De plus, l’article note comment le casting de Joan Fontaine a infléchi la caractérisation de la seconde Mme de Winter, le « je » du roman. En intégrant des analyses issues des études actorales et sur l’adaptation filmique, l’objectif de cet article est d’apporter un éclairage plus nuancé sur ce film canonique et sa pertinence historique.

This article considers the lengthy process of casting the unnamed female protagonist in the first film version of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* in light of the more general adaptation strategies employed by the filmmakers, particularly the independent producer David O. Selznick who was renowned for his film versions of literary classics. Drawing on archival documents from the Selznick Collection at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, and on the surviving screen tests of several candidates for the main role, the author compares Fontaine's screen tests with those of her most immediate "rivals" – Vivien Leigh, Anne Baxter, Margaret Sullavan and Loretta Young – and relates them to the vibrant exchange of opinions between Selznick and director Alfred Hitchcock for whom the film marked his Hollywood debut. Furthermore, the text notes how the casting of Joan Fontaine affected the characterization of the second Mrs. de Winter, or "I", as she is often referred to. By integrating adaptation studies with star and performance studies, the article's aim is to bring more nuance into the ongoing discussion of this canonical film and its historical relevance.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, Rebecca, David O. Selznick, Hitchcock Alfred, adaptation filmique, bouts d'essai, études actorales, star system, Hollywood
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Texte intégral

This study was funded by a grant of The Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR), reg. no. 17-06451S, 'Starmaker: David O. Selznick and the Hollywood Star System, 1935–1957'. I wish to thank the staff of the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, and, above all, my wife Ksenia who assisted me in collecting the materials and made numerous helpful comments.

1 Ever since she appeared as the second Mrs. de Winter in Alfred Hitchcock's adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1940), Joan Fontaine has been considered a perfect match for the role.[1] The film immediately turned her into a top Hollywood star, and brought her critical acclaim and her first Academy Award nomination. It also typecast her as a clumsy, naïve girl transformed into a mature, composed woman, which she later successfully repeated in *Suspicion* (1941), *The Constant Nymph* (1943), *Jane Eyre* (1944) and *A Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948). Today, some eighty years after the film's release, it remains her most popular and iconic part.[2] At the time of her casting, though, Joan Fontaine was an undistinguished and relatively unknown Hollywood performer and far from being the first or only choice for the demanding role. On the contrary, many American and British actresses – both experienced stars and novices – were considered and tested before the final decision was made.

2 It is always intriguing to speculate how a film's impact and meaning would change if some other actor or actress had been cast in the leading role. More than just a harmless game, this intellectual exercise – inspired by the commutation test in structural linguistics in which one element in a signifying system is replaced by another[3] – makes us more aware of the unique qualities each performer possesses and mobilizes in order to impersonate a character on the screen. Try to picture any canonical film with a different cast. For example, what would happen if Shirley Temple instead of Judy Garland played Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)? Would *The Third Man* (1949) be the same if Cary Grant were to play the male lead instead of Joseph Cotten? And, to name a more recent example, what if Emma Watson and Emma Stone were to switch their roles in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *La La Land* (2016)?[4]

3 Writing in 1978, John O. Thompson opined that "[t]here is room for a great deal of detailed research on the history of casting. [...] It would be good to have accounts of actual casting practice detailed enough to serve as a control on the intuitions

commutation affords us about possible and impossible matchings of actor to role."[5] In the case of *Rebecca*, we have at our disposal not only voluminous written documentation from producer David O. Selznick's archive, but also actual screen tests that were made of the most serious contenders for the female lead. This means that we do not have to merely imagine alternatives to Joan Fontaine as the second Mrs. de Winter – the footage that has survived allows us to compare her creation with other aspirants while they were all "in character."

4 My aim in this article is to reconstruct the process of casting the unnamed heroine in *Rebecca* using, on the one hand, written documents such as memos, telegrams and casting reports from the Selznick archive (housed by the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas) and on the other hand, screen tests made prior to the production, which are part of Criterion Collection's DVD edition of the film. Above all, I am interested in the decision-making process supervised by the film's producer David O. Selznick and its director Alfred Hitchcock, but I also discuss this process in light of the more general concerns related to the screen adaptation of Du Maurier's bestseller, particularly Selznick's oft-repeated demand to make as faithful a transposition of the novel as possible. Even though we routinely accept Joan Fontaine as the ideal choice for "I" (as the character of the second Mrs. de Winter is often called) and credit her with much of the film's effectiveness and success, her casting in the role surely wasn't a given. On the contrary, the process of selecting the female lead in *Rebecca* was riddled with doubt, uncertainty and, to some extent, conflict.

5 Because I treat casting as an integral part of the adaptation process and repeatedly make use of the term "fidelity" – one of the most problematic notions in adaptation studies – a short explanatory note is necessary. Fidelity criticism (or fidelity studies) was once a mainstay of the discipline but in the past twenty or twenty-five years, we have witnessed a methodological shift which turned fidelity into a dated concept that is often met with disdain and abhorrence.[6] This article on Selznick and Hitchcock's version of *Rebecca* is certainly not meant as an intervention in the discussion on the possible merits or weaknesses of this once widespread approach. I am not even concerned with a detailed comparison of the film with the novel, nor do I wish to make evaluative claims about their respective qualities or shortcomings. On the contrary, inspired by Guerric DeBona's pioneering work on film adaptations in the Hollywood studio era, I move away from a text-based approach to film adaptation to a more historically-grounded work which is preoccupied with the issues of agency, industrial choice and audience reception.[7] In other words, formalism is substituted with a production- and industry-based approach investigating the specific material conditions (in this case the process of casting) which determined the final shape of the film artifact. As put forward by Simone Murray, adaptation is thus treated not "as an exercise in comparative textual analysis of individual print works and their screen versions, but as a material phenomenon produced by a system of interlinked interests and actors."[8] To sum up, in what follows, I approach fidelity not as a method but rather as an object of my study: as will be seen hereafter, for Selznick, "fidelity" was a deliberate goal which informed his adaptation, casting and marketing strategies.

David O. Selznick's Theory of Adaptation

6 Both as a studio producer and as an independent, David O. Selznick was known to industry insiders and the general public as an adaptor of literary classics and, later in his career, of current bestsellers. His reputation as a master filmmaker with a consistently high level of artistic achievement rested on high-profile pictures derived from literary sources. His company's motto, "in the tradition of quality," determined

the choice of material and style for his adaptations, which included *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Garden of Allah* (both 1936), *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1937), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1938), *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and, earlier, while working at MGM, *David Copperfield*, *Anna Karenina* and *A Tale of Two Cities* (all 1935).[9] A screen adaptation supervised by Selznick usually implied an esteemed, culturally-valued material, high production values, a stellar cast and a proclaimed fidelity to the source novel, motivated by the attempt to preserve all those qualities – however vaguely defined – that made the original a success. The goal was to create an overall aura of prestige and respectability that would in turn translate into good box office.

7 Identical standards were supposed to shape Selznick's version of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, to which Alfred Hitchcock was assigned as director. The film was highly anticipated by audiences and critics alike as it was announced as the immediate successor of the Civil War epic *Gone with the Wind* which had been in the making since mid-1936. While adapting Margaret Mitchell's bestselling novel, Selznick formulated several principles which guided the whole process. He was convinced that "it is much better to chop out whole sequences than it is to make small deletions in individual scenes or sequences [...]. I don't think there is much harm in rearranging sequences so long as the sequences are as the readers remember them and so long as cuts in these sequences are made so carefully that the losses are not discernible."[10] He also felt that "we will be forgiven for cuts if we do not invent sequences" and that "we should not attempt to correct seeming faults of construction. I have learned to avoid trying to improve on success."[11] Selznick was of the opinion that "one never knows what chemicals have gone to make up success and that a successful adaptation is obtained by the most conscientious effort to recapture these chemicals."[12]

8 Basically, Selznick urged his screenwriter Sidney Howard, who was entrusted with writing the first draft of the screenplay for *Gone with the Wind*, as well as his numerous successors, to stay as close to the novel as possible. The writers were authorized to make necessary eliminations and reductions (these were unavoidable in most film adaptations and particularly in this unprecedented attempt to transform a 1,000-plus-page novel into a film of reasonable length) but Selznick discouraged them from inventing new scenes or making undesirable alterations to something which was proven so successful in the past. As he emphasized in a letter early in the screenwriting process, "I do not share the general motion picture theory that the screen is a different medium and because of that necessitates a different approach. I feel that the screen is much closer to the novel in form than it is to the play and that its latitude is at least that of the novel."[13] Similar concerns, amplified – as was the case with *Gone with the Wind* – by the recentness of the novel and its popular success, emerged when Hitchcock and his collaborators Joan Harrison and Philip MacDonald (with the assistance of the director's wife Alma Reville) started working on the screenplay for *Rebecca*.[14] After delivering a detailed, ninety-page treatment in June 1939, Selznick, furious, responded with the oft-quoted words "We bought REBECCA, and we intend to make REBECCA." He called it "a distorted and vulgarized version of a provenly successful work" and went on to elaborate on the reasons for his dismissal of the treatment. Specifically, the producer rejected a drastic change of exposition in Monte Carlo; sharply dismissed the idea to give "I" a name ("Daphne"); and insisted upon building a sense of empathy and identification between her and members of the audience which, according to the Audience Research Institute, was projected to be 71% female.[15] He also didn't care for Hitchcock's attempts to insert humor into the story and, on the contrary, in line with the previous point, insisted on preserving all the little details that deepened characterization or illustrated "I's" thoughts and emotions: "We have removed all the subtleties and substituted big broad strokes which in outline form betray just how ordinary the actual plot is and just how bad a picture it would make without the little

feminine things which are so recognizable and which make every woman say, 'I know just how she feels... I know just what she's going through...' etc."[16]

9 As in his earlier adaptations, Selznick demanded fidelity and rejected any substitutions of the screenwriters' invention: "Readers of a dearly loved book will forgive omissions if there is an obvious reason for them; but very properly, they will not forgive substitutions." The producer believed that the only grounds for making justifiable omissions were "length, censorship, or other practical considerations," presumably technical difficulties or unreasonable expenses.[17] In a detailed memo to Hitchcock dated June 12, 1939, Selznick then summed up his theory of adaptation, which – he wasn't shy to emphasize – was based on a proven track record of past successes:

> The only sure and safe way of aiming at a successful transcription of the original into the motion-picture form is to try as far as possible to retain the original, and the degree of success in transcribing an original has always been proportionate to the success of the transcribers in their editing process and the qualities that are gotten into the casting, performances, direction, settings, etc. – as well, of course, in the proper assembly for motion-picture purposes of the original elements. [...] I don't think I can create in two months or in two years anything as good with the characters and situations of REBECCA as du Maurier created; and frankly, I don't think you can either. I want this company to produce REBECCA, and not an original scenario based on REBECCA.[18]

10 In other words, as pointed out by Kyle Dawson Edwards, Selznick argued that "film adaptations should reproduce and preserve rather than interpret their sources."[19]

11 Selznick used his authority as the film's producer and Hitchcock's employer to order a completely new treatment that would correct these shortcomings and be more faithful to the novel. It is perhaps useful to reiterate that the producer's motivation for taking such an approach to adapting *Rebecca* was both of an artistic and a commercial nature: according to Selznick, popular material demanded fidelity (it wouldn't so much matter in adaptations of unsuccessful works) which reduced the risk inherent in film production and made for good box office. For instance, not giving the main protagonist a name was for Selznick not only a matter of storytelling but also of showmanship: this is how the readers remembered the book and they would no doubt expect this element preserved in the film version.[20]

12 I have included this lengthy prelude about Selznick's approach to film adaptation because I am convinced that the same assumptions and concerns guided the casting of *Rebecca*. In the producer's view, only an attractive cast true to Du Maurier's characterizations would translate into a popular (and thus commercial) success. However, despite Selznick's call for "accurate casting,"[21] the process of selecting suitable performers for the lead roles is not an exact science. Quite on the contrary, a lot of uncertainty is typically involved.

Another Talent Search[22]

13 As suggested, it was the requirement for "fidelity" to Du Maurier's literary original that also informed the careful process of casting the main roles. For Selznick, this had always been an important consideration in a film's development. For example, it took him more than two years to fill the role of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* and even though the talent search was extremely costly and, as the shooting was about to start, quite nerve-wracking, it also made for great publicity.[23] The process of casting *Rebecca* wasn't as long and extensive (after all, *Gone with the Wind* was *the* greatest production of all time), but it still was very thorough and time-consuming when compared to industry standards.[24] In the highly competitive American film industry, 300 to 400 films a year competed at the box office.[25] Selznick, who usually produced only one or two prestige pictures a year, was well aware that an attractive cast was

one of the best insurances against commercial failure and that it mattered particularly in adaptations of classic works and bestsellers because filmgoers' expectations were high, and they tended to be dismissive when their conception of favorite characters didn't match actual casting choices. Moreover, unlike MGM, Twentieth Century-Fox or Paramount, his company, Selznick International, had by the late 1930s only a limited talent roster and was therefore compelled to consider actors and actresses owned by other studios (while the majors would probably simply settle for one of their contract players). This meant that, in theory at least, more options were open for consideration, but those also often led to extended negotiations.

14 Finding the right actor to play Maxim de Winter, master of Manderley, was quite straightforward: after the refusal of Ronald Colman, called by Selznick "THE ONLY PERFECT MAN" for the part,[26] the assignment went to Laurence Olivier, fresh from the success of Samuel Goldwyn and William Wyler's production of *Wuthering Heights* (1939). It was the female lead that proved much more difficult to cast.

15 The role of the second Mrs. de Winter was in great demand for a number of reasons: it was a complex character who developed from a mousy, inexperienced girl into a confident woman; the film was based on an international bestseller and being developed by one of Hollywood's most respected filmmakers as his first production after *Gone with the Wind* (which was scheduled to be released in December 1939); and the director was to be the renowned Alfred Hitchcock, who had recently been imported to Hollywood from England after the signing of a seven-year contract with Selznick in March 1939. There was little doubt that, if cast right, the film could provide a tremendous boost to almost anyone's career.

16 However, there were also substantial requirements associated with the part. The actress had to be young and good-looking, but not breathtakingly gorgeous or overtly glamorous and exotic; in key sequences, she had to be able to project the right amount of nervousness and uncertainty but it was also necessary for her to convincingly portray the transformation from a shy and fragile creature into a mature woman; she had to be appropriate for audience identification as this was one of the major points Selznick raised with Hitchcock when discussing the screenplay; and, because of the material, it was preferable to select a British or an American actress who would be equipped with an acceptable accent. Some of these requirements made it more desirable to cast a newcomer or a lesser-known performer than an established star with a fixed persona.

17 Between July 1938, when Selznick started negotiating for the adaptation rights, and September 1939, when the picture finally went before cameras, dozens of candidates were considered. They included established personalities and unknowns, both British (who would provide the "correct" accent and an aura of authenticity) and American (whose foreignness in terms of the fictional world was not necessarily perceived as an obstacle because it strengthened the character's sense of being out of place at Manderley). The whole process was supervised by Selznick and Hitchcock with important input from others including Hitchcock's secretary Joan Harrison, his wife Alma Reville, Selznick's Eastern representative and talent scout Kay Brown, and John Hay Whitney, the primary investor in Selznick International. Selznick and Hitchcock had serious differences of opinion – just as with the screenplay and other aspects of the production – but in the end these seem to have had a positive effect: the two men challenged each other, which eventually led to better results.[27]

18 London-born actress Nova Pilbeam was the first serious candidate for "I." She had starred in two Alfred Hitchcock films – *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *Young and Innocent* (1937) – but, surprisingly, it was Selznick who became her champion, considering even signing a long-term contract with her and turning her into a big star under his management. Hitchcock, however, was fundamentally opposed to her because he was convinced that she lacked humor, had a narrow range and was "TOO IMMATURE AND DIFFICULT [TO] HANDLE IN LOVE SCENES."[28]

Instead, he suggested Margaret Lockwood, whom he directed in *The Lady Vanishes* (1938). Pilbeam's and Lockwood's names would be mentioned as remote possibilities in the months to come but they were soon joined by a legion of other hopefuls. Until spring 1939 the exchange of suggestions between Selznick, Hitchcock and others was lively and uninhibited but beginning in April and May, the process got more rigorous. Hopeless cases, inappropriate for the role, were rejected outright based on their photographs only. Others were invited for readings and only the most promising candidates were called in again for screen tests, which were regarded as the most sophisticated and reliable means of making the final decision. Screen tests of the highest technical standard were quite costly, but Selznick wanted to explore all possibilies and was prepared to spare a generous amount of money on them. He told Hitchcock that "I don't care if you test twenty girls, provided only that we don't waste money on obviously poor possibilities; that we weed out what we can through readings; and that we organize the tests to do as many possible in a day and thereby hold down the cost."[29]

19 Some of Hitchcock's assessments from the initial series of readings and tests are quite amusing but they are also indicative of the qualities the filmmakers were looking for:

> Miriam Patty – Too much Dresden china. She should play the part of the cupid that is broken – she's so frail.
>
> Marjorie Reynolds – Absolutely not the type – too much gangster's moll.
>
> Betty Campbell – Too ordinary – too chocolate-box.
>
> Jean Muir – Too big and sugary.
>
> Joan Fontaine – Possibility. But has to show fair amount of nervousness in order to get any effect. Further test to see how much we can underplay her without losing anything.
>
> Rene Ray – Competent but hard in type and therefore unsuitable.
>
> Kathryn Aldrich – Too Russian looking.
>
> Audrey Reynolds – Excellent for Rebecca who doesn't appear.
>
> Anita Louise – Very interesting. Her reading was competent, but she doesn't look anything like a companion.
>
> Evelyn Keyes – Too much like an actress – no reality.
>
> Frances Dee – Questionable personality and very snooty, but worthy of a test.[30]

And Then They Were Five

20 After several weeks, the selection was narrowed down to six contenders – Anne Baxter, Olivia de Havilland, Joan Fontaine, Vivien Leigh, Margaret Sullavan and Loretta Young. Of these, de Havilland was shortly ruled out – partly because getting her would mean dealing with the notoriously difficult studio moguls Jack Warner and Samuel Goldwyn[31], and partly because it would hurt the negotiations with her sister Joan Fontaine with whom she had an uneasy relationship. The remaining five actresses underwent further tests to determine who might fill the role of the second Mrs. de Winter most competently.

21 A short note on screen tests – according to Jeanine Basinger "a largely unexplored area of movie history"[32] – is in order. In her book *The Star Machine*, Basinger distinguishes between three types of tests:

> *scenes*, in which an actor was tested for a specific role, usually performing opposite another actor being tested or an unknown; *wardrobe*, in which an actor already cast in a part modeled the clothes designed for the role; and the all-important *'personality'* test, in which the newcomer was photographed while off-screen 'testers' asked questions designed to relax the performer and reveal the natural personality.[33]

22 For *Rebecca*, both *scenes* and *wardrobe* tests have survived but, understandably, it is the former that concern me in this discussion.

23 The screen tests that Hitchcock and Selznick supervised were not intended for public consumption; their purpose was to assist them in evaluating the appropriateness of casting by matching the performance of an actress with their conception of the character and by comparing it with other candidates. In general, three sets of data were analyzed: the performer's appearance (her physiognomy and how she photographed on film[34]); her personality (how she responded to the camera and which qualities of her "came through"); and her performance choices (the gestures and actions she used to interpret the scenario). In order to make the best decision possible, screen tests had to be of high quality and had to provide each candidate with comparable conditions in terms of scene selection, cameraman, lighting, costume, make-up, screen partner, etc. Selznick and Hitchcock picked the scene where the newly wedded couple, Maxim and "I", clash over the broken china cupid which had once belonged to Rebecca. The choice seems well-founded since the scene is very dramatic, heavy on dialogue and reaction, and provides ample opportunity for displaying nervousness and uneasiness but also a hint of assertiveness, all qualities which were deemed essential for an effective portrayal of the lead character.[35] The scene was played out without the benefit of continuity so the actresses had to concentrate their whole notion of the character into a few moments of drama. With the choice of the scene settled, Selznick and Hitchcock also made sure that the five aspirants for the role had flattering costumes (customized to each of them) and suitable acting partners (Alan Marshal, Reginald Denny, John Burton and Laurence Olivier, all skillful professionals, were used in the tests). Most of the tests were conducted in July and August 1939, with the final decision postponed until three weeks before the shooting was scheduled to start. Vivien Leigh, Selznick's Scarlett in *Gone with the Wind*, was enthusiastic about the prospect of appearing in *Rebecca* but was tested primarily as a courtesy to her lover Laurence Olivier who had already clinched the role of Maxim de Winter. Since early 1939, she was Selznick's contract player, which meant that using her would be simple and inexpensive (she was receiving a weekly salary regardless of whether she worked or not). However, the consensus at the studio was that she was not the correct type for the fragile "I." In her first test against Alan Marshal, Leigh seems flirtatious and bitchy rather than nervous and timid. When accepting the blame for the broken ornament, she crumples her sweater, supposedly to suggest uneasiness (thus turning it – in James Naremore's words – into an expressive object[36]) but it looks as though she's about to unbutton and undress. Later, when she says that she's "dull and quiet and inexperienced," it sharply contrasts with her appearance and conduct. To indicate her character's defensiveness, Leigh uses a high-pitched voice and fast speech but the effect, once again, is of manipulative trickery rather than uneasiness. In her second test, Leigh was allowed to perform with Laurence Olivier and the result was an improvement. This time, she seems more in character and her "I" does come across as a shy and insecure creature. Leigh's performance benefited from being able to move around the set a little which allowed her to express emotions with posture and small gestures (in her first test, she was seated behind a table). Nevertheless, it still wasn't enough to convince Selznick and Hitchcock that she was suitable for the part. As Selznick informed John Whitney, Leigh's only defender at the studio,

> she doesn't seem at all right as to sincerity or age or innocence or any of the

> other factors which are essential to the story coming off at all. Sometimes you can miscast a picture and get away with it; but there are certain stories, such as 'Rebecca,' where miscasting of the girl will mean not simply that the role is badly played but that the whole story doesn't come off. [...] I am convinced that we would be better off making this picture with a girl who had no personality whatever and who was a bad actress but was right in type than we would be to cast it with Vivien.[37]

24 In other words, despite her skill as an actress, the same qualities which made her an ideal Scarlett O'Hara – temperament, zeal, tenaciousness – prevented her from being an acceptable second Mrs. de Winter.

25 Loretta Young, born in 1913 just like Vivien Leigh, was until recently a contract player at Twentieth Century-Fox where she specialized in romance and comedy, but in 1939 she started free-lancing. This proved more challenging than expected and a lead role in *Rebecca* seemed a welcome opportunity to get a solid footing in her new position in the industry.[38] With her big eyes and apple cheeks, she was known as "Hollywood's beautiful hack."[39] However, her radiant looks ultimately worked to her disadvantage. Selznick visualized "I" as an "unglamorous creature," though "sufficiently pretty and appealing, in a simple girlish way, to understand why Maxim would marry her."[40] In the test, an attempt was made to deglamorize Young by dressing her in a dull sweater, but she still looks highly glamorous in close-ups. Regardless of her appearance, her performance in the test was not wholly convincing either: her reactions were slow and she kept on biting her lip to illustrate nervousness. In the final analysis she doesn't seem shy, insecure or frightened but merely sad and disappointed as though her present disposition is just a passing mood, not a defining character trait. Moreover, Young's strong American accent was not appropriate and overall, she was too much of an all-American girl to effectively portray a British companion. As aptly summed up by Selznick: "We have ruled out Loretta Young on the ground that when you strip her of Hollywood glamour, stunning clothes, a great deal of make-up, etc., there is very little left. [...] Incidentally, her accent, of course, does her no good for the role. We are prepared for an American accent, if necessary, but not one quite so Santa Monica Boulevard as Loretta's."[41]

26 In the final trio, Margaret Sullavan, recently nominated for an Oscar for her impressive performance in *Three Comrades* (1938), was the oldest: she was 28 when the tests for *Rebecca* were made.[42] In the footage, she fails to project innocence, fragility or naiveté. On the contrary, she seems "quirkily autonomous",[43] too sure of herself, as experienced and mature as Maxim (her costume – a white buttoned blouse with a high collar – contributes to this impression). Sullavan's characteristically husky voice and rapid cadence of speech also contradict any attempts at invoking vulnerability. As opposed to Loretta Young, her reactions in the test are too fast: sometimes she even speaks before Reginald Denny as Maxim finishes his lines. In consequence, her confident conduct makes it hardly credible that her "I" wouldn't be able to stand up to Maxim or Mrs. Danvers – for example, it is impossible to visualize Mrs. Danvers bringing her to the brink of suicide. Still, Sullavan was an accomplished actress and her performance never becomes monotonous; by varying her expression and speech, she manages to achieve some level of emotional intensity. Even so, her casting in the role would necessitate many changes in the screenplay (the least of which would be references to the girl's age) and the whole concept of an uneven romance between an inexperienced ingenue and an older man would be ruined. There were also practical considerations that, in the end, prevented Sullavan from obtaining the role. Even though she was married to the influential talent agent Leland Hayward, who pushed hard to get her the assignment, she was at the same time contracted to MGM, whose representatives demanded a substantial sum of money for her services and a one-film option for Vivien Leigh, which Selznick opposed.

27 In contrast to Sullavan, the sixteen-year-old Anne Baxter was the youngest of the lot. Even though she was new to the film industry, she had performed successfully on Broadway and in her screen test for *Rebecca*, she made a very strong impression. Kay Brown opined that she was "MOST TOUCHING AND BEAUTIFUL"[44] and Selznick concurred, saying that she "had more sincerity than Fontaine."[45] In her interpretation of the scene, she projects many of the qualities that were considered essential for the part: innocence, vulnerability, insecurity. She emphasizes "I"'s submissiveness by a careful selection of inventive gestures: she lowers her eyes, thus evading Maxim's look; nervously squeezes her knitting; and kneels beside Maxim to literally look up to him. As the scene progresses, she very touchingly seeks Maxim's confirmation of being happy in their marriage and still later, she holds a fragment of the china cupid to suggest a failure to do so. All of these performance choices prove that despite her age, Baxter already was a complete, highly skilled actress on par with her more experienced colleagues. However, her young age still posed a big problem because her pairing with Olivier – who at 32 was twice her age – would not look acceptable. Selznick explained to John Whitney that Baxter "is ten times more difficult to photograph than Fontaine, and I think it is a little harder to understand Max de Winter marrying her than it would be Fontaine."[46] The filmmakers experimented with her looks but neither a new hairdress, nor a blonde wig could conquer the prevailing sentiment that she looked like a schoolgirl in adult woman's clothes.[47]

The Decision Is Made

28 Leigh, Young, Sullavan and Baxter all had significant assets but, in each case, there was also something that prevented them from getting the approval of both Selznick and Hitchcock: Leigh seemed too sly and coquettish, Young couldn't possibly pass for a British companion, Sullavan was too old and Baxter too immature. Only Joan Fontaine seemed to be the ideal type: at 21, she was the right age; she was photogenic and good-looking but not exactly breathtaking; and as a child of British parents, she had the "correct accent." Unlike Leigh, Sullavan or even Baxter, though, her acting skills were often disputed. She debuted in 1935 in the Joan Crawford-Robert Montgomery star vehicle *No More Ladies* in which she was credited as Joan Burfield. After signing a long-term contract with RKO, she was subjected to a typical studio build-up (from walk-in parts to supporting roles to leads in B movies) which, however, didn't produce much result. For example, of the low-budget comedy/romance *You Can't Beat Love* (1937), *The New York Times* said that it "should be run through the reviewing mill as perfunctorily as possible."[48] The critic didn't find Fontaine's performance worthy of a comment, but the trade journal *Variety* noticed that she "has looks" but also "lots to learn about camera technique and vocal modulation."[49] Even when the quality of her films improved, Fontaine's notices remained unimpressive. *Variety* said that in *A Damsel in Distress* (1937), a musical comedy starring Fred Astaire, "Joan Fontaine is passively fair as the ingenue, nicely looking the role but otherwise undistinguished."[50] With her career stalled, RKO released her from the contract and, in early 1939, she became a free-lancer.[51]

29 Her tests for *Rebecca* were promising, though not entirely convincing. In the first series, Fontaine conveys her character's insecurity and submissiveness by posture – she is unnaturally slouched and looks like a dog waiting to be punished. She says her lines as if in a trance, her eyes wandering and avoiding Maxim's gaze. Later, she emphasizes "I"'s emotional strain by raising her hands and massaging her temples. In the second surviving test, Fontaine goes even further. She sobs, kneads her hands, roams her eyes from one place to another, breathes loudly – all of which transforms her agitation into impending hysteria. For some, this was unbearable overacting.

John Whitney wrote to Selznick that "the last test of Joan Fontaine was so bad that I cannot see her playing the role otherwise than as a dithering idiot, or as her other version – a talking magazine cover."[52] Alfred Hitchcock, his wife Alma and Joan Harrison all thought that Fontaine "was just too coy and simpering to a degree that it was intolerable" and "her voice was irritating."[53] There was resistance against Fontaine from the public as well. In a letter addressed to "Mr. O" (Selznick or, possibly, Laurence Olivier), a woman named Polly writes that giving the role to Fontaine would "ruin [the film] utterly. [...] She knows nothing about acting... Any waitress without an ounce of experience could do it – even I!"[54]

30 Despite strong opposition, Selznick became Fontaine's champion, privileging her appropriate type over any shortcomings she might have had as an actress. In other words, he preferred that the character of "I" – innocent, shy, awkward, gauche, unassuming – should be created not as an effect of acting or impersonation, but rather as a result of selecting a girl with proper physical features and on-screen presence. Already in spring 1938, he noticed that Fontaine "has a completely fresh quality that might be built with the right parts to stardom. She's going to get nowhere at RKO."[55] Sixteen months later, Selznick, still believing in her potential, used his authority as the producer of *Rebecca* to prevail on Hitchcock (who, despite some reservations, preferred Sullavan[56]), Whitney (who supported Leigh) and other sceptics at the studio, signing a seven-year contract with Fontaine, with *Rebecca* as her first assignment. Eschewing the slow, but ultimately meaningless build-up she underwent at RKO, under Selznick's supervision and guidance she was immediately cast in a coveted and difficult role in a prestigious, high-budget adaptation of a literary bestseller. The studio prepared a press release, informing the media that "THIS MAKES HER THE THIRD COMPARATIVE UNKNOWN ON WHOM [DAVID O. SELZNICK] HAS BEEN WILLING TO GAMBLE A STAR ASSIGNMENT DURING PAST YEAR – VIVIEN LEIGH AS SCARLETT, INGRID BERGMAN, SWEDISH STAR IN 'INTERMEZZO: A LOVE STORY' AND FONTAINE."[57]

31 Even though Fontaine convinced Selznick that she knew "what the part is all about",[58] it was obvious that she would need careful direction. Hitchcock spent an uncharacteristically large amount of time coaching her to vary her performance, so it wouldn't become monotonous, and guiding her through the transformation from a mousy girl to a more self-confident wife and mistress of the house.[59] Despite the extraordinary care, numerous imperfections had to be solved with retakes and in postproduction. As remarked by Leonard Leff, "while the picture was not made in the editing and dubbing rooms, the increasingly favorable response of preview audiences, especially to Joan Fontaine's performance, indicates that it was remarkably enhanced there."[60] This was all result of privileging an actress who was less accomplished and experienced but who provided her character with appropriate qualities in terms of appearance and personality – just as Selznick's "theory of adaptation" required.

A New Star Is Made

32 The risky bet on Joan Fontaine – up to then regarded as an actress without much star-potential – paid off. The film was an unambiguous success. Fontaine was heralded as a fresh find (despite having made fifteen films in the past five years) and Selznick also won his share of plaudits as the discoverer who provided her with her first real breakthrough. The reactions of preview audiences already suggested that Fontaine's interpretation of "I" met with approval. In a poll conducted after the preview screening of 25 December 1939, 53% of the respondents indicated that they "will go to see other pictures because Joan Fontaine is in them." Another 35% stated that they liked her performance but will not go to her next film just because she's in it. Ten respondents (or 4%) out of the total of 269 said that they "don't care one way

or the other" and no one was opposed to the actress to the extent that they wouldn't go to see a picture with her.[61]

33 *Rebecca* was shown to members of the press in late March 1940. The leading trade journal *Variety* stated that the

> picture is noteworthy in its literal translation of Daphne du Maurier's novel to the screen, presenting all of the somberness and dramatic tragedy of the book in its unfolding. More important, it commands attention in establishing Joan Fontaine as a potential screen personality of upper brackets. [...] Miss Fontaine is excellent as the second wife, carrying through the transition of a sweet and vivacious bride to that of a bewildered woman marked by the former tragedy she finds hard to understand.[62]

34 Frank S. Nugent in *The New York Times* agreed that Fontaine was one of the biggest attractions in the screen version of *Rebecca*. His laudatory review is worth quoting at length because the author makes several interesting points about the book, its transcription and Fontaine's performance:

> The real surprise, and the greatest delight [...] is Joan Fontaine's second Mrs. de Winter, who deserves her own paragraph, so here it is: 'Rebecca' stands or falls on the ability of the book's 'I' to escape caricature. She was humiliatingly, embarrassingly, mortifyingly shy, a bit on the dowdy side, socially unaccomplished, a little dull; sweet, of course, and very much in love with – and in awe of – the lord of the manor who took her for his second lady. Miss du Maurier never really convinced me anyone could behave quite as the second Mrs. de Winter behaved and still be sweet, modest, attractive and alive. But Miss Fontaine does it – and does it not simply with her eyes, her mouth, her hands and her words, but with her spine. Possibly it's unethical to criticize performance anatomically. Still we insist Miss Fontaine has the most expressive spine – and shoulders! – we've bothered to notice this season.[63]

35 With high-brow literary adaptations, the approval of critics was always welcome because it lent the product much-needed prestige, but what ultimately mattered most was the reaction of paying audiences. After all, there were thousands of those who had loved the novel and whose conception of the story as well as the main character might have been markedly different from what the film – by its nature a very explicit medium – offered. The success of Selznick's strategy, then, depended to a large extent on how effectively the *idea of fidelity* would be *sold* to the public. One only needs to have a look at the theatrical trailer to see that the film's promotion was heavily based on the assurance that it was indeed a faithful translation of the novel. Scenes from the picture are intercut with pages from the book with highlighted lines spoken verbatim by Joan Fontaine's "I" in the audio track. The narrator's authoritative voice dispels all doubt by promising that the novel was "brought to the screen with all the warmth and emotion that made millions of readers acclaim Daphne du Maurier's bestseller as the most exciting love story of our time." Similarly, posters and numerous newspaper and magazine advertisements included a reproduction of the book's cover (next to the likenesses of Joan Fontaine and Laurence Olivier) and promised another cinematic triumph "produced with equal faithfulness by the organization that gave you 'Gone with the Wind'."[64] Moreover, prior to the film's premiere, the well-publicized talent search made also distinctly clear that considerable personal and financial resources were invested in order to select the most suitable candidate for "I."

36 On its first release, *Rebecca* grossed $3,000,000, finishing among the top 5 box office champions for 1940 despite predictions that it had a limited audience appeal.[65] The film was chosen by American critics as the best picture of the year, beating *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Ninotchka* and Hitchcock's own *Foreign Correspondent*,[66] and went on to win two Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Cinematography. Joan Fontaine was nominated in the Best Actress category but lost to Ginger Rogers for *Kitty Foyle: The Natural History of a Woman* (1940). When she won the following

year for her performance in Hitchcock's *Suspicion* (1941), many commentators credited *Rebecca* for securing her the award.[67]

37 Of course, it's impossible to measure precisely how much of a contribution the choice of Joan Fontaine made to the overall success of the film. Equally, we will never know how it would have fared with another actress – say Margaret Sullavan or Vivien Leigh, both of whom were regarded as superior performers. But the triumph at the box office, favorable reviews in contemporary press and the numerous awards bestowed upon the picture, as well as its lasting appeal and legendary status, suggest that David O. Selznick's idea of "accurate casting" was at least in this case legitimate. Joan Fontaine, selected at the end of a long and laborious process, became an important ingredient in the producer's attempt to bring the film adaptation as close to the novel as possible and thus minimize the commercial and artistic risks involved in making a screen version of a cherished bestseller.

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Notes

1 See for example David Thomson's comment in "Du Maurier, Hitchcock and Holding an Audience," *in* Helen Taylor (ed.), *Daphne du Maurier Companion*, London: Virago, 2013, 305-311, 310.

2 In the Internet Movie Database, *Rebecca* has been rated by more than 110,000 users and is by far the most popular title in Joan Fontaine's filmography. The second on the list – *Suspicion* – has fewer than 30,000 votes ("Most Rated Movies and TV Shows With Joan Fontaine," *Internet Movie Database*, <https://www.imdb.com/filmosearch

/?sort=num_votes&explore=title_type&role=nm0000021&ref_=nm_ql_flmg_4>, accessed 1 August 2019). Scoring 8.1, *Rebecca* also has the highest rating of all feature films with Joan Fontaine and is currently ranked number 219 in IMDb's Top Rated Movies of all time ("Highest Rated Feature Films With Joan Fontaine," *Internet Movie Database*, <https://www.imdb.com/filmosearch/?explore=title_type&role=nm0000021&sort=user_rating,desc&mode=detail&page=1&title_type=movie&ref_=filmo_ref_typ>, accessed 1 August 2019.and "Top Rated Movies," *Internet Movie Database*, <https://www.imdb.com/chart/top>, accessed 1 August 2019).

3 John O. Thompson, "Screen Acting and the Commutation Test," *Screen*, vol. 19, no. 2, July 1978, 55-70.

4 All of these casting choices were in fact considered at one point or another. A whole book by Eila Mell, *Casting Might-Have-Beens: A Film by Film Directory of Actors Considered for Roles Given to Others* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2005) is based on the premise.

5 Thompson, "Screen Acting and the Commutation Test," 67.

6 David T. Johnson, "Adaptation and Fidelity," *in* Thomas Leitch (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 87-100, 87.

7 Guerric DeBona, *Film Adaptation in the Studio Era*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010, 1-11.

8 Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*, New York and London: Routledge, 2012, 16.

9 Kyle Dawson Edwards discusses the brand Selznick created for his company in "Brand-Name Literature: Film Adaptation and Selznick International Pictures' *Rebecca* (1940)," *Cinema Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3, Spring 2006, 32-58.

10 Quoted in Rudy Behlmer (ed.), *Memo from David O. Selznick*, New York: The Viking Press, 1972, 148, 150.

11 *Ibid*., 149, 150.

12 Quoted in Steve Wilson, *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014, 21.

13 *Ibid*., 21. The making of *Gone with the Wind* and the challenging process of adapting Mitchell's novel for screen purposes is documented in detail in Alan David Vertrees, *Selznick's Vision: Gone with the Wind and Hollywood Filmmaking*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997.

14 For an excellent account of the film's production history, see Leonard Leff, *Hitchcock & Selznick: The Rich and Strange Collaboration of Alfred Hitchcock and David O. Selznick in Hollywood,* New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987, 36-84.

15 Susan Ohmer, *George Gallup in Hollywood*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 128.

16 Rudy Behlmer, *op. cit*., 269.

17 *Ibid*., 266.

18 *Ibid*., 267.

19 Kyle Dawson Edwards, "Brand-Name Literature: Film Adaptation and Selznick International Pictures' *Rebecca* (1940)," *Cinema Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3, Spring 2006, 32-58, 35.

20 For the same reason, the title of the book was preserved even though there were some objections against it in the studio, claiming that it is rather undistinguished and only good for the "Palestine market" (David O. Selznick, Memo to Merritt Hulburd from 30 September 1938, Box 174, Folder 3, Rebecca Title, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.).

21 Rudy Behlmer, *op. cit*., 279.

22 The process of casting the role of the second Mrs. de Winter in *Rebecca* is covered in other books but often too sketchily and, in some instances, erroneously. For an example, see Lesley Coffin's account in *Hitchcock's Stars: Alfred Hitchcock and the Hollywood Studio System*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014, 1-12.

23 The talent hunt is covered by Rupert Alistair in *The Search for Scarlett O'Hara: Gone with the Wind and Hollywood's Most Famous Casting Call*, Kindle edition, Amazon Digital Services, 2014.

24 In addition to *Gone with the Wind* and *Rebecca*, Selznick mounted big, nation-wide talent searches when casting the child leads in *David Copperfield* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

25 Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s*, New York: Charles

Scribner's Sons, 1997, 463.

26 Rudy Behlmer, *op. cit.*, 272.

27 See Leonard Leff, , *op. cit.*, 82.

28 David O. Selznick, Telegram from 7 October 1938, Box 170, Folder 12, Rebecca, Casting 2nd Wife, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

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31 De Havilland had a long-term contract at Warner Bros., but Goldwyn obtained an option for one film with her. Selznick said that "dealing with either [Jack Warner and Samuel Goldwyn] is about the worst thing in the industry unless it is dealing with the other" (David O. Selznick Memo to John Hay Whitney from 18 August 1939, Box 170, Folder 11, Rebecca, Casting 2nd Wife, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas).

32 Jeanine Basinger, *The Star Machine*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, 39.

33 *Ibid.*, 39.

34 As Jeanine Basinger reminds us, "people don't always look on film the way they look in real life" (*The Star Machine*, 38).

35 The scene as used in the screen tests is different from the finished film: the dialogue is longer and the action takes place in the morning room in natural daylight as opposed to the screening room where director of photography George Barnes used various lighting effects to emphasize the mounting tension between Maxim and "I."

36 James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1990, 83-87.

37 Selznick, Memo to John Hay Whitney, 18 August 1939.

38 Earlier the same year, Young was considered for a role in Selznick's *Intermezzo: A Love Story*, but it eventually went to his new Swedish discovery Ingrid Bergman.

39 David Shipman, *The Great Movie Stars 1: The Golden Years*, London: Macdonald, 1989, 611.

40 David O. Selznick, Memo to Ray Klune from 6 October 1939, Box 170, Folder 9, Rebecca Cast I – Fontaine, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas; emphasis in original.

41 Selznick, Memo to John Hay Whitney, 18 August 1939.

42 At one point, she was also seriously considered for the role of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*. Steve Wilson, *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014, 3-4.

43 Donald Spoto, *Spellbound by Beauty: Alfred Hitchcock and His Leading Ladies*, New York: Harmony Books, 2008, 91.

44 Kay Brown Telegram to David O. Selznick from 14 August 1939, Box 174, Folder 1, Rebecca Tests, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

45 Selznick, Memo to John Hay Whitney, 18 August 1939.

46 *Ibid.*

47 Not long afterwards, Baxter signed a contract with Twentieth Century-Fox and debuted (on loanout to MGM) in the western *20 Mule Team* (1940).

48 B. R. C, "The Screen," *The New York Times*, 25 June 1937, 25.

49 Quoted in Marsha Lynn Beeman, *Joan Fontaine: A Bio-Bibliography*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994, 9.

50 *Ibid.*, 73.

51 Her most distinctive part to date was a supporting role in the MGM production of *The Women* (1939), directed by George Cukor. The film was released on 1 September 1939 after the casting for *Rebecca* was closed, so it didn't have a direct impact on Selznick and Hitchcock's decision. However, Cukor was Selznick's close friend and frequent collaborator, and according to Marsha Lynn Beeman, it was he who recommended Fontaine for the role of "I" (Marsha Lynn Beeman, *op. cit.,* 89).

52 Quoted in David Thomson, *Showman: The Life of David O. Selznick*, New York: Alfred A.

Knopf, 1992, 309.

53 Alfred Hitchcock, Memo to David O. Selznick from 19 August 1939, Box 174, Folder 1, Rebecca Tests, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

54 Polly [?] to Mr. O, undated letter.

55 David O. Selznick, Memo to Daniel O’Shea from 26 April 1938, Box 3338, Folder 9, Joan Fontaine Talent Files 1938-1939, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

56 Later, Hitchcock would tell François Truffaut that he preferred Fontaine all along (François Truffaut (with the collaboration of Helen G. Scott), *Hitchcock*, Revised edition, New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 1985, 140).

57 David O. Selznick, Telegram from 5 September 1939, Box 170, Folder 11, Rebecca, Casting 2nd Wife, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

58 Selznick to John Hay Whitney, 18 August 1939.

59 According to Donald Spoto, sometimes he achieved this using questionable methods (*Spellbound by Beauty*, 92-96).

60 Leonard Leff, *op. cit.*, 80.

61 Dan Auiler, *op. cit.*, 479. 7% of the respondents provided no answer and three of them said that Fontaine was “too drooped and meek” Olivier’s approval rates were comparable to Fontaine’s.

62 Walt, “Rebecca,” *Variety*, 27 March 1940, 17.

63 Frank Nugent, “Rebecca,” *The New York Times*, 29 March 1940, 25. Ironically, Selznick criticized Fontaine’s posture and walk after *Rebecca* and spoke to her repeatedly about it (David O. Selznick, Memo to Kay Brown from 16 February 1940, Box 3338, Folder 10, Joan Fontaine Talent Files 1940, David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas).

64 *Rebecca* advertisement in *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 March 1940.

65 Walt, “Rebecca,” 17; Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1997, 466.

66 “Rebecca Wins Critics’ Poll” 1.

67 Lupton Wilkinson, “Next Year’s Academy Award Winner!,” *Hollywood*, vol. 30, no. 7, July 1941, 19.

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'Je Reviens', or the Eternal Return of *Rebecca*

On the Afterlives of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca:* Spinoffs and Transfictions

La postérité de Rebecca de Daphne du Maurier : réécritures et transfictions

ARMELLE PAREY

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Résumés

English Français

Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* is one of these novels that are regularly submitted to rewriting and expansion. If the process "preserves the traditional canon's centrality" (as Jeremy Rosen says about minor character elaborations), it also participates in the critical reassessment of the source text as it throws a new light on it. This article discusses very diverse transfictions based on Du Maurier's novel and examines the workings of the various narrative strategies adopted to reactivate the well-known novel. This will enable us to underline the elements, traits or characteristics of *Rebecca* that are picked upon – and which ensure Du Maurier's novel an afterlife – and how these various revisions and/or expansions engage with the source text. While Antonia Fraser's "Rebecca's Story" (1976) is a coquel enabling a first-person account by Rebecca of her marriage, Rose Tremain's "The Housekeeper" (2014) changes diegetic level as it portrays the young Du Maurier and gives an account of the inspiration behind *Rebecca* by the character misrepresented as Mrs. Danvers. Other texts under study are Susan Hill's *Mrs. de Winter* (1993) and Sally Beauman's *Rebecca's Tale* (2001), which offer narrative and temporal expansions, and finally Lisa Gabriele's *The Winters* (2018), a transposition of the plot and its characters to contemporary America.

Rebecca de Daphne du Maurier est l'un de ces romans régulièrement soumis à la réécriture et à l'expansion narrative. Si ceci garantit la centralité du canon traditionnel (comme le dit Jeremy Rosen des développements de personnages mineurs), cela contribue également à une ré-évaluation critique du texte-source en jetant un nouvel éclairage sur celui-ci. Cet article s'intéresse donc à des transfictions diverses élaborées à partir du roman de du Maurier et

étudie le fonctionnement des différentes stratégies narratives adoptées pour réactiver ce célèbre roman. Ceci nous permettra de souligner pourquoi et comment certains éléments, traits et caractéristiques de *Rebecca* sont repris, révélant comment ces différentes révisions et/ou expansions se positionnent par rapport au texte-source. Alors que "Rebecca's Story" (1976) de Margaret Fraser est une expansion narrative latérale qui permet un récit de son mariage par Rebecca elle-même, "The Housekeeper" (2014) de Rose Tremain change de niveau diégétique et s'intéresse à la jeune du Maurier comme personnage, racontant l'inspiration derrière *Rebecca* par la voix du personnage qui se déclare représenté sous un faux jour dans le récit, sous les traits de Mrs. Danvers. Les autres textes étudiés sont *Mrs. de Winter* (1993) de Susan Hill et *Rebecca's Tale* (2001) de Sally Beauman qui offrent tous deux des expansions temporelles et narratives et enfin, *The Winters* (2018) de Lisa Gabriele qui transpose l'intrigue et les personnages dans l'Amérique contemporaine.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, Rebecca, transfictionnalité, réécriture, suite, expansion narrative latérale
Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, Rebecca, transfictionality, rewriting, sequel, coquel

Texte intégral

1 "She had decamped to Cornwall, to a house on top of a cliff ('like Manderley, terrifically wild and romantic, no Mrs. Danvers though, thank goodness')."[1] Such a remark, made in passing by a character in Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life* (2013), is just one illustration of the pervasive presence of Du Maurier's novel since its publication in 1938. Like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* or Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, amongst others, *Rebecca* is one of these culturally central texts well known to the general public because they have been read, if only partly at school, or encountered through screen and TV adaptations.[2] Not only has it tellingly never been out of print and was voted the nation's favourite book by W.H. Smith customers in 2017, but *Rebecca* is also regularly submitted to rewriting and expansion, leading to all kinds of rewritings, or "spinoffs", and transfictions.

2 The appropriation, in one form or another, of characters and plots from a work of fiction is a phenomenon that has shown no sign of abating since Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) famously gave a voice to the first Mrs. Rochester, *Jane Eyre*'s madwoman in the attic. In suggesting how and why she may have become the character in Charlotte Brontë's novel, Rhys operates "decentering, recentering"[3] and offers an instance of Edward Said's "contrapuntal reading", often present in texts which pick up an existing literary plot:

> We must therefore read the great canonical texts [...] with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented [...] in such works.[4]

3 *Wide Sargasso Sea* also illustrates the concept of transfictionality, defined by Richard Saint-Gelais as the phenomenon by which two texts relate to the same fictional universe, plot and characters.[5] Transfictionality accounts for all kinds of temporal and narrative expansions, centred around identical and therefore recognizable characters, which neither endanger nor challenge the fictional world in which the characters evolve.[6] Such expansions thus include prequels, coquels and sequels which entertain different temporal relationships with the source text. The sequel is a type of writing that "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."[7] A prequel situates itself before the story told in the source-text while a coquel is an allographic text that is set in the same diegetical time.

Within transfictionality, Saint-Gelais identifies as "version" the result of the process by which a story is revisited through the perspective of another character and

given a new interpretation.[8] Rewriting appropriates a plot or characters but with much greater freedom by creating a different diegetic world that alters the narrative of the source text. For instance, while Susan Hill's *Mrs. de Winter* (1993) is a transfiction that picks up the characters in *Rebecca*, Lisa Gabriele's *The Winters* (2018) rewrites the story with contemporary American characters bearing slightly different names. Birgit Spengler refers to such rewrites as "spinoffs", and defines them as "fictional texts that take their cues from famous, and often canonical, works of literature, which they revise, rewrite, adapt or appropriate as a whole or in parts, thus producing alternative voices and/or historical or geographical re-locations."[9] Rewriting is thus often associated with "writing back", implementing Adrienne Rich's notion of "re-vision":

> 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.[10]

5 As aptly put by Chantal Zabus, "[s]ince rewriting aims at redressing certain wrongs, it may be equated with its homophonic counterpart and be read as a re-righting gesture."[11] But while Zabus dismisses sequels as "fail[ing] to dismantle narrative authorities and priorities in the circulation of knowledge",[12] narrative expansions or transfictions, if less radical, may also change our perspective on a source text. Indeed, if both processes of rewriting and of transfiction preserve or reinforce the centrality of the source texts[13] by reactivating their memory and by fully acknowledging them, they can also participate in the critical reassessment of those source texts by throwing new light on them. Helen Taylor offered an overview of the aftermath of Du Maurier's novel in a 2007 article entitled "*Rebecca*'s Afterlife: Sequels and Other Echoes" based on the premise that they set off the source text. Without necessarily challenging this idea, this essay returns to some of these texts with the addition of two others and considers them in the light of recent critical notions like transfictionality.

6 This paper will thus discuss very diverse appropriations of Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, both as preservers of the centrality of the text and as critiques or reassessments. Texts under study will include two works commissioned by the Du Maurier estate, offering narrative and temporal expansions: Susan Hill's *Mrs. de Winter* (1993) and Sally Beauman's *Rebecca's Tale* (2001); Antonia Fraser's "Rebecca's Story" (1976) and Rose Tremain's "The Housekeeper" (2014), which both return to the story through a different character's viewpoint; and finally Lisa Gabriele's *The Winters* (2018), a rewriting which transposes the plot and its characters to contemporary America. Examining the workings of the various narrative strategies adopted in these stories and novels to reactivate the well-known novel will enable us to underline the elements, traits or characteristics of *Rebecca* that are picked upon – thus ensuring Du Maurier's novel various afterlives – and how these various takes or revisions engage with the source text.

Sequels: Susan Hill's *Mrs. de Winter* and Sally Beauman's *Rebecca's Tale*

7 The sequel, the oldest and most common form of narrative expansion, is a work that goes beyond the ending of a preceding and finished work.[14] Both commissioned and approved of by the Du Maurier estate,[15] Susan Hill's *Mrs. de Winter* and Sally Beauman's *Rebecca's Tale* are sequels in the sense that they pick up Du Maurier's

narrative and characters in novels respectively set twelve and twenty years later. In 2007, Helen Taylor foregrounded a (rare) positive view of sequels on the basis that they maintain an interest in the source text: "The sequel helps give new life, dignity, indeed a classic status to a popular text."[16] A mercenary interest is often suspected to lie at the basis of sequel writing,[17] especially as sequels do not simply continue an unfinished novel but prise open a work deemed complete by its author. Another justification for writing a sequel is dissatisfaction of some sort with the ending of the source text. For Taylor, the reason for sequels to novels resides in the fact that "they end with extremely unsatisfying and incomplete closures"[18] and in a wish to reach the conclusion that the original writer could not write: "Recognising their predecessors' narrative compromises with the sexual and gender mores of the day, these [contemporary] writers tend to be suspicious of harmonious conclusions to disturbing narratives."[19] Marjorie Garber also observes the "desire not only for continuation but also for happy endings"[20] while John Banville accounts for his own *Mrs. Osmond* by stating that Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady* was not fully finished.

8 Most sequels to *Rebecca* seem to respond to the wish for the happy ending that Du Maurier did not write. Indeed, if Hitchcock and Selznick's adaptation has popularised the notion of a happy ending to *Rebecca* by foregrounding the couple's reunion while Manderley is burning, the ending to the novel is, in Du Maurier's own words, "a bit brief and a bit grim"[21]: the novel's last paragraph is restricted to the description of the couple's drive towards Manderley while the first chapter, set in the aftermath of its destruction, suggests little happiness.

9 The desire to give a happy ending is however not what motivates Hill's sequel, seeing that distrust develops between the de Winters and that guilt for Rebecca's murder eventually leads to Maxim's suicide. Hill's novel is a text-book sequel that moves forward in time but remains within the same diegetic world and picks up the same characters, even the same narrator, without transforming them. Such a faithful sequel is marked by slow progress, by reduplication of events from Du Maurier's novel – like the examination of Rebecca's clothes and the disastrous ball – and by a narrator who seems to have regressed to the young timorous character she was in Monte Carlo at the beginning of Du Maurier's novel but adopts a staunch moral stance that demands Maxim de Winter's punishment for his crime.[22]

10 *Rebecca's Tale* is another sequel that takes liberties, temporal and otherwise, with the source text. Set after the events told in *Rebecca,* it also adopts the few additions made by Hill in *Mrs. de Winter*, including Maxim's death and the scattering of his ashes by his wife.[23] Beauman's novel is divided into four narratives: it is composed of an account by Rebecca, as promised in the title, but also narratives by new characters and minor characters in *Rebecca* (such as Colonel Julyan). All of them convey a peripheral vision of the drama while trying to come to terms with Rebecca's personality and the inconsistencies surrounding her death as narrated in Du Maurier's novel. As I argued elsewhere, Beauman's novel plays off those conflicting voices against one another: "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."[24] Even though Beauman's novel gives a voice to Rebecca, it does not replace one story with another, one authority with another. It insists, as Rhys did,[25] that there are several versions to the same story and remains in keeping with Du Maurier's inconclusive ending.

11 The part written in Rebecca's voice (287-373) – in the guise of a newly found notebook – is set in October 1931, the day before Rebecca is to see her doctor. This narrative is therefore a coquel as it inserts itself into Du Maurier's narrative to fill in some blanks, without directly disturbing the outcome of the source narrative. Overall, Beauman does not contradict the portrait in the source text: indeed, Rebecca is still a *femme fatale* although the character sees herself as the avenging angel of generations

of Mrs. de Winters: "I speak for a long line of dispossessed."[26] The rest of the novel being set in 1951, it can overall be considered as a sequel and if we return to the notion of the happy ending as motivation for sequel writing, it is significant that *Rebecca's Tale* does not end with the romance between the de Winters but with a nod to Rebecca herself, whose feminist stand is vindicated in the character of Ellie, Colonel Julyan's niece, who declines to get married and leaves for Cambridge to prepare a degree.

Giving a voice to the villains in Antonia Fraser's "Rebecca's Story" and Rose Tremain's "The Housekeeper"

12 Antonia Fraser's "Rebecca's Story" and Rose Tremain's "The Housekeeper" are shorter fictions that both operate the "decentering, recentering" mentioned before, but in different ways. Fraser's story, a first-person account by Rebecca of her marriage, jars with Maxim's version in Du Maurier's novel while Tremain's narrative gives an account of the inspiration behind *Rebecca* by the (supposedly real-life) woman (mis)represented as Mrs. Danvers. Tremain's and Fraser's stories are close to what Jeremy Rosen calls "minor character elaborations," which consist in "seizing minor figures from the original texts in which they appeared and recasting them in leading roles."[27] Of course, how minor Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers are in the source novel is quite debatable since the plot revolves around the consequences of their actions, but it is undeniable that their voices are filtered through those of the narrator and of various surviving characters. In that respect we recognise in these short stories the desire to give a voice to the voiceless, so prevalent in twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature since the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In her foreword, Fraser directly acknowledges Rhys's novel as the inspiration for "Rebecca's Story": she realised that "we know nothing positive about Rebecca's 'vicious' past except as related by Max de Winter to his second wife, and retold by her to us."[28] On the basis of "positive evidence on the other side to her charm, graciousness, sweetness to tenants, old people, etc., etc."[29], her story thus gives the reader a different version not only of Rebecca but also of other characters: Danny (Mrs. Danvers) is a motherly figure and Jack is poor but loveable, while Max is a pervert who literally bought Rebecca off her impoverished father. As for Tremain's "The Housekeeper", the opening lines set the tone of the story:

> Everybody believes I'm an invented person: Mrs. Danvers. They say I'm a creation: 'Miss Du Maurier's finest creation', in the opinion of many. But I have my own story. I have a history and a soul. I'm a breathing woman.[30]

13 The very first sentence asserts that generally accepted beliefs will be contradicted. Moreover, "I have my own story" suggests a desire to rectify an untruth and to reclaim authority. Altogether, "Rebecca's Story" and "The Housekeeper" aim to "re-right" the narrative and operate some serious "redistributive justice."[31] The underlying idea in Tremain's and Fraser's stories is to apply what Rhys famously did in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and to show that "there is always the other side, always."[32] All three point at the hierarchy of discourses. Rhys's narrators are unstable enough to keep the story open, not replacing one truth by another, while Fraser and Tremain just pitch a new version, presented as the truth, against a previous version recognized as anterior, and try to redress supposed wrongs.

14 Fraser's story is both a prequel[33] and a coquel, functioning as a sort of alternative narrative which is anterior to the source text. Set before Rebecca's death, the text in which she is the narrator begins with "I am waiting now for Max. Here in the

boathouse cottage which is so much dearer to me than all the state of Manderley."[34] Readers already know about this encounter and its outcome, as told by Maxim to his second wife towards the end of Du Maurier's novel. In the source text, Rebecca is fatally ill but hides the news from Maxim, taunting him so with the prospect of raising a bastard child as heir to Manderley that he kills her.[35] Rebecca is ill in Fraser's story too but she wants to ask Max to let her spend her last months with Jack, her true love. Fraser however does not contradict what happens next: Maxim turns up and shoots Rebecca. This changes the perspective on the whole novel as Rebecca is now a victim and Maxim a consummate liar who disguises the truth from his second wife. Such an alternative version of events invites a retroactive reading[36] and "re-vision" of *Rebecca*.

15 Tremain's "The Housekeeper" is also a prequel which develops events before the plot of *Rebecca* starts but it does so on an extradiegetic level. Like a metanarrative, it narrates events dating mostly from 1936, before the writing of the well-known narrative. As Peter Carey did in *Jack Maggs* for *Great Expectations*, the narrator in "The Housekeeper" gives background information on the making of *Rebecca* and contradicts Du Maurier's representation of her in the novel, following the writer's conscious "decision to make a villain out of me."[37] The (dizzying) effect for the reader is that the narrative both destroys and builds upon the referential illusion: in a mock metalepsis, *Rebecca* is declared to be a fiction and is superseded by a supposedly real story. The culprit or guilty party in "The Housekeeper" is the novelist,[38] as stressed by the reference to Du Maurier as "the authoress" or "Miss Du Maurier", which was her *nom de plume* after she married. It is therefore suggested that the writer feeds off, appropriates and distorts real people and events: "she stole these thoughts, just as she stole my life."[39]

16 The use of Daphne Du Maurier as a character evokes two genres: the biographical novel, defined by David Lodge as "the novel which takes a real person and their real history as the subject matter for imaginative exploration, using the novel's techniques for representing subjectivity rather than the objective, evidence-based discourse of biography", and biofiction, or "literature that names its protagonist after an actual biographical figure."[40] Indeed, the story combines what is known about Du Maurier and elements from the novel. For instance, in depicting an affair between Mrs. Danowski and the young novelist, "The Housekeeper" builds on Du Maurier's real-life "Venetian tendencies", a phrase she used to refer to her homosexual desires[41] with the direct reference to "'the boy within her.'"[42] This element in "The Housekeeper" also expands on the sexual attraction exerted beyond the grave by Rebecca on both Mrs. Danvers and the narrator in Du Maurier's novel. "The Housekeeper" evokes an affair between Mrs. Danowski and "the authoress" and suggests it is the source of Mrs. Danvers's adoration for Rebecca in Du Maurier's novel. This presupposition posits a chronological inversion: although "The Housekeeper" is obviously derived from *Rebecca*, it pretends exactly the opposite.[43] This is notably conveyed through the paronomastic effect[44] of names like "Manderville", "Danowski" and "Lord de Withers", whose phonetic and visual similarity with names in *Rebecca* suggests or reinforces the idea that Du Maurier took inspiration from Tremain's novel. Another twist is the fact that the supposedly real character says she has "been physically affected" by the fictional description made of her: she has become "as ugly as she made me in the book."[45] The reader is thus unsettled as key scenes and elements from *Rebecca* reappear in a different light, filtered through a new point of view. For instance, when visiting the bedroom which belonged to the former mistress of the house, the housekeeper simply invites the young woman to admire the view,[46] instead of inducing her to kill herself.[47] Likewise, the beach house that features in *Rebecca* is now used for a different love tryst.

17 While Mrs. Danvers remains in thrall to Rebecca, the housekeeper in Tremain's story is partly empowered by her relationship with the novelist, seeing that it leads her to leave service[48] and start "an independent life."[49] Moreover, a marked concern

for the lower classes[50] suggests contemporary "inclusive politics",[51] also visible in the depiction of this version of Mrs. Danvers as a lesbian of Polish origin. In Tremain's story, the antisemitism of the English upper classes is clearly denounced through Lord de Wither who suggests she should deny that side of herself.[52]

18 Finally, both stories focus on the villains in *Rebecca*, negative characters like Rebecca herself and Mrs. Danvers, through whom the first wife is still very much present in Du Maurier's novel. Fraser's and Tremain's stories show that these characters are not villains after all, but the victims of power and hierarchy – as opposed to Atwood's villains in her re-vision of fairy-tale characters in "Unpopular Gals", who remain gleefully unrepentant.

Rebecca transposed and rewritten in Lisa Gabriele's *The Winters*

19 Though the book jacket of *The Winters* informs the potential reader that Lisa Gabriele's novel is "inspired by the classic novel *Rebecca*", the actual reader of both novels quickly realises that Gabriele actually picks up the plot and its characters quite meticulously, modifying the spelling of their names and transposing them into present-day Cayman Islands (instead of Monte Carlo) and Long Island, NY (instead of England). It is thus a case of "trans-contextualisation", when characters reappear in another context, such as another period[53] but without any irony or parody as the plot is modernised, similarly to what was done in the Austen Project,[54] with the difference that the modernised versions of Austen's novels were all commissioned and scrupulously kept names and key elements unchanged. In the case of Lisa Gabriele's novel, one may wonder if *The Winters* manages to combine trans-contextualization with the usual "re-righting"[55] dimension of a rewrite.

20 Gabriele refers to that work as her "response" to *Rebecca*[56] while her literary agent presents it as "homage",[57] a word which seems to erase any challenging purpose. Indeed, the novel first focuses on the romance at the heart of the source novel and many elements in Du Maurier's novel are duplicated, not only the mystery about the unusual name of the second Mrs. de Winter, her self-deprecating attitude, the awe which she regards her new role, and her obsessive jealousy, but also the shrine to Rebecca in a part of the mansion, and key events such as the disturbance caused by the second wife's choice of dress for the Manderley ball.

21 Besides, the overall structure of *The Winters* and its beginning are similar to those in *Rebecca*. The opening chapter is set in the present and the closing paragraphs frame the narrative of preceding events. *The Winters* also begins with a dream set in a mansion that no longer exists, called Asherley. The opening line – "Last night Rebekah tried to murder me again" – actually sets the misleading tone that runs through the first chapter. The murder attempt only appears in a dream and the pronoun "we" used later on remains undefined, even if the reader assumes that it includes Max Winter and the narrator.

22 Gabriele's novel retains the deep social imbalance between the two protagonists, the emphasis being laid on the narrator's poor background while Rebekah and Max's adopted daughter enjoys a rich girl's education and is mostly left to her own devices. Yet, "update" and "updating" are words that recur in presentations of *The Winters* as the novel is definitely anchored in the contemporary world, due to the omnipresence of mobile phones and social media, and to the depiction of difficult relationships within a stepfamily. But Gabriele goes further and brings in changes that are not just a question of modernisation. Reader destabilisation comes from the fact that the novel features the negative force of the source text under nearly the same name, "Dani", which echoes the name "Danny" given to Mrs. Danver by Rebecca. However, Gabriele uses this name to refer to Max and Rebekah's teenage daughter, who goes

from antagonist to ally in the course of the narrative. Gabriele thus brings a new slant to the story by giving it a different ending.

23 Endings are often key stages in rewritings because they carry the author's signature and are a sign of the Zeitgeist.[58] As in Du Maurier's novel, several conflicting images of the first wife are given in *The Winters*: for instance, the image of the socialite propounded by Mrs. Van Hopper and the magazines in *Rebecca*, now voiced by Dani and the social media in *The Winters*, is opposed to the real and negative portrait eventually made by Max (de) Winter in both novels. In this version it is the husband, not the first wife, who is the lying character. Indeed, Max Winter is still a representative of the ruling classes, now a Republican senator, but keen to use his influential position to serve his own interest, i.e. keep his property. He is eventually revealed to be a liar and a double murderer for the sake of keeping Asherley. In Du Maurier's *Rebecca,* Max is guilty of murder but nevertheless retains his wife's love and support – which may resonate strangely with modern-day readers.[59] While Hitchcock's 1940 adaptation exonerates Maxim to abide by the Hays Code, Gabriele's novel takes the opposite stand: Max is a cold-blooded murderer who remarries in order to give Asherley an heir. Rebekah dies because of her "leaving the entirety of her fortune to Dani,"[60] her adopted daughter, in an attempt to establish a female lineage.

24 *Rebecca* has often been interpreted and marketed as a romance, yet it reverses the fairy-tale pattern that culminates in the poor girl marrying the prince, since the poor girl now finds herself in the grip of a gothic nightmare. With its overpowering, murderous husband, *Rebecca* can be read as a rewriting of the Bluebeard story – a point taken up and furthered by Gabriele. Her rewriting also dismisses another fairy-tale cliché: that of the wicked stepmother. Gabriele turns the ambiguous ending of *Rebecca* into a closed and happy one, not for the married couple but for the narrator and Dani, who eventually saves her step-mother from being murdered too. It is a feminist ending insofar as it depicts an all-supportive and positive female community: Laureen, the vulgar Australian, a new version of American-born Mrs. Van Hopper, turns out to be as caring as Max's sister; Max's lies about Rebekah and about Dani's birth mother are revealed, and the narrative ends on the expectation of the protagonist – now pregnant with a daughter – to meet her Cuban grandmother the following day. In the rewrite, Max Winter becomes an indictment of white money and power while all the men eventually lose their power and are punished for having been involved in Max's enterprise of spoliation of his adopted daughter.

25 Finally, Gabriele peppers her novel with self-reflexive comments when her narrator describes her story as "paperback romance" and as "a Grimms' fairy tale set in the Caribbean."[61] Later comes the reference to Jean Rhys's take on *Jane Eyre*, with Dani as "our little mad girl in the attic."[62] Finally, the Gothic dimension present in *Rebecca* (and in Hill's *Mrs. de Winter*) appears in *The Winters* through an echo of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and its heiress committed to an asylum when the same fate is planned for Dani. Gabriele's retelling of du Maurier's story is far from innocent: it plays on the general assumption regarding *Rebecca* as romance but it actually highlights the novel's darkness before bringing it to a happy ending – quite unlike any by du Maurier –, as neat as it is political.

Conclusion

26 To conclude, it has been suggested that one reason for the enduring popular success of Du Maurier's work is that "[s]he wanted the novels to continue to haunt us beyond their endings."[63] This is obviously true of *Rebecca*, which has led to all kinds of thematic and temporal expansions: transfictions (prequels, coquels, sequels) and

rewrites (or spinoffs).

27 Formally speaking, all are first-person narratives. As David Lodge puts it, this way of rendering consciousness "is just as artful, or artificial, a method as writing about a character in the third person; but it creates an illusion of reality, it commands the willing suspension of the reader's disbelief, by modelling itself on the discourses of personal witness: the confession, the diary, autobiography, the memoir, the deposition."[64] This attests to the writers' desire to describe the interiority of characters deemed to be equally worthy of interest. Whether pursuing the same narrative illusion (*Mrs. de Winter*), developing secondary characters and giving them a voice (*Rebecca's Tale*, "Rebecca's Story" and "The Housekeeper"), or rewriting the plot to different times and ends (*The Winters*), these narratives all throw light on different aspects of the source text and invite a retroactive reading of *Rebecca* or make it resonant with our own times, notably with the addition of feminist and minority concerns. Apart from Susan Hill's sequel, the expansions and the rewrite of *Rebecca* studied here share the desire to rewrite/re-right some point, often highlighting the power distribution underlying Du Maurier's novel. However, this does not refract negatively on the original: the "symbolic desecration of a hallowed literary monument" noted by Rosen in some recent texts[65] is indeed not to be found in any of these transfictions and spinoffs.

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Notes

1 Kate Atkinson, *Life After Life*, London: Doubleday, 2013, 399.

2 Hitchcock famously adapted the novel to the screen in 1940, while British TV adaptations were aired in 1979 and 1997. A new adaptation directed by Ben Wheatley was released on Netflix in 2020.

3 Richard Saint-Gelais, *Fictions transfuges, La transfictionnalité et ses enjeux*, Paris: Seuil, 2011,148.

4 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* [1993], London: Vintage, 1994, 78.

5 Richard Saint-Gelais, *op. cit.*, 1.

6 *Ibid.*, 55.

7 Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1997, 206.

8 Richard Saint-Gelais, *op. cit.*, 139-140.

9 Birgit Spengler, *Literary Spin-offs, Rewriting the Classics—Re-Imagining the Community,* Frankfurt: New York/Campus Verlag, 2015, 11. The distinction Spengler makes between rewritings and spinoffs is that for the latter "the requirements to recognize the fundamental relation to a given pre-text tend towards a more widely shared cultural competence." *Ibid.*, 51.

10 Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" [1971], *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-1978*, New York: Norton, 35-49, 35. This is a key element in Christian Moraru's 2001 pioneering study, which attempts to "locate, theorize and assess a rewriting model involving predominantly, albeit not exclusively, critique, revision, and dissent." Christian Moraru, *Rewriting: Postmodern Narrative and Cultural Critique in the Age of Cloning*, Albany; SUNY Press, 2001, 23. Julie Sanders confirms that "[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." Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London: Routledge, 2006, 98. Looking at more recent productions, Jeremy Rosen argues that "a great many intertextual works do not launch a critique of the canon." Jeremy Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day, Genre and the Contemporary Literary Marketplace,* New York: Columbia UP, 2016, 4.

11 Chantal Zabus, "Subversive Scribes: Rewriting in the Twentieth Century," Anglistica 5:1-2 (2001), 191-207, 191.

12 *Ibid.,* 205.

13 For Sanders, adaptation and appropriation "reinforce that canon by ensuring a continuing interest in the original or source text, albeit in revised circumstances of understanding." Julie Sanders, *op. cit.,* 97-98. For Rosen, minor character elaborations "preserve the traditional canon's centrality." Jeremy Rosen, *op. cit.*, 5.

14 A number of scholars use "sequel" as an umbrella term. Armelle Parey (ed.), *Prequels, Coquels and Sequels in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction*, London and New York: Routledge, 2019, 3.

15 Helen Taylor (ed.), *The Daphne Du Maurier Companion*, London: Virago, 2007, 84.

16 *Ibid.*, 76.

17 See Gérard Genette, *op. cit.*, 206.

18 Helen Taylor, *op. cit.*, 79.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Marjorie Garber, *Quotation Marks,* London: Routledge, 2003, 75.

21 Margaret Forster, *Daphne Du Maurier* [1993], London: Arrow, 1994, 135.

22 See Armelle Parey "Susan Hill's *Mrs. de Winter* and Sally Beauman's *Rebecca's Tale*: 're-visions' of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*?" *Odisea, Revista de estudios ingleses*, 2016:17. 7-17, 12.

23 Sally Beauman, *Rebecca's Tale*, London: Little, Brown and Company, 2001, 22.

24 Armelle Parey "Susan Hill's *Mrs. de Winter* and Sally Beauman's *Rebecca's Tale*", *op. cit.*, 14.

25 "Rhys's novel employs a tripartite narrative structure [...]. Rhys creates narrators who are not fully coherent, reliable, or sympathetic tellers of their tales. She thus invites readers to approach skeptically these formerly minor figures rather than be seduced into straightforward sympathetic identification with or sentimental attachment to them" (Jeremy Rosen, *op. cit.*, 13).

26 Sally Beauman, *op. cit.*, 327.

27 Jeremy Rosen, *op. cit.*, 1.

28 Antonia Fraser, "Rebecca's Story" [1976], *in The Daphne Du Maurier Companion*, London: Virago, 2007, 92-101, 92.

29 *Ibid.*, 92.

30 Rose Tremain, "The Housekeeper", *The American Lover*, London: Chatto and Windus, 2014, 121-148, 121.

31 Jeremy Rosen, *op. cit.*, 27.

32 Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* [1966], London: Penguin, 1968, 106.

33 As Helen Taylor says when she refers to it as "a tantalising outline of what might have been a wonderful prequel novel." Helen Taylor, *op. cit.*, 83).

34 Antoine Fraser, *op. cit.*, 92.

35 Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca* [1938], New York: Avon, 1971, 279-280.

36 Michael Riffaterre evokes the concept of "retroactive reading" ("lecture rétroactive"), which is the process of revising one's view of former material in the same text: "Au fur et à mesure de son avancée au fil du texte, le lecteur se souvient de ce qu'il vient de lire et modifie la compréhension qu'il en a eue en fonction de ce qu'il est en train de décoder. Tout au long de sa lecture il réexamine et révise, par comparaison avec ce qui précède." Michael Riffaterre, *Sémiotique de la poésie*, Paris: Seuil, 1983, 17.

37 Rose Tremain, *op. cit.*, 147.

38 A similarly unflattering portrait of Charles Dickens is drawn in Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and in Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (2003), in which the novelist is shown feeding off, and distorting, other people's stories (see Armelle Parey, "Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*: The True Story of the Convict?" in Georges Letissier (ed.), *Rewriting/Reprising: Plural Intertextualities*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 126-137.

39 Rose Tremain, *op. cit.*, 123; see also 147.

40 Michael Lackey, "Locating and Defining the Bio in Biofiction," a/b: Auto/Biography Studies, 2016:31, 3-10, 3.

41 Margaret Forster, *op. cit.,* 28.

42 Rose Tremain, *op. cit.*, 138. Paraphrasing Du Maurier in a letter, Forster says "she had forced herself to lock up in a box." Margaret Forster, *op. cit.,* 28.

43 See Richard Saint-Gelais, *op. cit.*, 256, 260 for a similar process in *Madame Homais*, which builds on *Madame Bovary*.

44 "The point of paronomasia," says Wolfgang G. Müller, "is that a mere accidental phonetic relationship assumes the appearance of a semantic relationship." Wolfgang G. Müller, "Iconicity and Rhetoric," in Olga Fischer and Max Nänny (eds), *The Motivated Sign*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001, 305-322, 316.

45 Rose Tremain, *op. cit.*, 147.

46 *Ibid.*, 127.

47 Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, *op. cit.*, 246.

48 Rose Tremain, *op. cit.*, 141-142.

49 *Ibid.*, 143.

50 *Ibid.*, 123-124.

51 Jeremy Rosen, *op. cit.*, 4.

52 We may draw a quick parallel here with Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* that similarly points at anti-semitism and extreme-right views amongst the upper-class.

53 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* [1985], Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000, 7-12.

54 Retellings of Austen's six novels were written by contemporary authors, including Joanna Trollope (*Sense and Sensibility*) and Val McDermid (*Northanger Abbey*).

55 Chantal Zabus, *op. cit.*

56 In a 2018 interview with NPR, Gabriele says, "I often call The Winters a response to Rebecca." "*The Winters* is a Modern Update of 1938 Best-Seller *Rebecca*." Interview on NPR, 30 Dec, 2018.

57 Christy Fletcher, in a personal email, dated 3 June 2019.

58 In Guy Larroux's words, "S'il est vrai que la convention gouverne les dénouements romanesques, il n'en reste pas moins que c'est probablement aussi la partie du livre où l'on aperçoit le mieux le travail de contestation (des modèles convenus précisément), et où l'on saisit le mieux le signe des temps." Guy Larroux, *Le Mot de la fin, la clôture romanesque en question*, Paris: Nathan, 1995, 9.

59 As Laura Varnam notes, "In the context of the #MeToo movement, his treatment of his first wife—who had the audacity not merely to betray him but to laugh at him—triggers a stomach-churning recognition of misogyny that modern readers are chilled to find that the second Mrs. de Winter cheerfully ignores. Maxim de Winter is far more menacing than the ghost of his first wife." Laura Varnam, "Du Maurier's *Rebecca* at 80: why we will always return to Manderley," *The Conversation*, 28 February 2018. <https://theconversation.com/du-mauriers-rebecca-at-80-why-we-will-always-return-to-manderley-92519>, accessed on 3 September 2021.)

60 Lisa Gabriele, *The Winters*, London: Harvill Secker, 2018, 313.

61 *Ibid.*, 29-30.

62 *Ibid.*, 260.

63 See Kate Kellaway, "Daphne's unruly passions," The *Guardian*, Sunday 15 April 2007. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/apr/15/fiction.features1>, accessed 5 September, 2019.

64 David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel* [2002], London: Penguin, 2003, 87-88.

65 Jeremy Rosen, *op. cit.*, 1.

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
'Adieu Sagesse', or Troubled Identities in Du Maurier's Fiction

Undermining the Everyday: Daphne Du Maurier's Gothic Horror

La déstabilisation du quotidien : l'horreur gothique de Daphne du Maurier

GINA WISKER

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Résumés

English Français

Daphne Du Maurier's Gothic horror destabilises the ordinary, the familiar everyday, revealing seemingly safe relationship and places to be undependable, even dangerous. Simultaneously, she disturbs the complacencies of familiar worldviews and the narratives with which we direct and understand our lives, including those of family, security, identity, order and romance. In *Rebecca*, "Ganymede", "East Wind" and "The Birds", she builds on Freud's theory of the uncanny and the questioning of constructed reality offered by existentialism to undermine securities, upset self-deceptive internal narratives, inverting the familiar and unfamiliar in liminal places and spaces whether a grand house, exposed coast or a touristic version of Venice. Everyday anxieties flower into destructive realities as loved ones, idealised or homely places and creatures are no longer trustworthy and dependable, and indeed, it is revealed, they never were. As instability and the unknowable disturb complacencies and certainties in these narratives, Du Maurier overwrites the Gothic romance of popular fiction, replacing it with Gothic horror.

L'horreur gothique de Daphne du Maurier déstabilise l'ordinaire et le quotidien familier pour montrer que les lieux et les rapports humains qui semblaient si sûrs sont en fait peu fiables, voire dangereux. Ce faisant, l'écrivaine met à mal les certitudes complaisantes qui sous-tendent notre vision familière du monde et les récits par lesquels nous appréhendons notre vie dans ses rapports à la famille, la sécurité, l'identité ou à l'ordre du monde. Dans *Rebecca*, « Ganymede », « East Wind » et « The Birds », du Maurier sape les certitudes, bouleverse les récits personnels trompeurs, inverse le familier et l'inconnu dans des lieux et des espaces

liminaux – qu'il s'agisse d'une imposante demeure, d'un littoral exposé aux éléments ou d'une version touristique de Venise –, illustrant ainsi la théorie freudienne de l'inquiétante étrangeté et le questionnement existentialiste de la réalité. Les angoisses liées au quotidien se transforment en réalités destructrices alors que les êtres chers, les lieux et les animaux, familiers ou idéalisés, ne s'avèrent ni fiables ni dignes de confiance – et, de fait, ne l'ont jamais été. Alors que l'instabilité et l'inconnu perturbent les certitudes complaisantes de ces récits, du Maurier déconstruit le gothique romanesque de la fiction populaire, le remplaçant par l'horreur gothique.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, horreur gothique, quotidien, complaisance, déstabilisation, inquiétante étrangeté, existentialisme
Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, Gothic horror, everyday, complacency, destabilising, uncanny, existentialism

Texte intégral

1 Daphne Du Maurier warns us of ourselves and of the ordinary when she writes: "The evil in us comes to the surface. Unless we recognise it in time, accept it, understand it, we are all destroyed, just as the people in 'The Birds' were destroyed."[1] Her Gothic horror rarely resembles "shlock" horror, bloody, violent, although some of the most ordinary-seeming people, such as the would-be painter in "The Alibi" and the wealthy romantic lead Maxim de Winter in *Rebecca*, are capable of deadly violence. It frequently includes the supernatural, such as time travel in *The House on the Strand*, "Split Second", "Monte Verità", "The Birds", "Not After Midnight", "The Breakthrough" and the clairvoyant sisters in "Don't Look Now". Most often, however, the disturbance, or evil, arises from human behaviour.

2 Alison Light's work on Du Maurier brought her into view as more than a popular novelist, instead engaged with contemporary problems, historical moments and class. Yet, commenting on Du Maurier's fidelity to history and "normal" life, Light sees her work always returning order, like a safe return journey: "Du Maurier's writing may take a modern psychological view of human life as adrift on a sea of memories, but she always leaves the reader on *terra firma*."[2] Rather, I find her work leaves readers with a lingering sense of unease, in which *terra firma* is as untrustworthy a construct as domestic harmony. Seeing her as a "haunted heiress", Nina Auerbach alerts readers to Du Maurier's mix of the realistic and the disturbing with a particular focus on the insecurities and dangers of couples and family life: "Her realism was, and is, compelling to me because it is inseparable from her alienated magic. I have found in no other writer's work the same tough-minded anatomy of family life combined with so eerie a patina of domestic strangeness."[3]

3 Du Maurier's Gothic horror is fundamental and springs from the ostensibly everyday which it undermines at the same time. Its key feature is that it destabilises the ordinary, the unquestioned, the securities of familiar behaviour, context and action while simultaneously disturbing our inner narratives used to overcome adversity, such as romance, order and strength. Its basis in realism misleads the trusting reader who finds the familiar relationships, people, places, trajectories of time and fixities of space insidiously dislodged, leaving them disorientated and unsettled. The comforts of recognisable locations – whether the streets of London, country lanes, small towns and beaches of Cornwall or the waterways of Venice – and of consistent behaviours, particularly homely, often complacent, married relationships, are all revealed as façades or dangerous delusions. Light notes that "Du Maurier, like Agatha Christie, made entertainment out of modern anxieties,"[4] emphasising everyday anxieties of which the most existentially unstable is often that of being a woman. In Du Maurier's work, instability and darkness seep through the

layers of security we wad about us, and destabilise all our certainties.

4 Building on these comments by Alison Light and Nina Auerbach, I will suggest that in *Rebecca*, "Ganymede", "East Wind" and "The Birds", the versions Du Maurier offers of reality, time, identity and relationships are fundamentally troubling. I choose these because they are emblematic of internal narratives of self-deception using liminal places where the familiar and the unfamiliar are inverted. Each is influenced by Gothic horror rather than the Gothic romance of popular fiction, and also by existentialism and its questioning of the relationship between words and things, self and the world. I will make a link between those four writings – in which what seemed normal or familiar is suddenly made strange, different, unpredictable, unhomely – and the unsettling of everyday worldviews identified in the work of the phenomenologists and in Freud's theory of the uncanny, which is frequently recognised as a source for Gothic authors and critics. Fred Botting, among others, makes this link between the work of Freud, the intent and achievement of much Gothic work, and a questioning of shared "reality".[5] My main interest will be in the insidious undermining of the security of both the everyday normality of life, that which is labelled as real or trustworthy, and of the inner narratives by which we construct and interpret our worlds.

Destabilising 'reality': Gothic, Freud, existentialism and phenomenology

5 Defamiliarisation, discomfort and disquiet disturb Du Maurier's short stories and her novels, enacting Chris Baldick's characterisation of traditional Gothic:

> for the Gothic effect to be attained, a tale should combine a sense of a fearful inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an effect of sickening descent into disintegration.[6]

6 Baldick links a sickening sense of the destabilisation of space and time, found in the Gothic, with a deep insecurity regarding the markers of the everyday, which reminds us of the philosophical questioning of shared "reality" developed by the phenomenologists of the early twentieth century, Husserl (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, 1913), Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945) and existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (*La Nausée,* 1938). While their views differed in relating the role of the self, objects, events and interpretation, each focused on ways in which we receive and interpret sense impressions, how both the worldview based in the self and intentionality drive this interpretation. In these philosophically explained contexts, the self can be totally unable to make any sense, at sea in a wash of impressions; all links between words as labels and things are questionable and merely notional. Feeling disorientated and terrified, the self can force interpretations on the versions of the world it receives with a view to making sense of it and to constructing stories about the relationship between self and world, things, or words. Delusions can follow, such as are suffered by several of Du Maurier's characters in the short stories and the novel considered here.

7 In his 1919 essay entitled "Das Unheimliche",[7] Freud's definitions of the uncanny emphasise the psychological experience of something as *strangely familiar* (the opposite of homely or *heimlich*), rather than simply *mysterious*. Freud's psychology is unsettling and his use of E.T.A. Hoffmann's short story "The Sandman" extends this unsettling sense further into the dark imagination, through the story, the characteristics and strategies of Gothic horror.[8] "The Sandman" introduces the issues of doubles and of objects which come to life or are seen as human. In Hoffmann's

story, young Nathaniel feels threatened by the folkloric Sandman who could blow sand in his eyes then feed those eyes to his birdlike babies. Another worrying figure, Olympia—the sleeping beauty 'daughter' of Professor Spalanzani – is both alluring and dangerously confusing, since part of her attraction is her stasis while her malleability enables her adorer to transfer all his emotions onto and into her. She turns out to be a doll and a similar fetishistic interaction is replayed in the sexually creepy 'Julius' in Du Maurier's "The Doll". "The Sandman" also directly influences Du Maurier's "The Birds" emphasising the vulnerability and unreliability of one's eyes, building on the Sandman's threat of stealing eyes in sleep. Du Maurier's tale establishes relationships between eyes and castration, the uncanny and taboo. When the Cornish coastal village is attacked by ordinary birds, from songbirds to crows and seagulls, Nat, the competent, physically active family man, is powerless to protect his family and so effectively emasculated. Other characters are actually blinded, their eyes pecked out and left to die.

8 For Freud, the uncanny locates strangeness in the ordinary. The fundamental unease, the stripping away of the tight, safe relationship between what we believe we see, feel, can name, understand and trust is further opened up by phenomenology and existentialism. Whatever is taken for granted as normality – behaviour, relationships between people and the world, or between words and things – is undermined, revealed as a construct in which we invest at our peril. This aligns a sense of the uncanny with disorientation, with the variously constructed relationships between words and things, between labels and things/people, between self and world. This revelation opens up a gulf between words and things, between the construction of the normal and everyday, and the terrible eyeless world without human transformative comprehension. There is a lack of categories and "norms"; the stories by which we interpret the world, people, events, creatures, ourselves – all is constructed, transient, invested in, but not of itself, solidly real.

9 The influence of phenomenologists, including Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, then of existentialism as developed by Sartre, peaks for me in *Nausea* (1938), published the same year as *Rebecca*. Each philosophical worldview variously makes claims for and disturbs the relationships between the world, the word and the self, between subject and object, between the names of things, our experience of them, and the narratives by which we make sense of them, casting us into a liminal space of insecurity and of existential doubt about self and the real. Their work aids our reading of Du Maurier's Gothic strategies of unease, of destabilisation of comforting fixed realities or narrative trajectories of romance and domesticity embodied in popular fictional forms. We must therefore explore her engagement with characteristics of popular genres insofar as they structure the delusive securities of the comforting stories we tell ourselves. Unlike Light, I do not read Du Maurier's work as ultimately closing down existential unease and returning the reader to their stability, since even when mysteries are explained, resolutions are no more than temporary. After all, in *Rebecca*, Max did murder his first wife, while in "Don't Look Now" John is a clairvoyant who misinterprets supernatural signs of a disquieting kind. What is at stake in those stories is the insidious undermining of the security of both the everyday normality of life – that which we would label as real and trustworthy – and of the inner narratives by which we construct and interpret our worlds.

10 Disturbing comfortable narrative trajectories, Du Maurier's endings – and often her openings – are unsettled, troubling stability with existential angst. *Rebecca* opens with the second wife and Max bored, unsettled, trapped, moving between lodgings, locked in the shared complicity over a murder. It leaves us with unease, complicated by the collusive silence the couple maintain over their shared knowledge of Max's guilt in murdering his wife. The family and probably the whole of civilisation at the end of "The Birds" await the last blinding and blind invasion along with the final obliteration of all life.

Destabilising fictions

11 As Nina Auerbach comments: "she's a complex, powerful, unique writer, so unorthodox that no critical tradition, from formalism to feminism, can digest her."[9] Du Maurier works with popular fictional genres and our inner narratives alike to undermine comfortable resolutions, so it is not surprising that less discerning readers dismiss her only as a writer of paperback popular fiction. That dismissal is limiting, but less dangerously limiting than the complacencies of her characters, who seem to think they live in forms of slightly risqué or confirmatory romantic fiction (*Rebecca*, *My Cousin Rachel*), romanticised travel escapism ("Ganymede"), and tame domestic fiction of going about one's business as teachers, scientists, writers, homemakers, fathers, or as fishermen and their wives (*The House on the Strand*, "The Birds", and "East Wind").

"Ganymede": self-deception, destruction and death

12 Some of the destabilisation of time, space, and identity is accompanied by self-deception. The stories with which we make sense of our lives and events are revealed as also dangerous. "Ganymede" is ostensibly a tourist and holiday travel tale set in Venice, the location for Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*.[10] Travel writing is "a practiced art of dissimulation [...] at once generically elusive and empirically disingenuous,"[11] leading us to wonder not only to what extent we can trust travel accounts to present accurate representations of reality, since we often bring with us unrealistic fantasies of perfect escapes, and lingering issues with our own sense of identity and reality. Travel Gothic horror exposes the fantasy/fantasies as dangerous partly because they cloud vision, dull any sense of danger, and render the different enticing when sometimes it is dangerous, or even deadly. Du Maurier's travel Gothic horror has also most probably influenced Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers*,[12] set in Venice. While in Mann's tale the attraction of an older gay male for a young boy leads to death, in McEwan's the misreading of friendship of an Italian couple also leads to death for Colin, a Londoner caught up with his partner Mary in the sadomasochistic relationship of Robert and his wife. In this novel, sexually suggestive actions and translation slippages are believed to be mere misunderstandings, just foreign, part of the local entertainment. While the defamiliarisation of the foreign new is sought, the deadly dangers which accompany it are often unreadable, though in plain view to those travellers for whom any incomprehensible code of behaviour, place and language is as enjoyable as the fascination of 'the different' sought in a foreign holiday. For the self-identified classical scholar in "Ganymede", who comes to Venice as his sister cannot this year accommodate him for his summer vacation, his disingenuous vulnerability lies in misreading as possible friendship his unacknowledged homosexual fascination with the young waiter in the Piazza San Marco, who he names for the classical mythic figure Ganymede.

13 Introducing himself as having been let go by his current employer with the words "unsavoury practices",[13] the insouciant classical scholar who only takes on holiday with him *The Canterbury Tales* is disingenuous in his intentions and interpretations, so his record of what happens is untrustworthy. His aesthetic delight in music, or in the sights and sounds of Venice, homes in on the beauty of the young waiter, his real object of desire. Comparing him to and calling him Ganymede emphasises the ways in which, although living in quite a mundane way back home, he has elevated this trip to Venice and the boy at the centre of it to the status of an art object, removed from normality, into a romantic frame, although beauty is not necessarily truth here. His self-deception means he cannot read what we can, that the white-coated,

manipulative man in the trilby hat hanging about on the sidelines is the young man's uncle, and also a pimp, setting him to catch a series of older gay men who seem unable to read the social signals. Such men (and we hear there have been several in Ganymede's young life) like the protagonist cannot name their love openly, but instead are self-deluded and enchanted at the same time by this young waiter and the lifestyle set up by the pimp uncle. The protagonist apparently cannot see this arrangement for what it is: a hustle, which can only end in financial loss, embarrassment and death.

14 Like many Du Maurier characters with only a tenuous hold on a shared reality, this first-person fallible narrator has a manipulative way with words. The stories he tells of the encounter with Ganymede, his friendship and the string of actions following – changing, going to lunch with the extended family, etc. – hover in the air as insubstantial explanations. His interpretation of the actions is thin because he is in his own little predatory bubble. His version of events has gaps because he is withholding alternative readings. His relationship between the language used, his interpretation and what we see unfold is deliberately managed to leave him in the role of innocent, well-intentioned, reasonable protagonist of his own fantasy. He reminds us of Sartre's existentialism in *Nausea*, in which there is only a tenuous, notional, slippery or asserted relationship between words and things, a randomness, an artifice born of the necessity of telling stories to make sense for one self or others. Du Maurier's narrator has a

> sense of abandon, of belonging – certainly not to the present, nor to the future, nor even to the past, but to a period in time that was changeless and was Venetian time, that was outside the rest of Europe and even the world, and existed, magically, for myself alone.[14]

15 He sees himself as Zeus meeting Ganymede, and his role as flying up and taking the boy away from everything. The young waiter is aptly named since, in early modern Britain, Ganymede was a name for a male or female prostitute. But the older man's removal from reality and soaring above himself is also an excuse, constructed from his own creative self myth-making into which he invites our collusion, since we presumably will understand and forgive everything when we know he is a scholar, trustworthy:

> I told you I was a classical scholar. Therefore you will understand—you should understand—that what happened in that second was transformation. . . . I could sense the man at my table raise his hand and summon the lad in the white coat carrying a tray, but I myself was above him, did not exist in his time; and this self who was non-existent knew with every nerve fibre, every brain-cell, every blood corpuscle that he was indeed Zeus, the giver of life and death, the immortal one, the lover; and that the boy who came towards him was his own beloved, his cup-bearer, his slave, his Ganymede. I was poised, not in the body, not in the world, and I summoned him. He knew me, and he came.[15]

16 He smooths over his actual motive and the dangers which play out in confusion, death for the boy, and a shameful reputation for himself to take back home. He cannot even think of coming to terms with what happened because he refuses to see it in another way than his own, and so the move into the next predatory scenario in London's Little Venice is logical. The story recalls another tale, by Ian McEwan, set in the United Kingdom, not Venice: in "Butterflies", a paedophile disingenuously tells of following a young girl into a tunnel under a bridge and murdering her – but lacks any sense of reality or guilt. Perhaps only psychoanalysts know what is in the mind of paedophiles and murderers. Yet a narrative filled with misplaced relations between people, places, objects, and behaviours, or with the protagonist's delusional ideas about his own intentions, actions and innocence, suggests that what could be there is a deliberate dissociation, or a wilful misreading and misrepresentation in their interior monologue or narrative, constructed to explain and absolve themselves. They

invest in what they might even sometimes recognise as a lie. This is a form of terrifyingly banal horror.

17 Cousins sees him as a "high camp" narrator fashioned with "unrelenting hostility", a "self-deluded poseur"[16] whose scholarly perspective has led to the actions he refuses to properly recognise and name, which are actually self-absolved carelessness leading to the death of the boy, and his own avoidance of any culpability or shame. But the special Ganymede with his uncle in the white mac and trilby has also served two prior probably predatory homosexual tourists, Mr Johnson and Bertie Poole, and the constant repetition of the word 'recognition', while given a classical mythological value, is just an unacknowledged recognition of the trade between the men in which the boy is object and ultimately victim. The narrator trusts in the fantasy enabled by defamiliarisation, by the complex geographies and architectures of Venice, cut through by water, and the unfamiliar foreign ways of behaving. He is out of his depth, enabled to stay in an elegant place and infatuated by the promise of idyllic moments with the boy. That this is a fantasy is clear to the reader—who reads his delusions as just that, constructions brought into being based on the defamiliarised context and interactions, the foreignness of place and people, the eternal lure of the holiday and of paradise. But the strange behaviours are also excessive and then suddenly destructive. Caught up in the dream of an unnameable desire for the boy, he agrees to a day in a speedboat, which, though initially fun, turns into excess of sound, movement, and discomfort for the protagonist as well as the extended family of the boy and his seedy pimp uncle. On the way back, exhausted, overwhelmed, dismayed, there is a fatal accident—the boy, water-skiing, is caught in the boat's propellers. The action, or lack of it, is life-destroying; Ganymede dies, the death is terrible. This is put down to the man's own lack of understanding of the working of the boat, and his inability to manage the ropes and the moment. For both men, the only unsolved problem is economic. When the classical scholar agrees to pay for everything there is no more problem.

18 His self-delusional world is part of a tourist dream into which he deliberately enters when taking his holiday in Venice. Tourist travel tales might be delightful records of exciting activities and lovely places visited because they encourage, enable and reward the investment in deliberate fantasy and enchantment. Yet their Gothic horror versions, as produced by Du Maurier, Mann and McEwan, show the attraction of difference and the delusional cocoon which this foreign difference wraps around guilt or danger. This holiday fantasy shifts from illicit romance to tragedy. The protagonist's version of the normal has been utterly fractured, but he ends the story by repeating his delusion through following the next young man. The stories he tells are cover-ups for fatally self-indulgent behaviour. Predatory, un-self-aware, dangerous in himself, he is telling us a story in a tone which suggests that events are normal, mundane even, and that he is guiltless. However, this seemingly 'everyday' story actually ends up in destruction. He fools only himself.

Rebecca: the emptying out of romance

19 Self-delusion is also central to the reverse romance of *Rebecca*. After a whirlwind fairytale courtship, the second Mrs. de Winter makes for herself a romantic fiction of dependency, a wifely role. In the shadow of her own version of the first wife, Rebecca, she tries to be whatever it is she feels her dashing husband would like a wife to be. She ends up stuck in the anti-romantic coupledom of insecure, second-rate lodgings, tied by her romantic fantasy of married love and by her complicity, after the event, with the murder of her predecessor.

20 *Rebecca* was commonly misread as a romantic fiction, but it is actually a rich example of Gothic horror, part of the lineage revealed by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, a lineage which includes *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*,

in which romance and marriage often lead not to "happy ever after" but rather to entrapment, deception, death. Nina Auerbach defines Du Maurier's novel as "a grim anatomy of wifehood".[17] It also features secret trysts, lies, murder, and the ghostless haunting of the unnamed second wife by the wilful first wife.

21 Du Maurier undermines grand narratives, defamiliarising the trajectory and the beliefs in which we invest. With *Rebecca* the novel begins at the end – and the narrative of romance, marriage to a wealthy owner of a fabulous old house, with grounds and servants, and of course secrets, is undermined. The reader begins to discern another narrative, one of deceit and decayed values, a nightmare of loss in defiance of the trajectory of fantasy, seduction and reward of the romantic fiction genre in which we wrongly expect it to belong. In *Rebecca*, the romance is not built up towards a marriage, rather to the prison of boredom and lies of a displaced couple tied to each other by the murderous secrets they share. It starts in Monaco with the mousy unnamed second wife's rescue from the role of companion to the horrendous Mrs. Van Hopper, whirled off by Max de Winter, whose name suits romantic fiction but whose figure resembles the medieval, potentially deadly as well as attractive. As I noted earlier,[18] the second wife sees Maxim as chivalric but the text reveals him as a Gothic figure, deceptive and violent:

> He belonged to a walled city of the 15th century, a city of narrow, cobbled streets, and thin spires, where the inhabitants wore pointed shoes and worsted hose. His face was arresting, sensitive, mediaeval in some strange inexplicable way [...] Could one but rob him of his English tweeds, and put him in black, with lace at his throat and wrists, he would stare down at us in our new world from a long distant past—a past where men walked cloaked at night, and stood in the shadow of old doorways, a past of narrow stairways and dim dungeons, a past of whispers in the dark, of shimmering rapier blades, of silent, exquisite courtesy.[19]

22 The second Mrs. de Winter is always only a shadow, confused by the demands she imagines come with wifehood and the house. She spends her time trying to find out what the role is which she is meant to step into, what to do with the management of finances and meals, the writing of letters, relationships. The unfamiliar place and the new set of expectations are worrying, and her sense of reality is constantly brought up short and contradicted by people's behaviour and events. She is overwhelmed, frequently called a child, or referring to herself as one. Once, after Max has discovered she found the beach hut with its books and its secrets, which only he knows was a trysting place of Rebecca's, she refers to herself as a second dog, sharing a biscuit with the faithful Jasper, offered a little of Max's attention:

> I'm being like Jasper now, leaning against him. He pats me now and again, when he remembers, and I'm pleased, I get closer to him for a moment. He likes me in the way I like Jasper.[20]

23 She is unaware of the sources of the mystery she senses, the hidden secrets and the never erased haunting presence of Rebecca herself, who she feels Max idolises, as Mrs. Danvers certainly does. The second wife misreads everything. Her everyday, like her surroundings, is defamiliarised, and the stories she tries to fit into jar with her experience. She is trapped in a marriage, in a house and in an outdated romantic fiction. While she fails in emulating a constructed ideal, the real Rebecca was actually non-conformist, and their shared husband Max, controlling, a murderer who has punished Rebecca's independence and wayward female energies.

24 "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me."[21] The famous start of the novel not only introduces a ruined house, it also emphasises the deadly embrace of deceptive romance through profusion, confusion, and the nightmarish entanglement of fifty-feet-high rhododendrons, such an overgrowth establishing both the dream version of the drive into Manderley and the

delusional dream of a romantic union and a happy marriage. The second wife cannot enter the lovely, largely imagined past. This nightmare is revealed as a Gothic horror parody of romance—a deadly entanglement in which the "squat oaks and tortured elms that straggled cheek by jowl with the beeches"[22] give way to "low branches", and roots "like skeletons". The "lost garden"[23] is their innocence, or rather hers, in this romance of sorts, actually a sordid, entwined, fatal, "inviolate", "bastard", "alien" marriage: "a lilac had mated with a copper beech, and to bind them yet more closely to one another the malevolent ivy, always an enemy to grace, had thrown her tendrils about the pair and made them prisoners."[24] A choked wilderness is described, a labyrinth, an eyeless and terrible landscape of madness where what is clearly lost, insidious, disgusting, enveloping and life-negating in its own sick fertility reminds her of the twining of her life with Max's—a twining with the deadliness of an artificial domesticity in the form of trauma.

25 The presence of the dead wife is overwhelming, casting the second wife into the shadows, emphasising her sense of incompetence. She cannot begin to inhabit the space Rebecca has left, not least because the presence of the energetic, sexually decisive and wayward first wife is still inhabiting that space through Mrs. Danvers' reminders and her passive-aggressive responses to the new wife, as she keeps Rebecca's memory alive in sections of the house, and in everyday references. When her cousin and lover, Jack Favell, arrives, "flashy" and "hefty",[25] sunburnt, obviously a drinker, the seedier side of Rebecca's behaviour is hinted at, while in the house the dustsheets over Rebecca's furniture, the clock stuck at a particular hour and the thought that she lies in the crypt haunt the young woman. Max's deadly secret is that Rebecca is not in the family crypt but in a sunken boat, murdered by Max following their confrontation over her various infidelities.

26 When the second wife descends the stairs dressed for the grand party as the lovely ancestor Caroline de Winter, whose portrait hangs over the stairs, she is trapped in the little spiteful game Mrs. Danvers has set up. She tries to fit in, appearing as an ancestor, but she wears the same dress Rebecca wore, and although no ghost walks this mansion's many corridors and climbs its staircases, to Max one is descending in front of his eyes. "What the hell do you think you are doing"[26] is an admonition shouted at a child, but since Rebecca is lying beneath the sea just down beyond the great house, it is a call to the powers of hell. A terrible storm follows, accompanied by party fireworks, but it seems hell is indeed let loose when the sea disgorges the boat and Rebecca's corpse. Wife murder, empty ancestral crypts, an ancient house filled with historical secrets; this is the silenced, destructive past regurgitated in front of them all, an extreme comeuppance of proportions suited to the most melodramatic Gothic tale, not unlike Manfred's massive helmet falling on the heir in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.[27] The maintained lie is shattered and, like Cinderella at the ball, the glitzy clothing falls away simultaneously with the idyllic life. Rather than the next phase of a romantic dream into which the second wife had been invited, all has been a fabrication, and is now, abruptly and violently, revealed as a sham. The enchantment falls away into the cold light of day. However, instead of reacting with shock and leaving Max to his fate when the body is discovered, the second wife invests in the fantasies attached to love and marriage, colluding with Max.

27 The novel ends with a dream sequence in which the narrator sees Rebecca's handwriting, and then, in a mirror, not herself but Rebecca, "ghostlike; very pale, very lovely".[28] She is laughing and Max, brushing Rebecca's hair, "wound it slowly into a thick rope. It twisted like a snake, and he took hold of it with both hands and smiled at Rebecca and put it round his neck."[29] Max is tying his own noose, their noose, they are intertwined in this mirroring of Rebecca's eternal existence through death, trauma, guilt. Manderley burns up, and the brilliance of the fire is bloodlike. The sky is "shot with crimson, like a splash of blood" and "the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea."[30] In this Gothic horror of a warped romance their

intertwined relationship is that of death and ashes, sharp, choking. Du Maurier has brilliantly twisted the romantic novel of love and marriage into one of lies, murder, bullying, defeat, bitterness – and worst of all, boredom and guilt.

28 It is a grim anatomy of wifehood, of the invested life of wedded domestic bliss, that often unwritten sequel to romantic love's narrative trajectory. Mrs. Danvers has undermined and misled her, dominated by the memory of her real mistress, Rebecca. Max has tried to bury the secret utterly by replacing the feisty first wife with a docile nameless second, quietened, trying quite hard and failing to even rise to the enormity, to her, of writing letters and managing the house. She cannot step into Rebecca's huge 19th-century romantic fiction novel shoes, nor her sensation novel shoes. She is not Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, with her own place in the romance, nor Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley, with her secrets and power. The entire romantic dream of domestic fiction is revealed as first nightmare, conflagration, death, and guilt, then as dust and ashes.

Undermining domestic safety

29 Both "East Wind" (1926, first published 2011) and "The Birds" (1952) relate natural devastations with the destabilisation of internal narratives, and each uses the turbulence and liminality of the coast and sea to do so.

30 Although born in London and following her husband in his various postings to Alexandria and elsewhere, Du Maurier's landscape and seascape are those of Cornwall, her home from 1926, and the setting for *Rebecca* and Manderley (inspired in part by Du Maurier's future house, Menabilly), *My Cousin Rachel*, *Frenchman's Creek*, *Jamaica Inn* and *The House on the Strand* among others. In both "East Wind" and "The Birds" she mirrors the sudden devastating disruption of the weather, the sea, birds, and that which breaks out in people who, wadded with communities, solidly built houses, and the routine maintenance of trustworthy civilised behaviour, ignore the dark and wild side of both nature and humans. An eco-Gothic horror transfers the unmanageability of the wind and the waves into the same blind untamed wildness and destruction in humans with devastating local effect in "East Wind". In "The Birds", the non-human calculated force of the birds themselves denies all human attempts at comprehension and control. Indicting a globally apocalyptic future, each tale channels the coastal or island setting into one of vulnerability and destruction; in each, tranquillity and complacency are dangerously delusional.

"East Wind": deception and destruction

31 Coastlines and islands can be seen as unstable, potentially uncanny, seemingly safe, bounded by their location, on an edge, secure land against the unpredictable sea, but actually that safety is always a construction, deceptive, since what is beyond the coasts of all large or small islands is wild and unknowable. What goes on in the restrained, managed behaviours of individual people is also manageable only temporarily, and what seems calm, predictable and familiar in terms of worldview or actions is possibly unimaginably wild, unmanageably vulnerable.

32 In "East Wind", the island is not idyllic but almost childlike in its tranquillity and order, the boats passing by like figments of a dream, their uninterrupted calm underlined in its simplicity:

> It was almost as if there were no such place, as if the island were a dream, a phantom creation of a sailor's brain, something rising out of the sea at midnight as a challenge to reality, then vanishing in surf and mist to be forgotten, to be

> half-consciously remembered years later, flickering for a bewildered second in a dusty brain as a dead thought. Yet to the people of St Hilda's the island was reality.[31]

33 It is a place of solid work and apparently calm relationships but the underlying vulnerability of this is ignorance, as emphasised in: "Here Guthrie dwelt with his wife Jane, living as children, content in each other, unmindful of desire, ignorant of distress."[32] Though controlled and repressed, potential disruptions and passions shift beneath calm surfaces, as Jane's occasional fretful actions suggest, since she is occasionally "possessed by something which would envelop her like a dark cloak and prevent her from straying."[33] Their love is more of a coffin than a comfort: "Thus they slept together in each other's arms, yet separately; like dead things in a grave, their souls."[34]

34 So when a brig appears with its dark, foreign, smiling wild sailors who see the island as a "poor, barren place, without interest",[35] their disruptive energies take the local inhabitants by surprise, drawing from their slumbering complacency an unexpected wildness and laziness—a lack of moral control which upsets the kind of balance which protected them daily and into the future. They neglect their fishing because the weather is too wild to set out to fish, but they also neglect their plants, their homes and their relationships, and turn to alcohol and intense bouts of drunkenness, to wild gaiety and abandon. Jane's abandon takes the form of an ill-judged longing for one of the sailors, whose name we never know, but who seems to call to her. One dark, windswept night, while everyone else is cavorting and drinking, restlessly like the wind, she wordlessly calls him out and waits for him. "She knew that if she waited he would come to her from the chapel."[36] But it is a small community and everyone has sensed this, except her husband who, waiting for her return from a single night of passion, uncharacteristically seizes an axe and buries it in her head. In the morning he has a dead wife, the wind has subsided, the brig has left. The wildness of the destructive weather and the parallel disruption of foreign men and behaviours have destroyed all calm. The tale leaves them there. "Chaos, wanton madness, deception, disorder and death"[37] have come with the wind and the sailors. Then they are gone.

"The Birds": puncturing the complacency of everyday normality

35 Another terrifying interruption of the everyday occurs in "The Birds" with the changed behaviour of the birds themselves, an invading force that shatters the calm of a small coastal British town as the animals gradually line themselves up. This tale is set just after the Second World War and in the defamiliarisation of normal life and the threat of the invading birds is embedded a threat for an island nation of invasion from the continent, from anywhere else. The narrative norm of strong men sorting out problems, popular in the war, is also shattered, as is the calm everyday, since Nat is not able to make his family safe, cannot board up once for all to keep out the birds who besiege his home. Domestic safety and familiar behaviour are both undercut.

36 For the bird phobic, Du Maurier's "The Birds" must be the ultimate abject horror. The threat and then the reality of the thrashing of wings and feathers, in confined spaces, the bodily invasion of humans by little songbirds as well as crows and seagulls are replete with horror. Their build-up of numbers, lurking, their changed habits of surrounding people and attacking them before invading their homes are a fundamental undermining of the sacrosanct nature of the home, the walls and shutters we put between us and the outside world to retain safety inside. Home invasion is mirrored in bodily invasion, the birds pecking out eyes, draining blood from every exposed part. We return with this story to Freud's use of E.T.A.

Hoffmann's "The Sandman". Experiences and locations are uncanny, recognisable but utterly deranged, and the birds, in seeking to peck out eyes before they mutilate bodies and wreck human constructions and civilisation, undermine not only the fragility and the tenuousness of those constructions, but also the rules, hierarchies and relationships between words and the world, between man and nature. This is not only bodily invasion but also an overturning of the hierarchy we have imposed on nature in which humans are intellectually superior and more able to defend themselves. The bird invasion challenges the Anthropocene with its denial of that human superiority, its undercutting of the terms on which we build our lives and investment in solidity, security, and continuity of civilisation.

37 In the acclaimed Hitchcock version, the build-up of threat from the natural world and the blind ignorance of people who expect only the stable and normal, is emphasised visually. Tippi Hedren, the self-absorbed visitor to the secluded costal village, wears the same fashionable outfit for three days, and checks her makeup outside the local school while the schoolchildren sing a counting song. Threat builds up using sight and sound, emphasising the danger only hinted at in the story. The counting song is ordinary but relentless; equally relentlessly, the crows on a children's climbing frame grow in number. The juxtaposition of the menacing of civilised order (Hedren's makeup and hairdo, the children counting) and the totally invasive undercutting of that order (the gathering of intrusive birds biding their time) is at the heart of the story as well as the film. There is no 'love interest' in the short story, rather a solid family setting for both Nat and the farmer down the road, who is destroyed along with his family while trying to ward off the birds. The human characters' actions are (mistakenly) bolstered up by their sense of the normal, the stable, and their belief in a natural superiority over birds, while the formidable mass attack of birds on an industrial, warlike scale, undermines such complacency, even as the birds begin to wipe out all the people. This is partly an eco-Gothic horror tale, since it is nature which undermines man's security, stability and existence through attack and negation. It is also an example of body horror, with the invasion of the flesh or the pecking out of eyes, and it is an end-of-the-world tale. Despite their waiting beside the radio, which they trust to pass on comforting civil information, the characters in the short story are doomed – the radio dissolves into static and silence. No one is coming to save them. There is no message, and the handful of warplanes launched to get rid of the birds were probably the silliest example of technology used against nature, since planes have histories of bird strikes. The planes are downed, silence falls. This is no human enemy with merely human intelligence: unknowable by people, the intelligence of the birds is more terrifying.

Conclusion

38 As Allan Lloyd-Smith argues in discussing *Rebecca*, the writing process is uncanny in itself.[38] Du Maurier's Gothic horror builds on and destabilises established narratives, domestic harmony, everyday normality and the stability of named things, presences, time, place. It is Freudian and existential at its core: names and naming offer no control, narrative ways of pinning down and sense-making float away in the unknowable nature of events and places, in the gap between words and objects. This falling away is often mirrored in the trajectories of Du Maurier's narratives of guilty unromantic dullness without closure, or of invasion without rescue.

39 Du Maurier's characters live in liminal spaces where relationships, norms and everyday experiences between individuals, the world, creatures, events and time are all tentative, transient and untrustworthy, about to dissolve. Each of her works discussed here deals with displacement, with the undermining of comfortable narratives, complacencies, relationships, and of certainties about self, reality, time,

place, or the safety of marriage and families. Alison Light notes that "Daphne Du Maurier's writing is not powerful because it successfully conveys a conservative vision but because of the pleasure it takes in undermining its own beliefs. Du Maurier's writing suggests that conservatism has its own divisions, its own buried desires, and that it has its own unconscious, its craving which cannot be satisfied and its conflicts which cannot be resolved."[39] In her deliberate instability, time, space, identity, romance, marriage, domesticity, the relationship between humans and animals—everything is questioned. She constantly undermines romance, consistent identity, time and place, safety, civilised behaviour, the expected, the securities of family. There is always a dialectic between the safe or explicable, and the wayward or inexplicable.

40 Her creation of these ontological instabilities is accompanied by and enacted through Gothic horror, which destabilises any hold on reality and therefore any investment in the safety of identities, human relationships, or relationships with objects and with nature. The destabilisation is also enabled through her misleading readers into the comforts of genre fiction, then through experimentation with the fictional norms associated with time travel, eco-Gothic, tourist travel tales and above all the tales of romance and domestic bliss.

41 Quietly, domestically, Daphne Du Maurier's apocalyptic and Gothic horrors undercut the familiar structures of popular fictional genres as they confront the ostensible fixities of everyday relations. They might sometimes use mansions, inheritances and endangered maidens, but in doing so are very likely to undermine the familiar contexts, characters and narrative trajectories of established Gothic horror, as one of the genres she plays with. By disturbing complacencies and stripping back the paraphernalia of people and places, they also excavate and enact the fundamentals of Gothic horror. In her Gothic horror the stabilities of the everyday, of identity, marriage, families, time, space are dissolved. Du Maurier therefore uses the strategies of popular fictional genres and the stories we tell ourselves—about friendship, time, identity, love, the familiar everyday—to leave her characters and her readers stranded, like Nat and his family at the end of "The Birds", only certain that fixities are unstable and can be torn away.

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
'Adieu Sagesse', or Troubled Identities in Du Maurier's Fiction

Gender and Generic Clashes in *The Years Between* (Compton Bennett, 1946)

Guerre des sexes et frictions de genres dans The Years Between (Compton Bennett, 1946)

Nicole Cloarec

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Résumés

English Français

Because of the enduring success of her novels and her short stories, Daphne Du Maurier is not immediately associated with the theatre except through her father. *The Years Between,* her first original play, was, however, a popular success. While the play ends up celebrating the Allies' forthcoming victory, five months before VE Day, what is striking is its very bitter tone as it dramatises the upheaval that society is about to face. This bittersweet note is precisely what singles out its film adaptation when it was released in 1946. The film, however, is very much a product of producer Sidney Box and his wife Muriel, who co-wrote the screenplay. Unlike other Du Maurier's adaptations, the Boxes do not so much sentimentalize Du Maurier's work as give it a feminist and socialist agenda, underscoring both the wife's perspective and the social ramifications of Du Maurier's drama. In so doing, the film dramatises the gender clashes through subtle disruptions of viewers' expectations regarding generic conventions.

En raison du succès durable de ses romans et de ses nouvelles, Daphne du Maurier n'est pas immédiatement associée au théâtre si ce n'est en référence à son père. *The Years Between*, sa première pièce originale, fut pourtant un succès populaire. Alors que la pièce se clôt sur la victoire prochaine des Alliés, cinq mois avant VE Day, ce qui frappe le plus est le ton désabusé et amer d'une intrigue qui dépeint les bouleversements auxquels la société est alors confrontée. Cette note douce-amère est précisément ce qui distingue l'adaptation filmique réalisée en 1946. Or le film est principalement le produit du producteur Sidney Box et de son épouse Muriel, qui ont co-écrit le scénario. Contrairement aux autres adaptations de du Maurier, les Box ne sentimentalisent pas tant l'œuvre de du Maurier qu'ils lui confèrent une dimension de

manifeste féministe et socialiste, mettant en exergue à la fois le point de vue de l'épouse et les ramifications sociales du drame de du Maurier. Ce faisant, le film dramatise les conflits entre genres sexués au travers de subtiles ruptures au sein des conventions génériques.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, The Years Between, théâtre, adaptation cinématographique, genre
Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, The Years Between, theatre, film adaptation, gender

Texte intégral

1 Because of the enduring success of her novels and short stories, Daphne Du Maurier's name and fame are certainly not immediately associated with the theatre, except through her father, the illustrious actor, theatre manager and producer Gerald Du Maurier, to whom she dedicated her first original play *The Years Between*.[1] The play was first produced in November 1944 in Manchester, then in the West End as from January 1945, five months before VE Day.

2 Truly enough, drama does not appear best suited to accommodate what makes her work so compelling, such as the narrative intricacies of unreliable narrators or the powerful evocation of dramatic scenery. According to Margaret Forster, when Du Maurier wrote her first play – her own stage adaptation of *Rebecca* – in 1939, "she was struck by how difficult it was to keep both atmosphere and suspense without having the heroine's interior monologues and without being able to describe the landscape."[2] It seems all the more surprising that Du Maurier went on writing two original plays, not only *The Years Between* but also *September Tide* (1949), even though she was quite inclined to venture into different genres.[3] What is equally striking is that while so many of Du Maurier's novels are historical fictions, *The Years Between*, which she wrote in between *Hungry Hill* (1943) and *The King's General* (1946),[4] tackles an uncharacteristically topical issue. What is far less surprising, though, is that the play pursues the troubled examination of power relationships between the sexes which lies at the heart of so many of her other works.

From stage to screen

3 The play focuses on Diana Wentworth, an upper middle-class woman who has always been a devoted wife to her husband Michael, an MP before he joins the army. It opens in the winter of 1942, when Diana decides to stand for his seat in Parliament, a few months after she has learned about her husband's presumed death in action. Time elapses. In April 1945, Diana has become an accomplished MP, enjoying not only her work, but also her new-found independence and the feeling of being useful.[5] She is about to remarry, with a farmer named Richard Llewellyn, who has proved a supportive neighbour for several years now, when all of a sudden the news is broken that her husband is not dead after all. Michael returns, only to find that his wife has rebuilt her life. He soon realises that "the dead mustn't return" and resents all the changes that the eponymous "years between" have brought—from the furniture[6] to his wife's new interests and self-fulfilment: "I'm not blaming you, or anyone. You believed me dead. Now I know the dead mustn't return [...]. And we're not happy now. Are we? Not your fault. Nor mine. The years between."[7] Notwithstanding, the couple are locked in mutual recriminations. Michael alternates wry sarcasms and hardly veiled reproaches that his family would have preferred him dead, while Diana proves unable to understand her returned husband, who has become "so different, so

bitter and twisted."[8] They eventually come to realise that both had to go through acts of self-denial, Diana in forgoing her new love interest, Michael in deceiving his wife to serve his country. Still, as so often in Du Maurier's works, the play's ending remains inconclusive: while closure is provided by the King's radio announcement of VE Day the couple's fate remains in a state of suspension. Both declare their resolution to salvage their marriage but this compromise is only achieved by Michael's decision to accept a diplomatic post abroad, thus postponing any actual readjustments to a life in common. Such an ending was disparaged by some critics, among whom Beverley Baxter for the *Evening Standard* (13 January 1945), who reviewed the play under the headline "It Might Have Been So Good," concluding, "When the curtain rose again we waited for the unfolding of a tragedy or the playing out of an ironic comedy. Unhappily, Miss Du Maurier had shot her bolt. Having created an admirable situation, she could do nothing to resolve it. So she decided to end the war, which was accomplished by the use of the radio and, one has to record, to the titters of some people in the audience."[9]

4 According to Margaret Forster and Ina Habermann,[10] Du Maurier admitted the play was partly autobiographical as she felt estranged from her husband while he was working for the War Office. Nonetheless, however personal the inspiration for the play may have been and although Du Maurier led a relatively sheltered life during the war, the depiction of the couple's strained relationships echoed the massive wartime disruption of family life that affected all English households. As such, the play proves to be surprisingly contemporary, documenting the profound upheavals that World War II was bringing about in the nation as a whole. The fact that it stages the announcement of the end of the war some five months before VE Day must also have struck a thrilling chord. All this may explain why the play was a popular success, running in the West End for 618 performances.[11] This, in turn, may well account for its being turned into a film just one year later.

5 However, the film is very much a product of producer Sidney Box and his wife Muriel, who cowrote the script. According to Muriel Box, they wanted Du Maurier to write the screenplay but she declined and "never got involved with the film at all, and refused to be consulted over the script."[12] As was often the case, Du Maurier was quite happy to sell the film rights but fairly reluctant to engage in any type of teamwork. According to Margaret Forster, Du Maurier had found that attending the rehearsals of the play in Wyndham's, which was formerly her father's theatre, was "a disturbing experience"[13] and one can also surmise the subject of the play may have been "too close to home."

6 The Boxes had just been working with filmmaker Herbert Compton Bennett on *The Seventh Veil* (1945), which scored an enormous commercial success and won them an Oscar for best original screenplay, although many were prompt to detect in that film reminiscences not only of George Du Maurier's novel *Trilby*, but also of *Jane Eyre* and "all their imitations down to *Rebecca*."[14] Sydney Box was his own producer at Riverside Studios at the time[15] and still had to be appointed head of Gainsborough studios. While he had already adopted some of the fiercely commercial strategies which he would later apply at Gainsborough studios, which consisted in either adapting best-selling novels to a film's stars or tapping into topical issues,[16] the Boxes were also determined to engage with significant social issues. In particular, they were eager to make a film with a strong feminist and socialist agenda. As Muriel Box recalls in her memoirs, *The Years Between* offered them the opportunity to give "a hint of the things we wanted to say politically."[17]

7 The film retains much of the storyline related to the balance of power in marriage and, more surprisingly, its bittersweet tone, which is precisely what singles it out among a national film production by and large committed to celebrating the war effort and the spirit of national unity. However, although some scenes inevitably feel stage-bound and dialogue-driven (this will be one of the common criticisms addressed to Muriel Box's own films and to many mainstream British productions

before the New Wave), the film not only opens up the play, by echoing other generic traditions like the documentary, but it also raises the question of point of view, which was considered inadequate in the stage performance. Significantly, in the film, the eponymous phrase "the years between" is not pronounced by Michael but by Diana as she explains that he has to give her time to get used to his being back: "it isn't easy to put the clock back for years. [...] It isn't that I don't love you. It's all the years between." Michael only scoffs at the phrase: "The years between. They've got a lot to answer for, haven't they?" As we will see, this shift of ascribing the weighty line from husband to wife is quite emblematic of the film's angle in adapting the play, as it partly endeavours to redress the onstage balance, which was felt to be too much in favour of the husband. However, even more significantly, the film expands the domestic and personal quandary of Du Maurier's drama to underscore its social ramifications. Thus, as it explores the emotional fallout of the war through the disruptive figure of a husband literally returning from the dead, the film dramatises the gender clashes through various subtle disruptions of viewers' expectations regarding generic conventions.

Shifting perspectives

8 The first surprise comes with the play only actually starting more than forty minutes into the film. While the play opens in winter 1942 and quickly moves forward to 1945, the film opens in 1940 with a lengthy prologue as if to foreground its extensive rewriting. While the play unfolds in a single location ("the library of the Old Manor, the Wentworths' country house"), the film opens on a series of exterior long shots of a quiet British village, as if to counter its theatrical source text and assert the film's medium. These shots are as many vignettes that follow the tradition of the documentary and most particularly recall the propaganda films commissioned by the Ministry of Information and so popular during the war, films like *Britain at Bay* (1940) or *Listen to Britain* (1942)[18] which compiled instantly resounding landscape images meant to extol the British nation and its resilience in the face of adversity.[19]

9 Likewise, it is fairly ironical that a film adapted from a play should start by eschewing all dialogue, using instead a series of inserts of written documents (a telegram, Diana's diary) just like the titles of silent films. The use of close shots clearly foregrounds the possibilities offered by the filmic medium as opposed to the stage, as if the film had to state its departure from the source text, yet paradoxically reverting to the writing medium to do so. The first words actually spoken (after about four minutes)[20] are related to death and mourning as the priest starts celebrating a service in memory of the husband (Michael Redgrave). But his words soon fade out, triggering a long flashback sequence composed of a series of diary entries that sum up Diana's life, revolving entirely around her husband and his successful career. Already one can perceive some irony in the use of a dissolve that segues the memorial service into Diana's wedding ceremony, which no doubt contrasts them but also equates them. Soon the visuals contradict the official discourse of marital bliss: Diana (Valerie Hobson) is often filmed framed, thus highlighting her confinement and reducing her to a pretty picture. The film actually expands on a single line from the play, when Diana answers Richard, who is assuming she was happily married, with the words, "Happy? I don't know. I've never thought. There wasn't time. What I was feeling, what I was thinking never seemed to matter. It was just Michael, Michael. His needs, his comforts." (Act 1, scene 1). Although it paradoxically conveys Diana's perspective by silencing her voice, in retrospect, the quasi-silent prologue that relates Diana's life in the shadow of her husband stands in sharp contrast to the subsequent scenes where she takes the floor, addressing committees and the House of Parliament. Moreover, as the prologue clearly foregrounds Diana's point of view, it

ironically reduces her husband to an abstract character, an already spectral figure that is constantly filmed with his back turned to the camera. While the device may convey Diana's grieving, it also creates a marked emotional distance for the viewer. Thus the long prologue that conveys Diana's nostalgic memories of her union paradoxically films the couple as if they were already apart.

10 Most significantly, since Diana's point of view is given prominence, the film seems to partly redress the balance that Daphne Du Maurier deplored when, as she was involved in the West End stage production, the male character turned out to be much more attractive than his wife.[21] Du Maurier's Michael is by far the most complex and elusive character in the play—reactionary but also libertarian, a former idealist now disillusioned.[22] The embittered, resentful husband keeps scoffing dismissively at his wife's new career and her aspirations for more social justice, and yet his sarcastic quips often sound more witty and salient than the emollient, mundane or morally heavy-footed discourses of the other characters. Unlike in the play, the addition of the long prologue that stresses Diana's mourning and faithful memory of her husband makes her renewed desire to live appear as a healthy and well-deserved change from her long doleful bereavement. Accordingly, in the film, Michael is unequivocally portrayed as an intruder who cannot find back his place or connect with his family. It is only three quarters of an hour into the film that his face is revealed at last, and then he is often seen moving off screen. The couple is repeatedly filmed in separate spaces, with their backs turned to each other, or moving in opposite directions. It is noteworthy that although the film proved a popular success,[23] many critics were offended by the portrayal of the returned soldier: one critic objected that "the presumed dead husband's intrusion into the plot at this juncture is more irritation than intrigue" (*Variety*, 10 April 1946) while another asserted that "his characterisation is quite revolting in its sullen conceit and self-pity" (*The Spectator,* 31 May 1946).[24]

An outspoken feminist agenda

11 However, not only does the film foreground Diana's point of view but it also turns the play's proto-feminist theme into an outspoken feminist manifesto. In so doing, the film sets Diana's experience within a broader social context, paying tribute to women's part in the war effort and addressing some of the topical issues of the day, such as childcare facilities and equal pay.[25] If the play does mention Diana's work on a Housing Bill and a message to the General Teaching Council, the film adds a montage sequence of Diana addressing different women's rallies, for example campaigning for day nurseries (28:00).[26] Most significantly, it includes her maiden speech (32:40) whereby she defends a bill for equal pay and markedly departs from the speech that was prepared for her to toe the party line. Instead she speaks on behalf of "Mrs. Smith" who "isn't very interested in statistics because there are no statistics for human emotions or decency or ideals" but "is the person who is vitally concerned with this bill." Diana goes on describing Mrs. Smith's everyday life, her struggle and the hardships she has to go through during war time: a wife with two children, she lives alone after her husband was called up and her two children were evacuated to the countryside. She works a twelve-hour shift in an aircraft factory to contribute to the war effort and divides the rest of her time between homework, fire watching, standing in queues for groceries or a pair of shoes for the children, and writing to her husband every other day, to her children the alternate day. Then Diana expounds on her aspirations:

> Now when Mrs. Smith has time to think, which isn't very often, she thinks of a happier, more pleasant world after the war. She wants quite a lot of things out of the post-war world, a decent home to live in [...], she wants the best

> education in the world for her children [...], she wants a little money saved against her husband's return and as long as she's doing a man's work, she doesn't see why she shouldn't have a man's payback at the end of the week. And that's not all. Mrs. Smith has earned the rights to all these things and a great deal more, she's going to have an equal say in the government of this country.

12 During the whole scene, other MPs, mostly males,[27] are filmed listening to her reverently, which, even considering the traditional indulgence that greets a maiden speech, looks highly overplayed, however sincere Diana's speech may sound.

13 Moreover, the social ramifications of Diana's situation are further probed through the creation of secondary female characters that echo her predicament. Effie, who has become a mechanic and a driver, experiences doubts and guilt while her fiancé is away at war, while Diana's secretary, Judy, who has a secret crush on Richard Llewellyn (James McKechnie), goes through a similar sentimental setback. Other characters provide further indirect comments of the disruptions that the war brought about in terms of gender roles: "a Sergeant Higgins to see [Mrs. Wentworth]" turns out to be her former cook; Nanny is seen reading the newspapers while Venning, Michael's soldier servant, is ironing, which leads them both to argue about what a man's job is—or should be.

A choral dimension

14 In this respect, the film's expanded examination of the gender issue goes hand in hand with a much more inclusive depiction of the British social classes than in the play. This gives the personal drama of an upper middle-class couple a choral dimension that is underscored at the end by the use of then recent archive footage, showing the whole nation celebrating VE Day. Just as the film blends various generic conventions, it also alleviates its melodramatic tone through the inclusion of comic relief. In particular, the film makes extensive use of running jokes, like the joke which turns the postman into a mouthpiece for wise folk sayings, seeing that he keeps warning his listeners, "You mark my words. Nothing will ever be the same again after this war and that's a fact."[28] Interestingly, those running gags encompass the whole social spectrum since Sir Ernest repeats on his own behalf the very words used by Richard to convince him that Diana should stand for Parliament, words like "her head is screwed the right way", which were Nanny's in the first place. Eventually, the film ends up with the lyrical portrait of a society facing the challenge of rebuilding itself.

15 This choral dimension is made manifest through the extensive rewriting of Nanny's role (interpreted by Flora Robson): while she remains a minor character in the play, in the film she literally acts like the film's screenwriter and director. She is the one who sets off the plot and induces Diana to start a new life. Significantly, after overhearing Diana talking alone, addressing the empty armchair which her husband used to occupy, Nanny sits down in the vacant seat, as if to fill in Michael's absence, and exclaims, "All the pretending in the world won't bring him back again. It's no good pretending; start a new life without him." Nanny is the one who devises the idea of having Diana elected to her husband's seat, submitting it first to Richard, who then talks Sir Ernest Foster into persuading Diana. Likewise, she is the one who brings the drama to its close, untangling the deadlock which the couple has reached by appealing to their reason and to the interest of the world at large. Recalling her own experience of mourning her fiancé who was killed during the First World War, she evokes the ordeal of "hundreds like me in this war as well as the last—women whose men won't come back to them." She soon adds:

> But there are thousands more like you. Women whose men *will* come back to them, men they didn't expect to see again. Men they didn't very much want to

> see again [...]. I know it is not one-sided; there'll be thousands of men coming back who won't make allowances for what their wives have been through while they've been away; men who will expect to find nothing changed even though they've changed themselves. That's not the point. It's this: somebody's got to start a little give-and-take. You heard what the Prime Minister said the other day on the wireless. He said nations have to collaborate and have faith in one another if there is ever going to be peace, but if people like you can't do it, how do you expect nations to? Have you got so big you can't be a wife to your husband anymore? And have you got so important you can't bear to see your wife doing something just as well as you did it? Do you mean you are both incapable of working together? [...] There's peace in the world again, it's starting today; but if you two are any sample of what's going to happen, then we might as well have the war again right away because we've lost the peace, lost it before it ever started.

16 Nonetheless, for all its wholeheartedness, Nanny's high-flown political discourse only highlights the contrived nature of the resolution. While she may seem to be voicing the "common decency" that George Orwell kept extolling,[29] and her intervention may echo the staple theme in so many American social comedies of the 1930s, of the upper middle class being redeemed by the common sense of common people, she still remains a supporting character whose primary function here is to allow for the intervention of a quite convenient *deus ex machina*. While the play's ending remains undecided, with the couple's marriage being salvaged only because Michael chooses to depart again, the film opts for a more conventional happy ending: after Diana has chosen to leave Michael to pursue her career and live with Richard, the echo of Nanny's words eventually makes her change her mind and come back to her husband. The scene of Diana's return actually mirrors one of the early shots that conveyed Diana's nostalgic memories of her husband. In both scenes, as Michael is nodding off in an armchair with an open book on his lap, Diana approaches from behind him, covers his eyes and gently teases him, as if he had not been sleeping: "You're ruining your eyes. Stop reading and come to bed." The second scene, however, is filmed as in a reverse shot, with Michael facing the camera. As the film thus comes full circle, the echo strongly suggests the restoration of the *status quo ante*. Then a very brief epilogue shows them both in Parliament, but sitting on opposite sides, thus suggesting that the battle of the sexes will go on. The idyllic picture of a reunited couple is therefore slightly qualified, and gently mocked, but by no means challenged, which explains why, though for different reasons, the film's ending was found just as unconvincing as the play's. The *Monthly Film Bulletin*'s review of April 1946 encapsulates the general verdict: "the end is rather unsatisfying, for the break-up of the marriage is the only correct solution. Otherwise this is a courageous portrayal of the rehabilitation and resettlement problems with which thousands of families in Britain, America and other countries are now faced."[30]

Conclusion

17 In her analysis of Du Maurier's film adaptations, Nina Auerbach concludes that though male directors "may not deliberately falsify Daphne du Maurier", they misrepresent her work, transmuting her stark vision into sentimental plots and "turning her impersonal, almost inhuman tales into the romances her admirers wish she had written."[31] In a word, they "feminise" her. In the hands of the Boxes, Du Maurier is not so much feminised as given a feminist agenda. The film's rewriting from a definite feminist perspective in turn sheds light on Du Maurier's highly ambivalent feelings towards the issue of women's condition, seeing that she would not endorse feminism while refusing the conventional roles associated with femininity. Besides, in the Boxes' adaptation, Du Maurier is not so much sentimentalised as socialised. Whereas the play foregrounds Diana's personal

predicament, the film sets it within the framework of the whole nation's upheaval; and while the play delves into an anguished examination of power relations between the sexes, the film highlights how urgent it is to deal with the social disruptions brought on by the war. As noted previously, the postman is proved right when he keeps repeating, "You mark my words. Nothing will ever be the same again after this war and that's a fact."

18 *The Years Between* may thus appear uncharacteristic of Du Maurier's work, due to its foraying into the dramatic genre but also because of its dealing with an acutely topical issue when "pastness in all its forms, personal, familial, biographical and national"[32] is so often the staple of her fictions. Diana returns to her husband just as Laura does in *Brief Encounter* (released in 1945) but unlike that other film, where the protagonist forgoes her romantic involvement with the noble-minded doctor, the dashing figure in *The Years Between* is embodied by the younger, pre-war version of the husband. The uncertain future which serves as the play's inconclusive ending paradoxically looks to the past. And as with Stella at the end of *September Tide*, Diana "seems to settle for perpetuating the past rather than launching into a new future."[33]

19 The film, on the other hand, reflects the Boxes' commitment to tackling urgent topical issues, offering a personal message of hope for a fairer nation. It is also fairly emblematic of Muriel Box's future production. Most of her films foreground women's experiences and their struggle to gain recognition and independence. Muriel Box herself was a victim of discrimination in an industry rife with gender prejudice. In her memoirs, she explains how she started directing documentaries thanks to the scarcity of male directors in wartime. She also recollects that she soon met difficulties because of gender prejudice. For instance, after writing the script for a third commissioned documentary called *Road Safety for Children*, she was barred from directing it because it was not considered "the type of picture suitable for a woman to direct."[34] She then bitterly remarks: "This was the first time I had been discriminated against in my work on the grounds of sex. I regret to say it was by no means the last."[35] Interestingly, her works have often been dismissed as filmic equivalents of novelettes, the term Hitchcock used to qualify Du Maurier's fiction.[36] Critic Richard Winnington, in *The News Chronicle* of 25 May 1946, thus described *The Years Between* as the "novelettish distortion" of a contemporary problem.[37] But Robert Shail's assessment of Box's work also recalls Du Maurier's disillusioned outlook on human relationships, which is made explicit by Michael in the play when he asserts: "It's always a mistake, my dear fellow, to find out too much about anybody's life. And the closer you are to someone, the less you ought to know."[38] According to Shail, this disenchanted and caustic view is what makes Muriel Box's films worth considering despite all their shortcomings: "Although sometimes lacking in obvious visual flair and often reliant on adaptations of stage work, the content of her films was often striking, with a tendency towards foregrounding relationships and viewing the battle between the sexes with an unsentimental, acerbic eye."[39]

20 *The Years Between* thus documents how traditional gender roles were radically changed by the Second World War. In both play and film, the spouses come to realise that the ideal image of their pre-war marriage is a bygone chimera: Diana is no longer the silent, supportive housewife that Michael cared for, while Michael is no longer the dashing and idealistic politician whom Diana found so seductive. Marriage may be preserved at the end, but the couple have yet to build up a new relationship and accommodate each other's diverging needs and desires. While in the play nostalgia prevails, the film suggests that the couple's future common life lies in the collective rebuilding of the nation. In this respect, the film not only offers an insight into women's hearts but it also asserts their aspirations at playing a part in society on par with men.

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Notes

1 Du Maurier's first play was actually her own adaptation of *Rebecca*.

2 Margaret Forster, *Daphne Du Maurier*, London: Arrow Books, 2007, 144.

3 Du Maurier even ventured into writing a collection of inspirational, morale-boosting stories entitled *Come Wind, Come Weather* that were commissioned by the Moral Re-Armament group and published in 1940. See Ina Habermann, *Myth, Memory and the Middlebrow: Priestley, Du Maurier and the Symbolic Form of Englishness*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 192-196 and Xavier Lachazette, "A Desperate Attempt at Conflict Resolution: Daphne Du Maurier, Moral Re-Armament, and World War II", *QUAINA*, June 2020. <https://journals.openedition.org/orda/908>, accessed on 1 July, 2020.

4 In 1943 according to Margaret Forster (*Daphne Du Maurier*, 178) but in the summer 1944 according to her daughter Flavia Leng (Flavia Leng, *Daphne Du Maurier: A Daughter's*

Memoir, Edinburgh & London: Mainstream Publishing, [1994] 2007, 91).

5 As Diana explains in the first act, "I suddenly realised my life doesn't belong to him anymore; it's mine; I can do what I like with it. And oh, Richard, that sudden sense of freedom – almost as though the years had rolled away and I was young again." Daphne du Maurier, *The Years Between*, London: Gollancz, 1945, 17.

6 The very first words Michael pronounces are about the furniture: "Where's the old cabinet?" [...] "It's altered the room, somehow. Funny... And the table has been shifted too, hasn't it?" *Ibid.*, 33.

7 *Ibid.*, 48.

8 *Ibid.*, 59.

9 Quoted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Years_Between_(play)>, accessed on 20 May 2019.

10 Margaret Forster, *op. cit.*, 178 and Habermann, *op. cit.,* 199.

11 John Peter Wearing, *The London Stage 1940-1949: A Calendar of Productions, Performers, and Personnel*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014 (2nd edition), 183.

12 Muriel Box quoted in Martyn Shallcross, *The Private World of Daphne Du Maurier*, London: Robson Books, 1991, 112-113.

13 Margaret Forster, *op. cit,* 189.

14 Richard Mallett in *Punch*, quoted in Louise Heck-Rabi, *Women Filmmakers. A Critical Reception*, Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1984, 142.

15 Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, 47.

16 Louise Heck-Rabi, *op. cit.,* 148.

17 "We were not under contract to Rank to make films with overt statements in social problems or those with strong propaganda themes. We were expected to produce a programme of films that would interest the general public and encourage people to go to the cinema more frequently and enjoy well-made dramas and amusing comedies. We were not engaged to indulge our own political or socialist views, however much we should have found satisfaction in doing so. *The Years Between* gave a hint of the things we wanted to say politically, but it was an exception." quoted in Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy (eds), *Gainsborough Melodrama*, London: British Film Institute, 1983, 65, and Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-49*, London & New York: Routledge, [1989], 1992, 89.

18 *Britain at Bay* (1940) (35 mm, black and white, 8 mins), directed by Harry Watt, produced by GPO Film Unit and sponsored by the Ministry of Information; *Listen to Britain* (1942) (35 mm, black and white, 19 mins), directed by Humphrey Jennings & Stewart McAllister, produced by the Crown Film Unit, sponsored by the Ministry of Information.

19 It is worth noting that both the Boxes and Herbert Compton Bennett worked on short propaganda films for the British Council and the Ministry of Information during the war. See Spicer, *Sydney Box*, *op. cit.*, 18-32 and Robert Murphy (ed.), *Directors in British and Irish Cinema, A Reference Companion,* London: British Film Institute, 2006, 43.

20 Dialogue proper actually starts after seven minutes.

21 Margaret Forster, *op. cit.*, 190.

22 This soured tone is typified by lines such as "Before I left this country I remember making a speech in the House of Commons about freedom. The right for every man to think for himself, to choose for himself, to do as he bloody well pleased. I understood that that was what we fellows were fighting for." Daphne du Maurier, *The Years Between*, *op. cit.*, 46.

23 "[T]he public's verdict was unequivocal: *The Years Between* performed well, indicating that once more the Boxes had understood the temper of the times." Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box*, op. *cit.*, 63.

24 Both are quoted in Louise Heck-Rabi, *op. cit.*, 149-150.

25 See Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1997] 2002, 222-254.

26 On the subject of day nurseries, Diana argues, "No woman worth her salt wants to be parted from her babies, but no woman with any sense wants to be saddled with them twenty-four hours a day. Now if we can afford to spend thousands on car parks and car park attendants, surely we can afford a few hundred for baby parks."

27 Although we can see some women MPs in the long shots of the House, Diana is soon framed in medium shots as the only woman among her male counterparts. According to *UK Political Info, A resource for voters, students, journalists and politicians*, there were twenty-four women MPs in 1945, or nearly 3.8% of the total number of MPs (640) at the time. See <http://www.ukpolitical.info/FemaleMPs.htm>, accessed on 12 July 2019.

28 The line is an expanded interpretation of a brief indirect reference to the postman made by the Wentworths' son, Robin. (Daphne du Maurier, *The Years Between*, *op. cit.*, 14).

29 The phrase appears in *Wigan Pier* (1937) to describe how the "ordinary working man" understands Socialism, as a synonym of "justice and common decency." Anthony Stewart also relates the notion to Orwell's analysis of Charles Dickens: "Orwell saw very clearly that the capacity for decency must be incumbent on the privileged if it is to have any real social consequence." For both quotations, see Anthony Stewart, *George Orwell, Doubleness, and the Value of Decency*, London and New York: Routledge 2003, 3-4.

30 Quoted in Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box*, *op. cit.*, 63.

31 Nina Auerbach, *Daphne Du Maurier, Haunted Heiress*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000, 157.

32 Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars*, London & New York: Routledge, [1991] 2001, 156.

33 Michelene Wandor, "Drama in Daphne Du Maurier: Spirit and Letter," in Helen Taylor (ed.), *The Daphne Du Maurier Companion*, London: Virago Press, 2007, 341-47, 342.

34 Muriel Box, *Odd Woman Out. An Autobiography by Muriel Box*, London: Leslie Frewin Publishers, 1974, 163.

35 *Ibid*. As Spicer recounts, Muriel Box had to face Michael Balcon's scepticism about her ability to direct a feature film, was forced to pretend that her husband was co-directing her first feature *The Happy Family* (1952), and lost one of the main financial backers' funding when he learned she was directing on her own. Eventually she was not credited as director when the film was first released. Andrew Spicer, "Box, Muriel," in Directors in British and Irish Cinema, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/479374/index.html>, accessed on 12 July 2019.

36 See the moment in the Truffaut/Hitchcock interview when Truffaut asks Hitchcock whether he is satisfied with *Rebecca*. Hitchcock answers, "Well it's not a Hitchcock picture. It's a novelette, really." (at 4:50), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDs3GvhJZq0>, accessed on 20 March 2019.

37 Quoted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Years_Between_(play)>, accessed on 20 March 2019.

38 Daphne du Maurier, *The Years Between*, *op. cit.*, 72.

39 Robert Shail, *British Film Directors. A Critical Guide*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, 33. Shail adds, "Whatever aesthetic limitations may be apparent in the films she directed, she directed a distinctive body of work and provided a model of achievement for future generations of women directors like Sally Potter and Lynne Ramsay." In 2018 two major retrospectives paid tribute to her career and provided the opportunity to re-examine her work. As Phil Hoad pointed out in his review of these retrospectives, with 15 feature films to her name, Muriel Box remains to this day Britain's most prolific female director.

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
‘Adieu Sagesse’, or Troubled Identities in Du Maurier's Fiction

“Soaring Towards the Sun”: The Icarus Complex in Daphne Du Maurier’s *The Flight of the Falcon*

« L’envol vers le soleil » : le complexe d’Icare dans The Flight of the Falcon de Daphne du Maurier

Helena Habibi

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Résumés

English Français

Bird-men, compelled fatefully to soar sun-ward, haunt Daphne Du Maurier’s novels and short stories. Her incessant re-working of the myth of Icarus finds its climax in her later novel, *The Flight of the Falcon* (1965), in which Aldo Donati dons Daedalus-like wings, then, “like Icarus, [...] fl[ies] too near the sun” before plummeting to his death. Furthermore, the presentation of the novel’s Donati brothers reflects, with uncanny accuracy, components of Jungian symbology as well as the “Icarus complex”, first identified by psychologist, Henry A. Murray. This article examines the relatively critically neglected novel, *The Flight of the Falcon*, as a narrative transformation of the classical myth of Icarus and the psychoanalytic theories that it inspired. In doing so, the article seeks to dispel du Maurier’s own anxiety that the “deep unconscious motive[s]” underlying the macabre actions of her beguiling, bird-imitating protagonist, Aldo Donati, and his brother, Armino, would remain overlooked.

Les hommes-oiseaux, fatalement contraints à s’envoler vers le soleil, hantent les romans et les nouvelles de Daphne du Maurier. Son remaniement incessant du mythe d’Icare trouve son apogée dans le roman tardif qu’est *The Flight of the Falcon* (1965) où Aldo Donati, ayant revêtu des ailes de Dédale, fait une chute mortelle après avoir volé, « comme Icare, [...] trop près du soleil ». En outre, la caractérisation des frères Donati reflète, avec une étrange précision, des éléments de la symbologie jungienne ainsi que le « complexe d’Icare », identifié pour la première fois par le psychologue Henry A. Murray. Le présent article examine ce roman relativement

négligé par la critique en tant que transformation narrative du mythe classique d’Icare et à la lumière des théories psychanalytiques qu’il a inspirées. Ce faisant, cet article cherche à dissiper l’inquiétude exprimée par du Maurier elle-même à propos d’un roman dont elle craignait que puisse rester incomprise la « motivation profondément inconsciente » à l’origine des actions macabres de son séduisant protagoniste, grand imitateur des oiseaux, et de son frère Armino.

Entrées d’index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, The Flight of the Falcon, Carl Gustav Jung, complexe d’Icare, Henry A. Murray

Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, The Flight of the Falcon, Carl Gustav Jung, Icarus Complex, Henry A. Murray

Texte intégral

1 Icarus-like bird-men, compelled fatefully to soar sunward, haunt the Du Maurier corpus. The hawk-like Vicar of Altarnun in *Jamaica Inn* (1936) “flung out his arms as a bird throws his wings for flight, and drooped suddenly and fell.”[1] In *The King’s General* (1946), Richard Grenvile’s bird of prey enacts an Icarian ascent and fall during a doomed hawking escapade. After developing wings, the narrator of “Ganymede” (1959) recounts “soaring above the earth”[2] and the protagonist of “The Pool” (1959) “thought of Icarus, soaring towards the sun.”[3] This incessant reworking of the myth of Icarus finds its climax in *The Flight of the Falcon* (1965), in which the protagonist, Aldo Donati, dons Daedalus-like wings, then, like Icarus, flies “too near the sun”[4] before plummeting to his death. This Icarian persistence in Du Maurier’s fiction has yet to be investigated by critics, although the following critical allusions intuit its importance: Richard Kelly’s recognition that the protagonist of “Ganymede” is “guilty of hubris, an arrogant pride” speaks to the tale’s Icarian resonances;[5] Nina Auerbach inadvertently hints at the Icarian sonority of “Ganymede” in its concern with a “trembling on the brink of visionary transformation”;[6] A. D. Cousins notes the presence of Ovidian transformation in “Ganymede” without acknowledging its Icarian nature; and Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik foreground the avian transformation of the macabre couple in “The Old Man”, but they connect it to “the classic Oedipal drama”[7] rather the mythical Icarus. Horner and Zlosnik do notice that, in *Jamaica Inn*, the vicar of Altarnun’s death is “Icarus-like.”[8] With regards to *The Flight of the Falcon*, Kelly recognises that, “like Jesus, Lucifer, and Icarus, [Aldo] challenges the status quo and is forced to suffer for his daring”[9] and Melanie Jane Heeley determines that Aldo “represents all the daring flyers of Greek myth from “Icarus” [...] to Phaeton.”[10]

2 In addition to bearing witness to Du Maurier’s interest in Graeco-Roman myth, *The Flight of the Falcon* is a culmination of a decade of research into Jungian psychoanalytic theory.[11] Du Maurier admits, in a letter to her friend Oriel Malet, to “reading so many psycho books lately” and to being “surrounded by [...] books on gods, and books on psychology.”[12] In a series of letters to her pen friend, Ivan Magee, dated between 1960 and 1963, Du Maurier reveals her interest in, and intimate knowledge of, Jungian psychoanalysis.[13] Further letters to Malet reveal a long-standing interest in Jungian psychology in the years leading up to her conception of *The Flight of the Falcon*.[14] In them, Du Maurier discusses aspects of Jungian theory pertinent to the themes of *The Flight of the Falcon*, like the significance of her fondness for mountains and climbing in relation to Jungian dream analysis[15] or his notion of the collective unconscious as a possible “case for reincarnation.”[16] Moreover, four months before she embarked on “brewing”[17] the novel, Du Maurier asserted a degree of expertise in Jung’s work when she referred to “a whole lot [...] I knew so well from Jung, and all his volumes, which you know I have been collecting for years.”[18] Evidently, Du Maurier was ruminating these ideas during her conception of *The Flight of the Falcon*.

Du Maurier’s tantalising insinuation, in a letter to Malet, of “deep unconscious

motive[s]”[19] underlying the characterisation of her Icarian protagonists has yet to be fully investigated by critics. In this article, I argue that *The Flight of the Falcon*, Du Maurier’s critically neglected novel, is a richly symbolic and sophisticated work of fiction, weaving a complex tapestry of mythic and psychoanalytic threads.[20] I read the novel as a narrative transformation of the classical myth of Icarus and a manifestation of the Jungian psychoanalytic theories it inspired. In doing so, I seek to dispel Du Maurier’s own anxieties that meanings and depth in this work would remain overlooked, and thereby demonstrate that her later fiction is of greater value and complexity than critics have thus far acknowledged.[21]

Icarus Complex

4 In the posthumously published *Man and His Symbols* (1964), which appeared in the midst of Du Maurier’s writing of *The Flight of the Falcon*, Carl Gustav Jung explores the enduring presence, in what he terms the “collective unconscious”, of numerous symbolic themes.[22] These include three prevailing motifs: a craving for immortality that finds expression in the Christian concept of resurrection; ascensionism and precipitation, often manifest in the “common dream of flying”,[23] of finding oneself “on a platform from which [one has] to descend”;[24] and the prevalence of the bird as a symbol of transcendence,[25] to which Jung devotes much of his thesis. He posits that these symbolic strands are encapsulated by the bird as “the most fitting symbol of transcendence [with evidence of its use going] as far back as the paleolithic period of prehistory.”[26] He goes on to chart subsequent manifestations of this unconscious avian compulsion in the winged protagonists of classical myth, such as Icarus, and recognises man-made flying machines, such as planes and spaceships, as embodying the same transcendent principal.[27] All three of these Jungian themes find expression in *The Flight of the Falcon*.

5 Du Maurier’s research material held in the Exeter Archives relating to Urbino, the inspiration for Ruffano in which the novel is set, reveals that these Jungian symbols are central to the identity of the city and its inhabitants. These symbols are subsequently developed as crucial elements in Du Maurier’s imaginative construction of Ruffano and the psychological development of her protagonists. Urbino, as the images collected by Du Maurier testify, showcases a dramatic undulating topography.[28] With its steep steps, rising hills, tall towers, spiral staircases, and art treasures depicting an ascending, reborn Christ, this Italian city could not be a more fitting expression of Jungian ascensionism, precipitation, and craving for immortality. The bird also figures as an important symbol of Urbino. Like its fifteenth-century Duke, Federigo da Montefeltro, Du Maurier’s city of Ruffano’s emblem “had for design the Malabranche Falcon.”[29] These images of Urbino, found in Du Maurier’s *Flight of the Falcon* research papers, correspond with her imaginative use of these three aspects of Jungian symbology in her novel.

6 Jung’s preoccupation with bird imagery, including that of Icarus, also finds a remarkable parallel to the life of Aldo in the novel. Jung observes that,

> over and over again, one hears a tale describing a hero’s miraculous but humble birth, his early proof of superhuman strength, his rapid rise to prominence or power, his triumphant struggle with the forces of evil, his fallibility to the sin of pride [or] (*hybris*), and his fall through [...] a “heroic” sacrifice that ends in his death.[30]

7 This, according to Jung, “is the meaning of the story of Icarus”;[31] it is also the fate of Aldo Donati.

8 Du Maurier’s presentation of the novel’s Donati brothers, Aldo and Armino, reflects, with uncanny accuracy, the components of the personality theory known as the Icarus complex first identified by the prominent psychologist, and associate of Jung, Henry A. Murray. The publication of Murray’s theory in 1955 coincides with the period during

which Du Maurier was reading “so many psycho books”[32] and the myth of Icarus is a significant motif across both Jung’s and Murray’s bodies of work. Whilst Du Maurier does not explicitly mention Murray, her fervent interest in Jung’s work – as well as the field of psychoanalysis and psychology more broadly – might well have led her to an encounter with Jung’s associate’s personality theory in some form. The proximity between Murray and Jung, and their shared interest in Icarian theories of the unconscious make this highly plausible.[33] Murray’s Icarus complex is characterised by the following six Jungian components: “ascensionism” combined with feelings of “falling [and] precipitation”; “cynosural narcissism”; a “craving for immortality”; an abundance of fire and water imagery; and “depreciation” of women often manifest in matricidal fantasy.[34]

9 To illustrate the extent of *The Flight of the Falcon*’s Icarian nature, I will examine some of the abounding examples in the novel that conform to the six interconnecting elements of Jung’s and Murray’s theories aforementioned. Underpinning these elements is the persistent presence of bird imagery, which culminates in Aldo’s Icarian flight at the end of the novel.

10 Like Armino in the novel, these tendencies are “exhibited in [the Icarian subject’s] dreams” – as we shall see in Armino’s dream-like return to his birth-city – and “come all the way from childhood in their present shapes.”[35] Murray’s illustrative case study of an Icarian subject named Grope abounds with astonishing parallels with the brothers in *The Flight of the Falcon* who, between them, manifest all of the elements of Murray’s complex. Coinciding with Jung’s notion of the archetypal twins, Aldo and Armino together thus form a fully realised Icarian subject. In Jungian terms, the brothers “together constitute a whole person. [...] they belong together, and it is necessary – though exceedingly difficult – to reunite them. In these two children we see the two sides of man’s nature.”[36] In one of her many letters to Magee discussing Jungian subjectivity, Du Maurier surmises that “Jung’s theory is that [...] we consist of Opposites [...] and only attain harmony and peace of mind when the two opposites are in balance.”[37] Notions of harmonising disparate aspects of the subject were clearly percolating in the period during which Du Maurier began “brewing” *The Flight of the Falcon*.

11 Armino, the novel’s first-person narrator, is a disenchanted tour guide. After failing to identify the body of a murdered woman as his childhood nurse, Marta, he is compelled to return to the city of Ruffano in which he grew up, both to alleviate growing paranoia that the police will pursue him and charge him with her murder, and to atone in some way for the guilt he harbours for abandoning her. On his return to Ruffano, Armino enters into dream-like reminiscences and recalls the fifteenth-century inhabitants, the brothers, Dukes Claudio and Carlo. He also begins to unravel the story of his own past, which is dominated by memories of his overbearing, charismatic older brother, presumed killed in action as an Air Force pilot. Armino is shocked when confronted with the living Aldo, who has re-established himself in Ruffano as the highly respected head of the city’s Arts Council. It transpires that Aldo is directing the city’s annual festival, titled “The Flight of the Falcon”, an intricate performance that re-enacts the dangerous Icarian flying feat of the ruthless Duke Claudio, himself known as the Falcon. Armino is simultaneously repelled and compelled by his brother’s mesmerising power over the population of Ruffano, compounded by Aldo’s determination to play the role of the Falcon in the festival – the novel’s shocking Icarian finale.

Ascensionism and Precipitation

12 Resonating strongly with Du Maurier’s novel, Murray’s notion of ascensionism includes “the wish to overcome gravity [...] to leap or swing in the air, to climb, to rise, to fly or to float down gradually from on high and land without injury [...] rising from

the dead and ascending to heaven.”[38] Murray also includes:

> emotional and ideational forms of ascensionism – passionate enthusiasm, rapid elevations of confidence, flights of the imagination, [...] ecstatic mystical up-reachings, poetical and religious – which are likely to be expressed in the imagery of physical ascensionism. The upward thrust of desire may also manifest itself in the cathection[39] of tall pillars and towers, of high peaks and mountains, of birds – high-flying hawks and eagles – and of the heavenly bodies, especially the sun. In its most mundane and secular form, ascensionism consists of a craving for upward social mobility, for a rapid and spectacular rise of prestige.[40]

13 Conversely, precipitation refers to “a consciously or unconsciously desired calamitous descension in which the [subject] allows himself to fall or leap from a height”, also referred to as “precipitative suicide.”[41] Murray’s case subject, Grope, “a self-propelled sky flier”,[42] enjoyed building model airplanes as a child.[43] As an adult, his intention is “to enlist in the Air Corps and become a pilot.”[44] With no less than eight references in the novel to Aldo’s “pilot’s wings”,[45] earned “during the war [when] he served in the Air Force”,[46] it is clear that Du Maurier is keen to impress upon the reader a sense of his marked propensity for doomed airborne feats even before he conceives of his suicidal, “self-propelled” winged escapade as the Falcon.

14 Furthermore, Aldo’s childhood fascination with the “dangerous twisting staircase of the tower”,[47] which Armino laments “he would force me to climb with him”,[48] bears witness to an Icarian fascination with elevation and descension. The recurring image of the spiral steps is inextricable from the image of the bird. Armino recalls: “I followed now, up the grand staircase to the gallery above, while in every niche and vault stood the Malabranche falcon.”[49] Similarly, Armino, recounts:

> before me was the stair, curving ever upward to the tower above, below me the descent, three hundred steps or more, the abyss below [...]. The old fear, the old fascination gripped me. I put my hand upon the cold stone step, preparatory to climbing.[50]

15 This psychological rising and falling compulsion pervades the novel and finds further expression in the undulating topography that dominates it. As Ruffano looms ahead, “some five hundred metres high”[51] – a suitable homecoming for an Icarian – Armino’s impressions combine a sense of height and precipitation: “ahead the mountains [...] snowflakes fell [...] we came up from the south; they must have been falling all day.”[52] Mirroring Armino’s childhood remembrances of his brother, Ruffano emerges as a nightmare juxtaposition of twisting heights and dizzying descents. As Armino recalls:

> snow banked the road as it curved upward, lay thick upon the roof-tops, made phantoms of the trees, and, crown[ed] the minarets of the twin towers [...] and campanile beyond.[53]

16 His Icarian propensity for precipitation is further played out when he witnesses the Murrayesque “calamitous descension”[54] of a young man:

> I heard the sound of running. Someone was coming down the steps towards me, but in headlong flight. The descent was steep, and to run at speed was to court disaster.
>
> “Watch out,” I called, “you’ll fall.”
>
> The running figure emerged from the darkness, stumbled, and I put out an arm to break the fall.[55]

17 This occurrence is not unlike Armino’s own movements around the city and foreshadows his later inability to break his bird-brother’s fall at the end of the novel. A telling omission in Du Maurier’s typescript reveals an earlier intention to further impress this sense of precipitation: the phrase “down to the further flight of steps descending” is deleted.[56] This is one of many edits made throughout the typescript

relating to the imagery of undulation, suggesting its centrality to Du Maurier’s conception of the psychological fabric of the novel.

18 This obsession with ascensionism and precipitation, which permeates Armino’s boyhood reminiscences about jumping off walls that he “always thought so high” before “descending abruptly”,[57] forms a remarkable parallel to Grope’s “self-propelled flights and of jumping off a high place and floating gracefully and gently to the ground.”[58] Murray’s Icarian subject’s childhood memory of “a toy auto he enjoyed until the day he sat his little brother in it and sent it rolling down a hill”[59] becomes the dangerous chariot ride that Aldo and Armino perform at the commencement of the festival. Armino recalls allowing his older brother to “bind him to the chariot”,[60] which mirrors Grope’s “many dreams and daydreams of rising in the air and flying [...] in a horse-drawn chariot.”[61] Aldo and Armino’s horse-drawn escapade, which leads them to the twisting staircase of the ducal palace from which Aldo will enact his Icarian bird flight, is cheered on by the crowd who “clapped like the fluttering of innumerable wings.”[62] The rising and falling imagery relating to this scene is remarkably dense and pervasive. As Armino climbs the winding staircase after Aldo (“up, up, forever up”), he recalls “the sickness of vertigo” which accompanies his realisation “that the tower was forever out of reach, like the pit below. There was nothing left within me but the urge to climb, and sliding, stumbling, I swung between heaven and hell.”[63]

19 Armino’s vertiginous nightmare culminates in a fall “like the descent to hell”[64] during which his sense of terror becomes unbearable: “I had reached the peak of fear.”[65] This striking resemblance to Murray’s conception of the Icarian “ascension-descension cycle on all levels” reveals that “the question of falling or not falling”[66] is as central to Du Maurier’s novel as it is to Murray’s Icarus complex. This leads one to wonder whether Du Maurier consciously used the Grope case in support of her protagonists’ psychology and related imagery, or whether she conceived of her novel as illustrative of that case.

Cynosural Narcissism and a Craving for Immortality

20 Aldo’s conceptions of himself as various powerful figures who embody ascensionist and precipitative compulsions – Jesus, the Devil, and Duke Claudio as the falcon – reveal at once the extent of his cynosural narcissism and his craving for immortality. These figures defy mortal death: Jesus’s resurrection is a kind of immortality, as is his raising of Lazarus, which Aldo and Armino role-play as children; another boyhood role-play enacts the Devil’s invitation to Jesus to demonstrate imperishability; and Aldo’s self-fashioning as Duke Claudio, the falcon, in the festival, whose precipitative suicide Aldo replicates in his final Icarian flight, is foreshadowed in his death-defying piloting descent.

21 According to Murray, cynosural narcissism denotes “a craving for unsolicited attention and admiration, a desire to attract and enchant all eyes.”[67] Michael A. Sperber adds to this: “the Icarian’s wish is that his mere appearance (*cynosural presence*), or some startling exploit (*cynosural act*) [...] will draw all eyes.”[68] Again, Grope’s case is abundantly and accurately manifest in Du Maurier’s Icarian brothers. Grope, whose fantasy involves a dictatorial role, “founding a new civilization with himself as king and lawgiver”,[69] is realised by Aldo’s establishment of the secret orphaned boys’ society over which he rules. This band of brothers is a microcosm of the broader influence Aldo holds over the city of Ruffano. Like Grope, he aspires to “go down in history as a leader.”[70] A parallel with Grope’s Icarian “appreciation or composition of artistic forms”[71] finds expression in Aldo’s position as director of the Arts Council and in his curation of Ruffano’s annual theatrical festival. In these roles, Aldo fulfils the Icarian proclivity for “charismatic oratory and leadership [...] and messianic enthusiasm.”[72]

22 Aldo also manifests the Icarian propensity for identifying with prominent historical figures. His identification with the fifteenth-century Duke Claudio, about whom he learns by consulting a coveted biography, bears a remarkable parallel to Icarian behavior as outlined by Murray. In a clinical experiment, Grope, according to Murray, projects his own complex onto the image of another boy, explaining that “the reason he’s doing these daydreams is because he doesn’t feel he can get much glory in this age, this civilization. He needs to go back to an older one in his thoughts. He finally realizes that perhaps there were geniuses in the old days too.”[73]

23 Aldo’s other assumed powerful, historical role is enacted during childhood, “believing, so the story ran, that he was the son of God.”[74] As a boy, Aldo would induce his younger brother to role-play the biblical scene of the “Raising of Lazarus” as depicted in a fifteenth-century painting at the alter-piece of Ruffano’s chapel in the novel. During these role-plays, Aldo would summon his brother Armino, i.e. Lazarus, from his death-tomb. Du Maurier’s use of this biblical narrative is rich in Icarian imagery since it embodies the very essence of ascensionism: in addition to his ability to resurrect, to raise from the dead a close male ally from his tomb, Jesus later undergoes his own resurrection before occupying the highest position by God’s right hand,[75] presiding over all from the lofty heights of heaven. Aldo’s incessant re-enactment of Jesus’s miracle is also evidence of Murray’s other Icarus complex symptom – a craving for immortality.

24 Murray observes in the Icarus subject a yearning for “resurrection of the body or the soul [and a] fantasy of breaking out of his tomb, digging his way up, and hovering in phantom form over his parents’ house.”[76] This bears remarkable resemblance to Du Maurier’s novel. After recurrent recollections of childhood role-plays of the “Raising of Lazarus”, Armino travels north to the elevated Ruffano, in a sense “digging his way up”,[77] and does indeed hover around the house he lived in with his parents as a boy. During this time, Armino admits “I felt as a phantom would, returning after death”[78] and “once more I had the strange impression that I was a ghost returned, or not even a ghost, some disembodied spirit of long ago, and that there, in the darkened house [of my parents] Aldo and I sleeping.”[79]

25 In a scene from the novel, Du Maurier describes another imaginary painting that the young Donati brothers used to role-play: a “masterpiece [...] painted in the early fifteenth century by a pupil of Piero della Francesca”[80] depicting another biblical scene, “The Temptation of Christ.” As with Lazarus, this is a fictional image likely inspired by real-life artistic renderings of the scene, such as the depictions collected in Du Maurier’s research materials.[81] The image, the parable it depicts, and the role-play it inspires in the novel bear the same intertwining of superhuman, death-defying imaginings with a propensity for heights. Du Maurier stresses first and foremost their ascensionist/precipitative and cynosural narcissistic themes – their depiction of “Christ standing on the Temple pinnacle.”[82] In most real-life artistic renderings of the parable, Christ is seen aloft – usually atop some dizzying plateau or precipice. The parable tells of the Devil’s invitation to Jesus to willingly plummet from this great height with the idea that winged beings – angels – will intervene, thereby confirming beyond doubt Jesus’s superhuman status.[83] This foreshadows Aldo’s orchestration of his own avian plummet at the end of the novel. Aldo is now interchangeable with Jesus, Duke Claudio, and a falcon.[84] Embodying key elements of Murray’s complex throughout the novel turns out to be a symbolic basis from which Aldo eventually achieves a most quintessential embodiment of the complex – the re-enactment of the flight of Icarus.

26 Furthermore, Murray relates that the Icarian fantasy also involves scenarios in which the dead hero comes to life again:

> [In addition to] resurrection (re-ascension) [...] there is the possibility of *replication*, which may be defined as a process whereby one or more persons are transformed in the image of the subject. It is the complement of identification, or emulation: the implanting of a memorable image of the self in the minds of others.[85]

27 This corresponds with the following Icarian fantasy in which the desire to replicate the self in the image of an idolised counterpart finds expression in a sexual partnership. Grope declares:

> “I have created a replica of myself.” Whereupon the king says, “*That* is the most beautiful thing in the world, therefore *you* are the most beautiful thing in the world. Will you be my queen?” The king takes the hero as his male queen and gives this androgynous beauty half his kingdom (cynosural ascension of status).[86]

28 Grope’s desire for replication resembles Aldo’s invitation to Armino to ride side by side with him in his chariot, and his bequeathing of his prestigious position upon his suicide.

29 This coincides with Aldo’s return from the presumed dead, when Armino likens him to “the risen Christ”,[87] “returned from the dead.”[88] It also describes Armino’s replication of his older brother – as the likely new figurehead of Ruffano after the latter flies, Falcon-like, to his death at the end of the novel. Armino feels “transformed [...] from what I had hitherto believed myself to be.”[89] Upon death, Aldo lives on, resurrected through replication, in Armino. Aldo’s replication of himself through Armino also speaks to Murray’s theory of “the evolutionary significance of [the Icarian’s] overreaching need for attention, worship, fame – glory in the highest. But if this is denied man, there is still the possibility of immortalizing his likeness through reproduction.”[90]

30 This “implanting of a memorable and impelling image of the self in the minds of others”[91] with the desire to triumph over death finds expression in Aldo’s final Icarian flight as the Falcon, a feat he orchestrates to maximum effect by inciting the whole population to bear witness to it. To the very end, Aldo is in pursuit of immortality: “you never know. I might soar further this time.”[92]

Fire and Water Imagery

31 According to Murray’s theory, the imagery of water and fire is also likely to dominate in the Icarian imagination, marked by “the association of persistent enuresis [...], dreams of urination.”[93] Also, as Sperber indicates, “the occurrence of incontinence or enuresis in the childhood of an Icarian is likely to result in an abundance of water imagery in subsequent dreams and fantasies.”[94] Murray relates that “Grope wet his bed and his pants quite frequently until he was 11”[95] Murray also documents that fire imagery, manifesting in a ““burning” ambition [and] exhibitionism”,[96] is likely to be prevalent in the Icarian subject’s endeavours, to the extent that “there is a high incidence of pertinent fire imagery in his projective protocols.”[97]

32 A prevailing memory of Armino’s childhood in Ruffano is “the touch of Aldo’s hand, a desire to urinate.”[98] Watery imagery continues to pervade Armino’s return to the city in which he grew up. On his approach, the sky is “threatening the snow.”[99] As Ruffano looms ahead, Armino’s impressions combine a sense of height and precipitation, as noted above, with “snow-covered” wateriness.[100] Standing in front of the Duomo, Armino notes that “icicles had formed on the fountain in the piazza, hanging like crystals.”[101] Mirroring Grope’s “major recurrent fantasy”,[102] which features “an inexhaustible spring of fresh water”,[103] Armino further impresses the sense that water is related to childhood memories of his bird-brother:

> I used to drink at this fountain, inspired by a tale of Aldo’s that it held all purity and many secrets in its clear waters [...]. I lifted my head to the palace roof and saw brooding there, above the entrance door, the great bronze figure of the Falcon, emblem of the Malebranche, the ducal family, his head snow-capped, his giant wings outspread. [...] Now it was my footprints only that marked the fallen snow, [...] so that the snow, still featherlight, drifted in front of me.[104]

Amidst this watery reminiscence, Armino’s body emits water, in a mirroring of his

childhood incontinence, as “idiot tears pricked [his] eyes.”[105] Clearly, for Armino, a confrontation with the city of his boyhood conjures a distinctly watery imagery that becomes interconnected with the avian imagery of the Falcon. It is at this point that Armino recognises his own life as a “flight without purpose.”[106]

34 Whereas water imagery dominates Armino’s psyche, Aldo is connected to the opposing aspect of Icarian elemental imagery. Fire imagery is related to Aldo’s ascensionist escapades: the reader is reminded a number of times that “Aldo [was] shot down in flames”[107] in a “fighter plane falling to the ground in flames”;[108] wall sconces alight with naked flames pervade the ducal palace in which Aldo delivers one of his compelling demonstrations as the festival director; and two of his antics as the Falcon also involve fire imagery. Mirroring Aldo’s fire-inflected, ascensionist determination to “rise”, Grope also reveals that he yearns for his ““soul” to ignite and this inner fire will send me hurtling [...] up the ladder of success.”[109]

35 From the outset, Aldo’s “burning” ambition is likewise set amidst a fiery backdrop. The room in which Aldo’s rising from the presumed dead takes place is “illuminated by flares and torches [...]. A huge log-fire was burning on the open hearth [...], the leaping flames of the fire drew all eyes like a magnet [...], the torch-light and the flames, reflecting shadows.”[110] The scene commences with an abundance of references to these naked flames as the incredulous Armino works over in his mind the fire-filled nature of Aldo’s miraculous survival: “if [the plane] had crashed it had not burnt, or if it burnt the pilot had come out of it unscathed.”[111] Either way, fire imagery is central to Aldo’s miraculous escape from death, and his “rising” from the dead.

36 Aldo’s language is likewise infused with fire imagery as he incites his audience to partake in his elaborate re-enactment of the flight of the Falcon, “who by their example would act as a torch, a fire to every dukedom in the country.”[112] Amidst this fiery speech, “four more [bodyguards] advanced, holding flares in either hand, and formed a square in the centre of the room, lit by the flames alone. Aldo took his place beside one of the flares.”[113] Coinciding with the Icarian tendency towards arsonism, Aldo uses fire to carry out punishments, one of which involves tricking a student into thinking that his head has been set on fire. In Icarian terms, Aldo’s fire cathection is complimentary to the snow-filled and watery imagery of Armino’s arrival in the city. This reiterates the Jungian presentation of the two brothers as two sides of the same Icarian coin, fragmented upon the wrongly presumed death of the older, but when reunited, form the whole Icarian subject.

Depreciation of Women

37 Murray’s Icarus complex also encompasses a condescension of women, evident in both Aldo’s and Armino’s attitudes and relationships, and “a revengeful (almost implacable) rejection of the mother”,[114] examples of which are more often than not expressed through avian imagery. From the outset, Armino displays a contempt for the women he comes into contact with. The woman he remembers alternately “preen[ing] her maternal feathers”[115] and wearing “a feather in her cap”[116] was, he insists, his “beautiful slut of a mother.”[117] Armino’s damning appraisal of his mother corresponds with that of Grope, whose “opinion of his mother is no higher than it was ten years ago. He thinks that her deficiencies of character outweigh her intellectual gifts. It is she who has disappointed him the most.”[118] Murray recounts that Grope relished the idea of “a suffering remorseful mother”,[119] which is consistent with Armino’s determination that “it could be that we get the death we deserve. That my mother, with her cancerous womb, paid for the doubtful pleasure of that double bed.”[120] Corresponding with this Icarian sentiment, Armino prefers to interpret his mother’s departure with a German Commander as an unforgivable female sexual transgression rather than as a desperate attempt to save herself and her young son from unimaginable fates under German Occupation. Indeed, as soon as she and her son are safe, she begins a long-term

relationship with an Italian who becomes a kindly *de facto* father to Armino.

38 This is not the only time Armino perpetuates the suffering of a mother figure by negatively interpreting the events of his past. In similar fashion, he dismisses Marta as a drunken vagabond, refusing to acknowledge her as the surrogate mother of his childhood thrice abandoned by her "sons."[121] He dismisses two women's pleas that Marta's life should be valued, and despite the dreams that confirm she is in fact his beloved childhood nurse, prefers to neglect her. Armino is not unaffected by this, but his repeated denial of her true identity reveals that, in this novel of fraught masculinities, concerns for women, and mothers in particular, are resisted. This depreciation of the mother figure is heightened by the fact that it was "Passion week, and this Friday dedicated to the Mother of God. [...] It seemed to me then, kneeling in bewilderment, that the Mother played a sorry part in her Son's story."[122] Despite this clear-eyed perception, Armino continues in his failure to reconnect to a matriarchal order.

39 Just before Aldo the Falcon leaps to his precipitative suicide, the two brothers discuss shared culpability in a double matricide.[123] About Marta, his birth mother, Aldo admits: "Yes, I killed her [...]. I killed her by despising her, by being too proud to accept the fact I was her son. Wouldn't you say that counts as murder?"[124] Armino responds with an equally Icarian matricidal sentiment, admitting that,

> I thought no more of my relationship to Marta, but of my own mother who had died of cancer in Turin. When she had scribbled me a line from hospital. I had not answered.
>
> "Yes," I said, "it was murder. But we're both guilty, and for the same cause."[125]

40 Armino's earlier reference to the English proverb "that you should kill two birds with one stone"[126] foreshadows the novel's later revelation that two mothers are killed by the conjoining force of their matricidal sons. Murray's subject, Grope, "often imagined his own death and his parents' subsequent grief, one particularly gratifying fantasy being that of resurrection from the grave as a ghost and then of gloating unseen over his mother's remorseful grave",[127] which recalls Armino's sense that he is a "phantom"[128] returning to his parent's "darkened house."[129] In the novel, the Icarian matricidal tendency is delineated in avian terms. When he is told that he resembles his mother, for example, Armino reflects that it was meant

> kindly, but it was the final insult. The humiliation of the years returned. The foolish figure that pattered in bare feet back to the chariot and mounted beside Aldo was not Duke Claudio, not the Falcon it was supposed to represent, but a scarecrow effigy of a woman I had rejected and despised for twenty years.[130]

41 Armino's eventual assimilation of himself with his mother as a "scarecrow effigy of a woman" is significant as it repositions the latter in the novel's avian pattern: originally described with preening maternal feathers and feathered cap, she is now presented as a crow-scaring doll. An effigy, commonly a crudely made model of a person created for the purpose of public annihilation in protest of some ideological stance, seems a fitting description for an underdeveloped character whose function seems to be to illustrate Armino's misogyny.

42 In addition, Armino and Aldo extend their avian-inflected misogyny to the women associated with the University of Ruffano through the use of sexist, speciesist language. For example, one is contemptuously presented as a "wife, more like an eager hen than ever, pecking and clucking at [her husband's] side."[131] Moreover, the trope of the caged bird, often a canary, is evoked in the following passage, where Armino hears its melodious song:

> "That's women for you." [Jacopo] whistled up at the canary, who, swaying on its perch, feathers rumpled, was nearly bursting its small heart in song. "They're all the same," he said, "whether they're women of quality like the signora or peasants like Marta. They try to squeeze a man dry. They come between a man and his

> work.” [...]
>
> The canary’s song finished in one last passionate trill. I looked up at it. The small throat quivered and was still.[132]

43 The irony of this gross misunderstanding of both Marta and Signora Butali uttered against the backdrop of the caged canary seems lost on Armino. His prejudiced opinion of Signora Butali’s perceived sexual transgression is also formulated with bird imagery: “My hostess was ready poised for another movement of the ritual flight.”[133] She is “the queen before the final flight.”[134] Indeed, Signora Butali is ultimately perceived by both Armino and Aldo as an adulteress with a use, a “handsome wife [who] had been profaned by the Falcon himself.”[135] Thus, to be any kind of woman in *The Flight of the Falcon* is to be detested and punished – for want of a better word, feathered.

44 Armino and Aldo reserve further contempt for another of the novel’s prominent women, Carla Raspa, whose seeming sexual avidity is condemned by both brothers. When Carla makes an omelet for Armino, he construes this act as a sexual provocation. By drawing attention to the violent nature of Carla’s preparation of the eggs (“she broke eggs into a basin and forked them briskly”,[136]), Du Maurier suggests a sexual power dynamic that unsettles Armino. Besides, Carla’s beating of the eggs, the reproductive matter of the chicken, is significant when considered in conjunction with the prevalence of malformed or afflicted wombs in Du Maurier’s fiction. As Auerbach has observed, “uterine cancer is a recurrent symptom” of her female characters who “do not love enough, or well enough, or consistently enough, or at all.”[137] In other words, self-supporting women are, by the standards of her male protagonists, “rotten” and “defective.”[138] Certainly, in *The Flight of the Falcon*, women like Armino’s mother, who are deemed sexually threatening or transgressive, or who fall without the narrow parameter of patriarchal femininity, are subject to a cancerous womb.

45 But Du Maurier’s presentation of women in *The Flight of the Falcon* belies the presumption, expounded by Armino and Aldo, that female sexuality should be synonymous with dysfunctional fertility. Both Armino’s mother and Carla are seeking self-sustenance in a world run by overwrought, self-possessed, power-wielding and violent men, in which there are no meaningful roles for women. Carla may have a place of her own and a job, but she is under no illusion as to their ability to fulfil her. Her role as a university museum guide fails to exert her full intellectual capacity. In search of something more challenging, she seeks recruitment into Aldo’s secret society, but, like the other women present, she is disenfranchised from his band of brothers. Carla, competent and shrewd, craves a greater degree of social prominence and privilege. Her beating of the maternal eggs is a bleak observation that, in striving for what men have – power, influence, agency, excitement, sexual freedom, and intellectual stimulation – she is deemed by her male counterparts as self-destructive, dysfunctional, or, in Auerbach’s terms, “rotten” and “defective.” Aldo and Armino, disgusted by Carla’s sexual transgressions, misrepresent her by failing to comprehend the limited means by which she can obtain social mobility.

46 Compounding the threat that Armino perceives in Carla’s sexual vigour, their dialogue is interspersed with details of her making of the omelet before she demands, “Eat it while it’s hot”, to which Armino admits that he “did as she told me.”[139] As with scenes of avian consumption in Du Maurier’s earlier fiction, Carla’s omelet is similarly indicative of a troubling gendered power dynamic.[140] Whereas elsewhere in Du Maurier’s fiction the trope of bird consumption signals female consciousness to the threat of male dominance, the avian meal shared by Armino and Carla ostensibly reveals the female character as a potential threat. While the violence embedded in men’s bird-eating elsewhere in Du Maurier’s fiction is ultimately overlooked by their respective female partners, Armino is repulsed by the sexual transgression that Carla’s preparation of the omelet enacts. These two brothers, who knowingly perpetrate matricide, are deeply unsettled by the potential for a woman to exert sexual agency. Even before they conjoin in this avian meal, Armino detects Carla’s potential sexual dominance and describes it in avian terms: “I tried to remember what it was, whether

bird of reptile, whose lovemaking ended always in the female devouring the male” (89).[141]

47 This violation of the maternal symbol of the egg also speaks to Murray’s notion of the “Mother Rejection complex”[142] that he identifies as integral to the matricidal element of the Icarus complex. In his case study, Murray relates how his Icarian subject, “never having loved his mother [...] “sort of lost his virility”,[143] then regained life when his father brought him a cup of chicken soup. Since male control is perceived to be destabilised when women, such as Carla, assume male-dominated positions of predation, which include sexual promiscuity and animal exploitation (such as consumption), the patriarchal order and “virility” are achieved again when the father figure is restored to the role of exploiter of other beings, such as Grope’s dead, consumed bird. Grope’s anecdote of avian consumption, in which his father feeds him dead bird soup, echoes Du Maurier’s earlier fiction when, for example, in *Frenchman’s Creek*, vegetable soup is substituted for bird corpse consumption as Dona St Columb confronts the necessity of returning to her stifling patriarchal life. Conversely, when Armino allows Carla to assume that he is homosexual, defusing the sexual menace that Carla initially poses to him, their meal consists of salad and fruit. In light of Carla’s disenfranchisement, her act of avian violence reveals her enforced complicity in the system of oppression that she endeavours to escape.

Conclusion

48 *The Flight of the Falcon*”s Murrayesque Icarian components – rising and falling compulsions, reascensionism and reincarnation, cynosural narcissism, fire and water imagery, and depreciation of women – converge in the avian imagery of the novel’s explicitly Icarian finale, Aldo’s suicidal plummet as the Falcon. If “[l]ike Icarus, he flew too near the sun”,[144] like Murray’s Icarus subject, Grope, he becomes a “sky hero.”[145]

49 In a letter to Malet, dated 23 February 1964, Du Maurier makes connections between various components of the Icarus complex:

> I have to study the plans and postcards of Urbino, and the books about the University there, day after day, so that I could, in a way, find myself blindfold about the place! ... then when I come to outline the story I find the first suspense idea, and the *son et lumière*, all become involved with deeper levels – I mean, there has to be an explanation of *why* the person directing the acting in the *son et lumière* (a professor at the University), begins to make it all come real to himself, and to the students etc., etc., what is his deep unconscious motive in wanting to re-enact history, and the wicked Duke. So it’s much more difficult than I thought, hence the slowness of the notes.[146]

50 Despite her frustration at not being able to revisit the city that inspired the novel, Du Maurier was nonetheless immersed in its undulating, rising and falling topography by virtue of her efforts to imaginatively transport herself there and find her way around it in her mind’s eye. This process was undoubtedly intensified by the images of Urbino that Du Maurier had acquired. Out of this process, Du Maurier formulates an interconnection between the cityscape and the “deep unconscious motive” of her protagonists. It is out of this undulant landscape that Du Maurier’s sense of her protagonists’ unconscious motives emerges and is imaginatively formulated. Hence, she begins to conceptualise that these topographical oscillations “all become involved with deeper levels”, amongst which include Murray’s other Icarian criteria, the oppositional psychological compulsions towards ascensionism and precipitation, and fire and water imagery. Murray’s Icarus complex provides the motivations behind her protagonists’ bizarre psychology and behavior as well as the novel’s intricate symbology: the symbiosis between Ruffano’s fluctuating topography and the brothers’ alternating ascensionist and precipitative psychic compulsions; their incessant re-enactments of reincarnation myths; the pathology of narcissism that is haunted by the

sense of self-inadequacy; the recurring fire and water imagery in dreams and its prominence in waking life; and the prevalence of misogyny and related pre-occupation with matricidal guilt.

51 *The Flight of the Falcon*, like *The Scapegoat* (1957) before it and *The House on the Strand* (1969) after it, is a study of mythic and psychoanalytic archetypes of split subjectivity encapsulated in its pervasive imagery of oscillation and opposing forces. By integrating Murray’s complex into her doubled protagonists, Du Maurier effectively produces a theoretical resolution for the split subject that worried her throughout her life. With Aldo’s death, the schism of the Icarian brothers is potentially resolved with the rebirth of Armino who is now able to embody previously disparate or opposing aspects of the self in one whole, multifaceted subject – thus, at the end of the novel, he is no longer a “disembodied spirit.”[147] In the terms of Nietzsche, whom Aldo quotes before he plunges to his death, Armino realises self-individuation. In Du Maurier’s terms, her own male persona, “the boy in a box”,[148] dies or is dispensed with as a distinct and conflicting aspect of the self but not before becoming an integral part of the subject’s psyche, who is now not a split but a whole, multi-faceted being. Thus, the novel can be read as a realisation of the subject’s capacity to embody multifarious, seemingly contradictory elements. By encoding her novel with the opposing imagery of Murray’s psychological profile, Du Maurier theoretically resolves her own conundrum regarding split subjectivity. In a letter to Magee, she suggests the role that her fiction plays in negotiating the perceived problematic aspects of selfhood:

> you will see that it is possible, by writing fiction, to exocise [sic] all sorts of things that would otherwise lie dormant. People who do not write often have to “live out” the unconscious tendencies within them, and this can lead to trouble, perhaps disaster.[149]

52 Notwithstanding this, such a complex, multi-layered novel resists a neat summation of conjectured meaning, and countenances a variety of seemingly contradictory elements. The idea that the brothers represent two sides of the Icarian coin in line with Jungian split subjectivity does not preclude what others have recognised as the novel’s exploration of Jung’s collective unconscious, nor does it contravene the Graeco-Roman elements explored by Heeley. Rather, *The Flight of the Falcon* demonstrates the many levels on which Du Maurier was attempting to work, and this multi-faceted capacity of the novel is itself testament to its success as a work that eludes reductive reading. Du Maurier’s narrative transformation of the Icarus myth and her employment of both a Jungian motif and Murray’s psychological personality theory reveal that she was prepared to take “artistic risks she hoped would free her from condescending categories.”[150]

53 Although her contemporaries, including her publisher, Victor Gollancz, refused to accept it, Du Maurier was self-consciously writing beyond conventional genres. With *The Flight of the Falcon*, she defies categorisation as a novelist of romance or adventure. The novel is not only a story, but a study that grapples with the deep mysteries of the human psyche that Du Maurier encountered in the works of Jung and, as this article would suggest, of his associate, Henry A. Murray. The novel proves Du Maurier’s responsiveness to intellectual concerns regarding human psychology and inheritance, myth, philosophy, and history, and can be read as an attempt to integrate these wide-ranging theories into a cohesive metatext.[151] Since Du Maurier’s fiction is often underestimated, and *The Flight of the Falcon* is particularly undervalued and overlooked by critics, reading it with Murray’s personality complex in mind enriches and complicates our understanding of Du Maurier as a writer.

54 In his article outlining the remarkably consistent Icarian components found in Albert Camus’s character, Clamence, in *The Fall* (1956), Sperber concludes:

> it is a tribute to Camus’ intuitive understanding that his protagonist is a recognizable psychological type. Clamence’s associations, fantasies, and preoccupations have internal consistency, and by relating them to Murray’s syndrome, it is hoped that certain puzzling metaphors and unusual juxtapositions

may become more comprehensible.[152]

55 Given the glowing appraisal afforded to Camus for his “intuitive” creation of the Icarian subject, it follows that Du Maurier should receive a similarly lofty recognition since her novel satisfies the same criteria.

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Notes

1 Daphne Du Maurier, *Jamaica Inn*, London: Virago, 2015, 292.

2 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Breaking Point: Short Stories*, London: Virago, 2009, 108.

3 *Ibid.,* 147. In “The Pool”, “Deborah thought of Icarus, soaring towards the sun. Did he know when his wings began to melt? How did he feel? She stretched out her arms and thought of them as wings. The fingertips would be the first to curl, and then turn cloggy soft, and useless. What terror on the sudden loss of height, the drooping power.” (147) When Deborah herself “flung up

her arms to the sky” (138), “the joy was indescribable, and the surge of feeling, like wings about her in the air, lifted her away” (140). Amidst this euphoric outburst, her overriding vision is dominated by “the beating of wings. This above all, the beating of wings” (141). In “Ganymede”, the narrator, who imagines “the boy and I, soaring towards the sun [...] as though both of us plunged headlong into the molten mist which was neither sea nor sky, but the luminous rings encircling the star” (119), also displays the five components of Henry A. Murray’s Icarus complex, rooted in Jungian personality theories, which I will outline in this article. Stephen in “The Chamois” also manifests components of the Icarus complex whilst the eagle, mentioned five times throughout the tale, “soared” (261). Du Maurier’s recurring use of the phrase, “soaring towards the sun”, connects these three Icarian stories originally published together in *The Breaking Point* (1959). Further examples of Du Maurier’s evocation of the Icarian imagination include: “A Difference in Temperament” (1929), “The Doll” (1937), and “The Old Man” (1952). Some feature Icarian scenarios, in which protagonists experience the euphoria or horror of avian transformation or flight; others portray a protagonist who manifests, with remarkable accuracy, the five features of Murray’s Icarus personality complex. Most of these short stories encompass both of these mythic and psychoanalytic dimensions. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to include analysis of the full extent of Du Maurier’s pervasive and persistent use of the Icarus myth and related personality complex, it is nonetheless worth noting that these Icarian tales, including *The Flight of the Falcon*, span five decades of Du Maurier’s writing career.

4 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, London: Virago, 2006, 304.

5 Richard Kelly, *Daphne Du Maurier*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987, 130.

6 Nina Auerbach, *Daphne Du Maurier: Haunted Heiress*, Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2000, 65.

7 Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, “Glimpses of the Dark Side”, *in* Helen Taylor (ed.), *The Daphne Du Maurier Companion,* London: Virago, 2010, 242-248, 243.

8 Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *Daphne Du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, 170.

9 Richard Kelly, *op. cit.*, 113.

10 Melanie Jane Heeley, *Resurrection, Renaissance, Rebirth: Religion, Psychology and Politics in the Life and Works of Daphne Du Maurier*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Loughborough U, 2007, rev. 2019, <https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/Resurrection_renaissance_rebirth_religion_psychology_and_politics_in_the_life_and_works_of_Daphne_du_Maurier/9326801>, accessed 8 March 2020, 185.

11 For evidence of Du Maurier’s broader interest in Graeco-Roman myth, see her essay, “Romantic Love” (*Rebecca Notebook* 99-108). Heeley explores mythic dimensions of *The Flight of the Falcon* and acknowledges Du Maurier’s interest in Jung (“Greece” and *Resurrection*). Horner and Zlosnik recognise that “undoubtedly there are Jungian resonances in this late novel, evidence of the influence of Du Maurier’s reading of Jung’s work” (*Daphne Du Maurier* 160). Margaret Forster also points out the novel’s interest in Jungian theory (336).

12 Daphne Du Maurier, *Letters From Menabilly: Portrait of a Friendship*, ed. Oriel Malet, New York: M. Evans, 1992, 34, 48.

13 Ivan Magee was a fan of Du Maurier’s fiction who had initially written to her with questions about *Rebecca*. The pair subsequently developed a correspondence that touched on personal subjects and included Du Maurier’s frequent references to Jungian theories. See Special Collections, Exeter Archives, University of Exeter, ‘Letters to Ivan Magee”, EUL MS 354. Permission to reproduce excerpts from Du Maurier’s unpublished letters, typescripts, and research materials held at Special Collections, Exeter Archives, University of Exeter, is granted by her son and literary executor, Christopher Browning and The Chichester Partnership.

14 Daphne Du Maurier, *Letters From Menabilly*, *op. cit.*, 33, 39, 141.

15 *Ibid.*, 33.

16 *Ibid.*, 39.

17 *Ibid.*, x.

18 *Ibid.*, 141. This letter is dated 9 November 1962. Her first mention of “brewing” the novel that became *The Flight of the Falcon* appears in a letter dated 11 March 1963 (149-50). Although she claims to have read all of Jung’s publications, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, first published in 1933, is the only one she mentions specifically.

19 *Ibid.*, 167.

20 The following are exceptions: Horner and Zlosnik dedicate a thirteen-page section to *The Flight of the Falcon*; Heeley has written a twenty-page section on the novel as part of her PhD thesis, and has subsequently published a journal article relating to this research. Neither of these studies identify the novel’s symbiosis with Murray’s Icarus complex or examine its Jungian elements in detail.

21 Du Maurier predicted that *The Flight of the Falcon* would be misunderstood; she lamented that her publisher, Victor Gollancz, had failed to recognise the ““Deeper” Thought layers” and

“just thinks it’s a suspense story” (Du Maurier, *Letters From Menabilly,* 176). Furthermore, she admitted, “I’m afraid people are not going to understand [*The Flight of the Falcon*] at all” (Du Maurier, *Letters From Menabilly,* 177). Du Maurier’s predictions were realised by contemporary critics, who condemned the novel as another “little” “bestseller” and an “extraordinarily dull book” (Kelly, *Daphne Du Maurier*, 108).

22 “Some of the[se] symbols [...] derive from what Dr. Jung has called “the collective unconscious” – that is, that part of the psyche which retains and transmits the common psychological inheritance of mankind” (Carl Gustav Jung (ed.), *Man and His Symbols,* 98).

23 Carl Gustav Jung (ed.), *Man and His Symbols*, New York: Random House, 1964, 38.

24 *Ibid*., 113.

25 *Ibid*., 146-156.

26 *Ibid*., 147.

27 *Ibid*., 155-156.

28 See, in particular, the following images: “Scalette di Santa Margherita”, *Italia Artistica No. 6: Urbino*; “Panorama Sulla Conca del Catria”, *Italia Artistica No. 6: Urbino*; “Scalette di S. Giovanni, *Italia Artistica No. 6: Urbino*; “La Scala a chiocciola nei torricini”, *I Tesori Dell’Arte Italiana: Il Palazzo Ducale di Urbino*; “Palazzo Ducale – Tiziano: La Resurrezione”, *Italia Artistica No. 6: Urbino*; and “L’Aquila di Federico Conte”, *I Tesori Dell”Arte Italiana: Il Palazzo Ducale di Urbino*. These images belong to Special Collections, Exeter Archives, University of Exeter, “Research Materials relating to *Flight of the Falcon*”, EUL MS 207/6/1/3/1.

29 Daphne Du Maurier, *Flight of the Falcon, op. cit*., 58.

30 Carl Gustav Jung, *Man and His Symbols, op. cit*., 101.

31 *Ibid*., 112-113.

32 Daphne Du Maurier, *Letters From Menabilly, op. cit*., 48.

33 Murray’s life and work were intimately bound and influenced by Jung’s. An interview with Murray, conducted in 1975 by American psychoanalyst James William Anderson, reveals the extent of the connections between Jung and Murray. Anderson asserts that in 1925 “Murray underwent an analysis lasting a few weeks with him. In later years, Murray had several visits with him and corresponded with him [...]. Murray was enchanted with Jung during the period of the analysis” (James William Anderson, “An Interview with Henry A. Murray on His Meeting with Sigmund Freud”, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 3, March 2016, 322-332, 324). In this interview, Murray also recalls a time when Jung participated in talks given during two-hour-long lunch events at Harvard Psychological Clinic, where Murray was based (327). Tellingly, in this interview purportedly centering on Murray’s “meeting with Sigmund Freud” (322), the former refers to Jung no less than twenty-four times. For further evidence of Murray’s connections to Jung, see Forrest G. Robinson’s biography of Murray (1992), which contains nineteen references to Jung, four references to the Icarus complex, and a reference to the Icarus complex in relation to Jung.

34 Henry A. Murray, “American Icarus”, *in* Arthur Burton & Robert E. Harris (eds.), *Clinical Studies of Personality* [1955], New York: Harper & Row, 1966, 631-638. Murray sees bisexuality as a further indicator of his complex. Du Maurier’s novel also satisfies this element but it is beyond the scope of this article to fully investigate it.

35 *Ibid*., 616.

36 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit*., 106.

37 Special Collections, Exeter Archives, University of Exeter, “Letters to Ivan Magee”, letter dated “December 14. 1960”, EUL MS 354.

38 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit*., 631.

39 Used in the field of psychology, “cathex” refers to “the concentration or accumulation of mental energy in a particular channel” (*OED*, accessed 8 March 2020).

40 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit*., 631.

41 *Ibid*., 635.

42 *Ibid*., 629.

43 *Ibid*., 621.

44 *Ibid*., 624.

45 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit*., 35, 83, 303.

46 *Ibid*., 303.

47 *Ibid*., 14.

48 *Ibid*., 14.

49 *Ibid*., 39.

50 *Ibid.*, 42.

51 *Ibid.*, 30.

52 *Ibid.*, 30.

53 *Ibid.*, 30.

54 *Ibid.*, 635.

55 *Ibid.*, 69-70.

56 Amendment on “Typescript of The Flight of the Falcon (1965)”, 113-14. EUL MS 144/1/13, Special Collections, Exeter archives, University of Exeter.

57 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 35.

58 *Ibid.*, 264.

59 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 619.

60 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 260.

61 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 632.

62 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 291.

63 *Ibid.*, 297.

64 *Ibid.*, 292.

65 *Ibid.*, 292.

66 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 635.

67 *Ibid.*, 633.

68 Michael A. Sperber, “Albert Camus: Camus’ *The Fall*: The Icarus Complex,” *American Imago*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1969, 269-280, 273. My approach is directed in part by what Sperber has to say about Albert Camus’s novel, *The Fall*. Sperber demonstrates a likewise remarkable correlation between the components of Murray’s Icarus complex and the nature of Camus’s character, Clamence.

69 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 624.

70 *Ibid.*, 624.

71 *Ibid.*, 626.

72 *Ibid.*, 639.

73 *Ibid.*, 630.

74 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 13.

75 *King James Bible*, Mark 16:19.

76 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 637.

77 *Ibid.*, 637.

78 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 32.

79 *Ibid.*, 35.

80 *Ibid.*,13.

81 Special Collections, Exeter Archives, University of Exeter, “Research Materials relating to *Flight of the Falcon*”, EUL MS 207/6/1/3/1.

82 *Ibid.*, 13.

83 *King James Bible*, Matthew 4:6-10.

84 Furthermore, Aldo establishes himself as a dual figure, at once Jesus and Satan, as Armino reveals: “I did not know whether I should meet with the Christ or with the Devil, for according to Aldo’s ingenious theory the two were one, and also, in some manner which he never explained, interchangeable” (Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, 12). In many visual interpretations of this biblical scene, Satan’s wings are depicted as distinctly bird-like and therefore further foreshadow Aldo’s own winged persona. These Icarian symptoms become indistinguishable from the novel’s avian imagery when these ascensionist/precipitative figures converge: “the face of the Christ, gazing out from the portrait to the hills beyond, had been drawn by the daring artist in the likeness of Claudio, the mad duke, named the Falcon, who in a frenzy had thrown himself from the tower, believing, so the story ran, that he was the Son of God.” Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 13).

85 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 637, original italics.

86 *Ibid.*, 638, original italics.

87 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 73.

88 *Ibid.*, 165.

89 *Ibid.*, 274.

90 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 637.

91 *Ibid.*, 637.

92 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 300.

93 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 631.

94 Michael A. Sperber, *op. cit.*, 274.

95 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 618.

96 *Ibid.*, 631.

97 *Ibid.*, 631.

98 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 53.

99 *Ibid.*, 29.

100 *Ibid.*, 30. I quoted a condensed version of this passage in a previous section to illustrate the undulating topography of Ruffano. It is worth quoting again here, with further details included, to show the extent of its equally snowy, watery aspects: “snow-covered [...] snowflakes fell, or rather we ran into them as we came up from the south; they must have been falling all day. The sky became a pall. The rivers, swollen with the coursing mountain streams, roared through the ravines beside us. [...] It was magnificent. [...] Snow banked the road as it curved upward, lay thick upon the roof-tops, made phantoms of the trees, and, crowning the minarets of the twin towers of the palace and the Duomo and campanile beyond, turned my city into legend, into dream” (30).

101 Ibid., 35.

102 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 624.

103 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 246

104 *Ibid.*, 35.

105 *Ibid.*, 34.

106 *Ibid.*, 36.

107 *Ibid.*, 38.

108 *Ibid.*, 130.

109 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 625.

110 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 93.

111 *Ibid.*, 95.

112 *Ibid.*, 96.

113 *Ibid.*, 98.

114 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 639.

115 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 33.

116 *Ibid.*, 38.

117 *Ibid.*, 29.

118 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 623.

119 *Ibid.*, 618.

120 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 84.

121 First, by Armino and his mother, who flee Ruffano, leaving Marta without explanation; second, by Aldo, who refuses to acknowledge her as his birth mother; and thirdly, by Armino, who deserts her after discovering her slumped in a drunken stupor on the streets of Rome.

122 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 285.

123 For insights into matricide in *The Flight of the Falcon*, see Melanie Jane Heeley, “‘Greece as Inscape’ in Daphne Du Maurier’s *The Flight of the Falcon*”, *in* Rebecca Munford & Helen Taylor (eds), *Women: a Cultural Review*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2009, 42-56, 50-53; Heeley, *Resurrection*, *op. cit.*, 186-191; or Horner and Zlosnik, *Daphne Du Maurier*, *op. cit.*, 170-172.

124 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 299.

125 *Ibid.*, 299.

126 *Ibid.*, 85.

127 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit.*, 623.

128 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit.*, 32.

129 *Ibid.*, 35.

130 *Ibid*., 290.

131 *Ibid*.,173.

132 *Ibid*., 259-260.

133 *Ibid*., 138.

134 *Ibid*., 138.

135 *Ibid*., 134.

136 *Ibid*., 241.

137 Nina Auerbach, *op. cit*., 111-112.

138 *Ibid*., 110.

139 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit*., 242.

140 Scenes of bird flesh and egg consumption, and reactions of nausea or revulsion, abound in Du Maurier’s fiction from her earliest short stories (“Fairy Tale”, “Indiscretion”, “Frustration”, and “Nothing Hurts for Long”) to her mid-career, heroine-centred novels (*Frenchman’s Creek* and *The King’s General*) to many later short stories, like “Split Second”, “The Rendezvous”, “The Apple Tree”, “The Alibi”, “The Blue Lenses”, “Ganymede”, “The Pool”, “The Chamois”, “A Border-Line Case”, and “The Way of the Cross.” Three of the tales mentioned in the opening section of this article (“Ganymede”, “The Chamois”, and “The Pool”) contain scenes of bird consumption: in “The Pool”, Deborah, on the brink of a sexual rite of passage, muses on the fate of Icarus while pondering the consequences of human disregard for consumed birds; the narrator of “Ganymede” imagines the object of his desire serving him a swan instead of coffee; and the nauseating effect of fried eggs on the narrator of “The Chamois” also signals the uneasy bourgeoning of sexual awakening. In the earlier tales, the consumption of bird flesh and eggs occurs amidst delusional protagonists’ confrontations with awkward truths. Throughout the tales of the 1950s, scenes of bird consumption continue to appear during episodes of crises in the lives of men, and during moments of potential awakening in the lives of women. In the 1970s, Du Maurier re-enlists this avian trope in “A Border-Line Case”, a tale of unwitting father-daughter incest, the perpetrators of which eat hard-boiled eggs and cold chicken. Most are concerned with the power dynamics at play in sexual relationships and encounters; others probe the coming-to-terms with a stifled, yet threatening, sexual identity. In all of these tales, engagement with commodified birds’ eggs and flesh always signals malcontent. When couples share an avian meal, or one of the couple partakes in bird consumption in the presence of the other, such as the linnet-like Dona St Columb’s conflicted partaking of chicken during trysts with her bird-admiring lover in *Frenchman’s Creek* and Honor Harris’s swan consumption and sickness during an illicit encounter with the bird hunting and hawking Richard Grenvile, Du Maurier implies a dysfunctional relationship in some way.

141 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit*., 89.

142 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit*., 640.

143 *Ibid*., 640.

144 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit*., 304.

145 Henry A. Murray, *op. cit*., 615.

146 Daphne Du Maurier, *Letters*, *op. cit*., 167.

147 Du Maurier, *The Flight of the Falcon*, *op. cit*., 35.

148 Horner and Zlosnik, *op. cit*., 5.

149 Handwritten letter to Magee, dated “February 19. 1964.” Special Collections, Exeter Archives, University of Exeter, “Letters to Ivan Magee”, EUL MS 354.

150 Nina Auerbach, *op. cit*., 104.

151 Heeley also reads *The Flight of the Falcon* as metatext, but with an emphasis on Du Maurier’s “ekphraseis” (“Greece” 42, 54).

152 Michael A. Sperber, *op. cit*., 280.

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
'Adieu Sagesse', or Troubled Identities in Du Maurier's Fiction

The Beginning of the End: the Prologue and Epilogues of *Hungry Hill* and *The Glass-Blowers*

Le début de la fin : le prologue et les épilogues de Hungry Hill et The Glass-Blowers

Eva Leung

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Résumés

English Français

This article provides a close reading of the prologue and epilogues of two fictionalised family biographies: *Hungry Hill* (1943) and *The Glass-Blowers* (1963). It is not standard practice for Du Maurier to offer prologues and epilogues to her novels, but she ends *Hungry Hill* with a lengthy epilogue and provides *The Glass-Blowers* with both a prologue and an epilogue. This article examines the plausible rationales for this aesthetic feature, in terms of the function of contextualisation and characterisation, and analyses how closure is achieved both for the characters concerned and the readers. It shows that the development of these features is not the result of accident, but of narrative experimentation.

Cet article propose une lecture approfondie du prologue et des épilogues de deux biographies familiales romancées : *Hungry Hill* (1943) et *The Glass-Blowers* (1963). Alors que Daphne du Maurier n'avait pas coutume d'inclure des prologues et des épilogues à ses romans, elle termine *Hungry Hill* par un long épilogue et encadre *The Glass-Blowers* au moyen d'un prologue et d'un épilogue. Cet article examine les justifications plausibles de cette particularité esthétique, en termes de contextualisation et de caractérisation, ainsi que l'effet de clôture ainsi produit, à la fois pour les personnages concernés et les lecteurs. Il se propose de montrer que le développement de ces caractéristiques n'est pas le résultat d'un accident, mais d'une expérimentation narrative.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, Glass-Blowers, Hungry Hill, prologue, épilogue, clôture
Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, Glass-Blowers, Hungry Hill, prologue, epilogue, closure

Texte intégral

1 Daphne Du Maurier's versatility and interest in biographical writings extends to family, literary and historical narratives in both fictionalised and non-fictionalised manifestations. Throughout her career, she published biographical works – notably *Gerald: A Portrait* (1934) and *The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë* (1960) –, an autobiography entitled *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer* (1977[1]), and personal essays and documents in *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories* (1980). At the age of 30, she published *The Du Mauriers* (1937), a companion book to *Gerald: A Portrait*. It presented her family history in the form of a novel, with her ancestress Mary Anne Clarke as a significant character, and included references to her French forebears. After introducing these colourful real-life ancestors in this family narrative in 1937, she returned to them in the 1950s and 1960s, devoting an entire novel, *Mary Anne* (1954), to a fictionalisation of the life of Mary Anne Clarke, and another novel to her French forebears, *The Glass-Blowers* (1963). She also published the fictionalised sagas of two families other than her own in *The Loving Spirit* (1931) and *Hungry Hill* (1943).

2 As literary historians have shown, the family saga genre gained popularity during the interwar period,[2] while in the 1960s, approximately the period when Du Maurier's family narratives were written, women's literary productions often consisted of family sagas or chronicles of a woman's life.[3] Critic Alison Light notes that, although these family chronicles were "not among her greatest successes", Du Maurier exhibits in those works her obsession with "the passing of time" and a "hostile as well as fascinated attitude toward the past" through her (re)invention of her own heritage or the heritage of others,[4] as demonstrated by the two novels which will be discussed here.

3 The fictionalised family saga *Hungry Hill* is based on the Irish ancestors of Christopher Puxley,[5] an extramarital love interest of Du Maurier's during World War Two, while *The Glass-Blowers* (1963) is a fictionalised account of Du Maurier's own family history which documents the dramatic experiences of her French forebears – the master glass-blowers of La Brûlonnerie, Chérigny, La Pierre and Le Chesne-Bidault.[6] In the generic framework of these two fictionalisations of family history, such a difference already makes for a fruitful comparative study. Moreover, Du Maurier ends *Hungry Hill* with a lengthy epilogue, and gives *The Glass-Blowers* both a prologue and an epilogue, which is not standard practice in her oeuvre. For instance, no prologue or epilogue is to be found in either her autobiography or *Golden Lads: A Study of Anthony Bacon, Francis, and Their Friends* (1975), though she does include an epilogue in *The Winding Stair: Francis Bacon, His Rise and Fall* (1976), the second volume she devoted to the famous Renaissance scientist, philosopher, and statesman. As far as her non-biographical novels are concerned, it must also be noted that some of them begin with a first chapter that performs the function of a prologue, set in a time when the fictional events in the story have returned to some sort of equilibrium and can be narrated in retrospect, the protagonists being now older and wiser. *Rebecca* (1938), *The King's General* (1946), and *My Cousin Rachel* (1951) are cases in point. This essay, however, focuses on the two family narratives in Du Maurier's works in which a chapter or chapters

specifically bear the labels “Prologue” and “Epilogue.” By focusing on these narrative features, it will demonstrate how those chapters contribute to the key themes of lineage, transmission, and continuity. It will also shed light on the processes of making meaning – in relation to the reconnection of a lineage through a family legacy in *The Glass-Blowers*, and to the fulfilment of a curse in *Hungry Hill* – through Du Maurier’s articulation of such a narrative strategy.

Narrative Form as a Strategy

4 In her essay “Twentieth-Century Recent Theories on Beginnings and Endings of Novels”, Giuliana Adamo lists the different functions of beginnings, one of which is “to stimulate expectation and surprise in the reader.”[7] Du Maurier’s method of beginning a tale by its conclusion serves this function through inducing anticipation in her readers and raising questions which will be answered in the course of the novel. In employing this narrative strategy – e.g. in *Rebecca*, *The King’s General*, *Mary Anne*, or *The Glass-Blowers* – she sometimes mentions characters yet to appear and events yet to occur. This method sometimes demands that readers reread parts of the novels to fully comprehend the significance of the references in the opening scenes, and it also creates suspense by withholding information. It is one of Du Maurier’s central narrative strategies to move a story forward. The technique of circularity, meanwhile, also creates a stronger sense of formal completion, because a form of narrative closure is achieved despite the inconclusiveness of the endings of novels such as *My Cousin Rachel* or *The Scapegoat*.

5 The epilogue is a structural device to signify the ultimate closure of a text. It records what happens after the end of the story and exists outside the framework of the main narrative. In Mike Cadden’s words, the epilogue is “post-narrative despite being narrative.”[8] It satisfies “what is perceived to linger in the mind of the reader after the plot has been resolved” and provides emotional satisfaction through reassuring readers about the positive outcome of a story.[9] It is an extension which gives additional information and meaning to the story while being separate from it. At the same time it distances the reader from the story[10] by giving them a sense of completion that goes beyond mere narrative closure.[11]

6 For critics Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle, the *ending* of a novel involves “not only the sense of ‘conclusion’ (the end of a text, for instance) but also the sense of ‘goal’ and ‘purpose’ (the goal or purpose of reading a text, for instance).”[12] They assert that “[a] part of the equilibrium that endings apparently offer is the satisfaction of epistemophilia, [that is,] the reader’s desire to know.”[13] Epistemophilia is important because readers want to know what happens to the main (and sometimes secondary) characters after the story ends, and tend to expect the end to provide answers to the questions raised in the text. The presence or absence of closure can in turn affect the meaning of a text and, subsequently, the entire reading experience. The *ending* here does not only concern the *end* of the narrative, in the form of the last few pages of a novel, but also the chronological end of the occurrences in the diegesis, including any introductory chapter that might actually serve as a conclusion.

7 Epistemophilia is achieved when there is closure for the readers. This can occur on the thematic or the narratological level, which can be understood as “thematic completeness” and “stylistic closure.”[14] The former signifies the achievement of the characters’ goals, once the major events have played out and brought resolution. Readers finish a thematically complete work with the feeling that nothing of importance has been left out, or that the main conflicts are solved and the main questions answered[15] – as in crime fiction, when the motive is finally explained and the criminal is caught. The latter refers to “the aesthetic pleasure of endings”[16] whereby the narrative achieves completeness whether or not the action does. In other

words, stylistic closure renders the narration complete regardless of whether the characters' goals are successfully achieved.

8 In *Rebecca*, closure is achieved because the second Mrs. de Winter describes the life she leads with Maxim in the first couple of chapters, so that readers receive early information about the main characters after the burning of Manderley. This also happens in *Mary Anne*, Du Maurier's fictionalised account of her great-great-grandmother Mary Anne Clarke (1776-1852), where the deaths of the central characters signal the end of events, drawing the narrative to a close. Her death provides a background against which the fate of each important man in her life is explained, allowing stylistic closure to be achieved, but it is narrated at the beginning of the novel. The removal of unstable situations that lead to the events portrayed in the story, together with the formation of a new equilibrium after the central conflicts, provide readers with a strong sense of finality,[17] and hence, when readers feel that their desire to know is fulfilled, epistemophilia is achieved.

9 At this point it must be noted that many Du Maurier novels have an *absence* of closure, which may contribute to the power of her stories, and thus it is important to understand her treatment of the beginnings and endings of her works. For example, in *My Cousin Rachel*, the narrative remains stylistically intact even though thematic completeness is not achieved. To use Richter's term, the "plot-question" remains unanswered[18] because, as a first-person narrator, Philip is unable to find out whether Rachel is guilty or innocent, which frustrates the reader's epistemophilic needs. Yet the narrative is complete, as is made evident by the circularity that has the final line in the novel echo the opening sentence, "They used to hang men at Four Turnings in the old days. Not anymore, though."[19] In some of Du Maurier's novels, therefore, readers do not get all their questions answered in the end, but the characters move on all the same. Both John-Henry Brodrick (*Hungry Hill*) and John (*The Scapegoat*) involuntarily leave the scene of action at the end – John taking the road to Bellême and Mortagne,[20] while John-Henry departs without a clear destination, although it is suggested that he will travel and see the world.[21] In both novels the major events are indeed concluded, but readers are left with unanswered questions, like *What will their next destination be?*, *How will John survive without his job?*, or *What will John-Henry do without Clonmere Castle?* The fact that these particular questions are left hanging frustrates epistemophilia, and offers a different experience from that offered by the reading of *Rebecca*, or *The King's General,* or *Mary Anne*, in which no specific questions regarding the characters are left unanswered. Though both thematic completion and stylistic closure are achieved in *Hungry Hill* and *The Scapegoat*, epistemophilia is not.

10 These open endings also differ from Du Maurier's treatment of the ending in one of her short stories, "No Motive" (1980). The story investigates the suicide of a young woman: when her motive is finally discovered, the investigator decides not to tell her husband. Here is a case where the readers have the central question in the story answered, but the character – in this case, the husband – does not. Hence, in "No Motive", epistemophilia and stylistic closure are achieved despite the fact that the character's goal is not.

11 As the two novels discussed below are not among the most widely read of Du Maurier's works, it should be noted here that *The Glass-Blowers* is a homodiegetic non-linear family story told from the perspective of Du Maurier's ancestress, spanning roughly a hundred years, from 1747 to 1844. The first-person narrator, Sophie Duval, is the younger sister of the author's great-great-grandfather Robert-Mathurin Busson Du Maurier, a French master craftsman, but the prologue and epilogue are told by a third-person omniscient narrator who frames Sophie's retelling of family events, essentially creating bookends to the main narrative. As for *Hungry Hill*, it is a heterodiegetic linear narrative divided into five books and an epilogue. Spanning a century from 1820 to 1920, it deals with five generations of the Brodrick family, the inheritors of Clonmere Castle and of the copper mines at Hungry

Hill, who struggle to survive a curse laid upon them by a rival family. As these two family narratives end, the characters move on to other courses of action, so that the reader's epistemophilia is at once fulfilled *and* frustrated: both stylistic closure and thematic completeness are achieved while various questions are left unanswered. In both novels, these narrative features play an important role in the resolution of the tales.

The Prologue of *The Glass-Blowers*

12 Set in June 1844, the prologue of *The Glass-Blowers* details the visit Sophie Duval pays to Louis-Mathurin to confirm his identity as her brother Robert's lost descendant. It performs several functions, including those of contextualisation, characterisation, and perhaps most importantly, closure, in the form not only of a reconnection with the rightful heir, but also of the fulfilment of a promise and the passing of a crystal tumbler. That passing of a tumbler is particularly significant, because it is a family heirloom supposedly created in 1769 by Sophie's father Mathurin Busson, in the foundry of La Pierre, Coudrecieux, on the occasion of the visit of King Louis XV, a great honour for the Busson family.[22]

13 Since its main object is to create suspense in the exposition scene, the issue of epistemophilia is not particularly significant in the prologue: its first function is to explain that the family story needs (re)telling as a result of Robert's fabrications regarding his lineage and family identity. Robert escaped his debts and the prospect of imprisonment during the French Revolution by settling in England, but he made his descendants believe that he was an *émigré*, a fallen aristocrat who narrowly avoided the guillotine. He returned to France alone in 1802 and stayed there for nine years, leaving his second wife Marie-Françoise to believe him dead and to raise their young family on her own. Moreover, Robert's family is unaware that he had been the heir of a glass-blowing enterprise, that he was previously married and had abandoned a teenage son. When the elderly Sophie realises this, she is compelled to disclose the truth of their family history through a letter to her long-lost nephew.

14 It is important to note that, although the novel is a fictionalised account of family history, Sophie Duval's letter and the crystal tumbler were not creations of the author's imagination. They were both in Du Maurier's possession when she wrote *The Glass-Blowers*.[23] As described in the novel, the author's grandfather George "Kicky" Du Maurier inherited these important heirlooms, which were later passed to his son Gerald Du Maurier, and then to Daphne Du Maurier after his death. She remembered the crystal tumbler as "the family Luck", which was put on display on special occasions. The letter is now kept in Special Collections at the University of Exeter library, and when George Du Maurier inherited the letter, he proudly made his own annotations in the margins, explaining his relationship to his French ancestors.[24]

15 Sophie's ten-page letter was what inspired Du Maurier to embark on a series of visits to central-western France, starting in October 1955, to discover more about her own family history. She was excited to be able to verify the contents of the letter by finding the places associated with her forebears, as well as many relevant birth, marriage, and death certificates.[25] The Du Mauriers' ancestor, Robert-Mathurin Busson, came from Saint-Martin-de-Chenu, a village in the Province of Anjou (in the southern part of the current Département de la Sarthe). His father was born in the village of Coudrecieux, also in Sarthe; and his mother, Madeleine Labbé, came from the village of Saint-Christophe-en-Touraine, which is currently known as Saint-Christophe-sur-le-Nais.[26] These facts and verifications were particularly significant for Daphne Du Maurier as a family chronicler herself.

Thus Sophie Duval's role as a family chronicler in the novel echoes that of the author herself as the family historian, and Du Maurier's great-grandfather Louis-

Mathurin Busson becomes a character and the initial recipient of this family narrative. Epistemophilia here concerns the author herself just as much as it concerns Sophie, Louis-Mathurin, and Kicky; for Sophie's narrative – Sophie's letter as real artefacts – is the final revelation of how the Du Mauriers came to be, and was instrumental in satisfying Daphne Du Maurier's own need to learn about the history of her family.

17 This contextualisation contributes to the characterisation of Robert, and explains why the reconnection with Louis-Mathurin signifies closure for Sophie. Robert's choice of an aristocratic lineage and the glamorised version of his personal history suggest a lifelong desire to be associated with the aristocracy and to live in luxury, causing the series of events that eventually led to his bankruptcies. Robert's recklessness, his irresponsibility, and his indifference to the feelings of others create a pattern in which bold risks are taken on a whim, problems arise, and his family are left to suffer the consequences of his poor judgment.

18 One of the many consequences is the breakup of the Busson family: Robert abandons his second family and then fakes his death. For decades this second family leads a life entirely disconnected from Sophie and her family, of whose existence they are unaware. By reconnecting with Louis-Mathurin, Sophie assuages Robert's lifelong regret of having abandoned his second family – the family from which the author herself descended – and restores the wholeness of the Busson family. This carried particular significance to Daphne Du Maurier as the lost family thus retrieved their place in the genealogical tree.

19 Another consequence is the symbolic, decades-long disruption in the lineage caused by the fact that the family crystal tumbler, engraved by Robert and Sophie's father Mathurin Busson, never passed on to the rightful heir when it followed Robert to France or when it was placed in Sophie's care after his death. Closure is only achieved for Sophie when she presents the heirloom to its rightful owner, her great-nephew George "Kicky" Busson, Daphne Du Maurier's grandfather. Kicky's claim to the tumbler by right of inheritance is symbolic in three ways: it represents closure for the dramatic life and affairs of Robert-Mathurin Busson through the reconnection in the lineage; it epitomises the family's reconnection to its Busson lineage; and it embodies a future that will hopefully turn out to be quite different from his grandfather's past – full of triumph and artistic talent.

20 Moreover, the prologue is also essential in providing a sense of closure not only to the Busson family but also to the readers. Epistemophilia is achieved here insofar as Sophie is reunited with Robert's lost second family, and the crystal tumbler is passed to its rightful heir. With the final debunking of Robert's fabricated tales and the transmission of the family heirloom, the prologue acts as an epilogue to the family tale while creating suspense.

The Epilogue of *The Glass-Blowers*

21 The epilogue of *The Glass-Blowers*, set on 6 November 1844, does not only achieve closure for readers, but also for the lead character, Sophie Duval. It signifies the completion of her family history as she relives the incidents of her life, and prompts her to revisit La Pierre, her childhood home, the next day. This echoes Du Maurier's own visits to the places described in Sophie's letter. At La Pierre, Sophie observes the life of the secluded glass community which passes on ancient traditions to their successors.[27] At the beginning of her narrative, her grandfather Pierre Labbé warned her mother Magdaleine in 1747 about the world of glass, "If you marry into glass, [...] you will say goodbye to everything familiar, and enter a closed world."[28] Almost a hundred years later, Sophie Duval sees that nothing has changed, that it is still a community where the craftsmen and workmen abide by their own rules and customs,

and remain indifferent to the world outside[29] What she observes conveys a strong sense of succession and continuation, and brings her narrative to full circle.

22 Epistemophilia in this case is achieved when the main issue of Louis-Mathurin's parentage has been dealt with in Sophie's narrative, and when the fates of the other characters are communicated in the epilogue, although they do not necessarily have any bearing on Louis-Mathurin. These include the deaths of Robert's eldest son Jacques, his youngest sister Edmé, Sophie's husband François Duval, and the rest of the large cast of family members. Epistemophilia is frustrated, however, when one piece of information is missing from the epilogue, which is Louis-Mathurin's reception of Sophie's grand narrative of the family mystery. His reaction to the real family story, and more importantly, the cruel truth of his father's fake death and his abandonment of his mother and siblings in France, are left unknown. The revelation of his true ancestry should have a profound effect on his perception of a father of whom he has no recollection and whom he was raised to regard as "a man of tremendous principle and integrity."[30] This is the illusion that Sophie shatters by delivering the truth about their family, just as Robert's recklessness through the years had shattered the Busson family, as symbolised by the vulnerability of the tumbler. It is through these family narratives that Du Maurier explores "the shaping influence of family history upon an individual's identity", and what it means to be a Du Maurier.[31] In the same light, the revelation should force Louis-Mathurin to reconsider his identity as the descendant of a commoner, not of noble forebears, and to confront his roots. His father Robert bluffed that he became a glass-engraver out of "amusement", not from need,[32] but the truth is that his artistry as a master glass-engraver is what defines him as the heir of the family business. Thus, artistry in fact plays a more significant role in Robert's identity than he claimed. Louis-Mathurin's reaction to all of these cruel truths about his father and their ancestry is the missing piece in the narrative that frustrates the reader's desire to know.

23 Significantly, the epilogue highlights the fact that meaning-making lies more in the act of telling and less in the reception of the tale. Epistemophilia may be frustrated for readers, but for Sophie, the delivery of the papers alone involves closure. "Even if he does not read any of it aloud, [...] or suppresses those parts that show his family, and especially his father Robert, to disadvantage, it will not matter. I shall have done my duty and told the truth. Most important of all, his son George, the boy he called Kicky, will keep the glass."[33] It is the passing of the symbolic family heirloom, which happens in the prologue, and the passing of the family story, which occurs in the epilogue, that really matter. Both of them are required for full closure for Sophie.

24 Louis-Mathurin's role as a "receptive audience member",[34] meanwhile, is less significant in the tale. In fact, it is not revealed in the novel whether he has even received or read Sophie's letter, for the epilogue ends with the *dispatch* of these papers to him. For readers this is a gap in their knowledge of the family's story because, to them, Louis-Mathurin's reaction to a truth that does not place his much-admired father in a positive light is more relevant than details about the deaths of the minor characters, without which there would still be closure. But for Du Maurier, his reception of the family tale is not a necessary element in the resolution, for his acceptance of Sophie's account of the family story is already implied from the fact that he had preserved the letter and passed them to his son George, and later to the author herself[35]. What is more important is that the enduring narrative ensures that the story continues in the family, and the truth of the lineage is passed to the descendants. As Alison Light observes, the fortunes of the family come full circle when Sophie Duval hands the glass heirloom to her great-nephew Kicky, thus bringing the distant past of the family close to home.[36] Throughout Sophie's family narrative there is a strong symbolism of the Busson world shattering like glass because of the irresponsible lies of Robert, yet Du Maurier's novel ends with a positive tone – with pride in the family's humble beginnings, and with the assertion that the tradition of her glass-blowing ancestors continues to thrive.

The Epilogue of *Hungry Hill*

25 While the epilogue of *The Glass-Blowers* mentions the flourishing glass-blowing business of the Bussons, the epilogue of *Hungry Hill* details the downfall of the Brodrick family and the fulfilment of a curse. Closure is achieved when the curse is fulfilled, but epistemophilia is frustrated when, as in many other Du Maurier novels, the fate of the central character remains ambiguous.

26 This particular epilogue is the result of narrative experimentation on Du Maurier's part. While the untitled epilogue of *The Glass-Blowers* is much shorter, serves to give additional information about Sophie Duval's letter or various characters, and fulfils the reader's desire to know, the epilogue in *Hungry Hill* is structurally different. Du Maurier entitles it "The Inheritance, 1920" and extends it over three chapters, thus making it seem more like a subplot with its own elements of suspense, or its conflicts, climax, and conclusion. With the first two of these chapters functioning as suspenseful exposition, closure and epistemophilia are only achieved and/or frustrated in the last chapter of the epilogue.

27 Du Maurier approaches this epilogue in a different manner from that of *The Glass-Blowers*. Each of the five books that precede the epilogue is titled with the name of the characters and the corresponding years, as in "Book One: Copper John, 1820-1828", "Book Two: Greyhound John, 1828-1837" (Copper John's second son), "Book Three: 'Wild Johnnie', 1837-1858" (Greyhound John's eldest son), "Book Four: Henry, 1858-1874" (Wild Johnnie's younger brother), and "Book Five: Hal, 1874-1895" (Henry's son). Yet Du Maurier does not name the epilogue "Book Six: John-Henry, 1920", because she draws a distinction between that particular section and the five books before. While those other books involve the personal histories of the heirs and make up the grander, decades-long narrative of the Irish family's history, the epilogue stretches over a few days only and focuses on the inheritance itself. Instead of providing supplementary information about what happens to the characters, the epilogue resolves the issue of what happens to the estate. For *Hungry Hill*, epistemophilia concerns both the fate of the inheritance and that of its heir; and although both aspects are addressed in the epilogue, the heading Du Maurier gives to this section suggests that the fate of Clonmere Castle is the most important question the epilogue needs to address.

28 The answer to the question hinges on two factors: the heir's safety, and his intentions. The previous patriarch of the family, Henry Brodrick, brother of "Wild Johnnie", led a long life but had no intention of preserving the estate, as he even attempted to break the entail. His son and heir Hal Brodrick wanted to keep the estate, but died before he could inherit it. The fate of Clonmere Castle and the nearby woods thus depends on whether John-Henry, the son of Hal and the current Brodrick heir, lives, and whether he decides to retain the estate. There is a possibility that John-Henry will die young, for the five generations of the Brodrick heirs, due to "the Donovan curse", either die young or lead long, lonely lives.

29 This can be traced back to the century-long rivalry between the Brodricks and the Donovans. When Copper John Brodrick of Clonmere Castle develops the copper mines at Hungry Hill in 1820, the patriarch of the Donovan family, Morty Donovan, curses him and his heir Greyhound John on two occasions:

> "I tell you your mine will be in ruins, and your house destroyed, and your children forgotten and fallen maybe into disgrace, but this hill will be standing still to confound you."[37]

> "I curse you, John Brodrick, [...] and not only you, but your sons after you, and your grandsons, and may your wealth bring them nothing but despair and desolation and evil, until the last of them stands humble and ashamed amongst the ruins of it, with the Donovans back again in Clonmere on the land that belongs to them."[38]

30 Thus the curse, as a symbol of rivalry, is also what seeks closure in the epilogue. In other words, epistemophilia is achieved when the epilogue resolves the Brodrick-Donovan conflicts and provides answers to the fate of Clonmere Castle.

31 The epilogue takes place in 1920, when Henry Brodrick has died, and his grandson John-Henry returns to Doonhaven to claim his inheritance, Clonmere Castle. By then the family estate has been left uninhabited by the Brodricks for half a century, because Henry Brodrick removed his family from Clonmere upon being widowed. Unlike his grandfather, John-Henry sees himself as a Brodrick of Clonmere, and intends to restore the mansion, and return to live in it with his mother. He describes his attachment to the family estate:

> This overgrown sub who sweats his guts out in an engine-room and then goes ashore at Malta and overstays his leave, isn't John-Henry at all. The real John-Henry is standing in front of Clonmere, looking across the creek to Hungry Hill. And that's where I belong. That's where my roots are, that's where I was born and bred.[39]

32 This symbolises permanence and the continuation of a legacy which is particularly significant at a time of change and upheaval. John-Henry's grand plan to restore the estate and its nearby woods thus raises the readers' hopes, because it signifies that after half a century of negligence, the last of the Brodricks finally returns to his family estate, hopefully to revive its past glory and prosperity. This is the closure which readers may anticipate in the epilogue.

33 Rather uncharacteristically, Du Maurier creates suspense at the beginning of the epilogue by placing John-Henry in dangerous situations. In the first chapter, he finds himself at the mercy of stray bullets fired in a fight between soldiers and civilians, while in the second chapter, six strangers kidnap him on his way to Clonmere and hold him captive until after his mansion has burnt down. Du Maurier provides an answer to the key question in the reader's mind through a twist – the safety of the heir is ensured, but the inheritance is not. Clonmere Castle stands as an enduring entity that testifies to the turmoil of changing times, due to the rivalry between the Brodricks and the Donovans, until its destruction in 1920. The Brodricks may have been blessed by material prosperity, but they suffer from early death or loneliness. The burning of the mansion symbolises an end to both the prosperity and the sufferings of the Brodrick heirs.

34 It should be noted that, while the burning of Clonmere Castle echoes the burning of Manderley in *Rebecca*, and where John-Henry's loss of his inheritance parallels the unnamed heroine's loss of Manderley, "For Manderley was ours no longer. Manderley was no more",[40] the contexts of the destruction in the two novels are very different. In *Rebecca*, Manderley is destroyed as an act of revenge for the death of Rebecca on the personal level; but Clonmere Castle is demolished as an act of retribution on the national level during the Irish War of Independence. The country houses (or "big houses") of Irish landowners like the Brodricks were symbolic of the power of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and the economic strength of the landed class.[41] Hence the physical dismantling of these "big houses" symbolises the destruction of the British power base,[42] and has become a phenomenon during the Irish revolutionary period (1919-1923), beginning in the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) and becoming intensified during the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). Thus, Clonmere Castle becomes the target of the revolutionists in addition to the antagonism on a personal level with the Donovans, with its demolition changing the significance of the Donovan curse in the context of colonial oppression.

35 Nevertheless, the destructions of both grand mansions are significant to the texts as a whole. For *Rebecca*, the burning of Manderley does not signify the end of the influence of Rebecca, but rather, it represents the beginning of an aimless life and a flight from England for the two protagonists. As the second Mrs. de Winter admits in "The Rebecca Epilogue", a section in *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories*,

"Those things we are trying to forget and put behind us would stir again, and that sense of fear, of furtive unrest struggling at length to master unreasoning panic – now peacefully stilled, thank God – might in some manner unforeseen become a living companion, as it did before."[43] In *Hungry Hill*, however, it is a fulfilment of Morty Donovan's curse a century ago, while John-Henry's grand plan of restoring the castle vanishes into thin air. True to the Donovan curse, Hungry Hill stands to witness the rise and fall of the Brodrick family until, a hundred years later, the last of the Brodricks, John-Henry, returns the land to Eugene Donovan, as Morty Donovan had prophesised.

36 Closure is finally achieved, as the Brodrick heir makes peace with the Donovans and ends the antagonism between the two families for good; and, like the de Winters in *Rebecca,* John-Henry embarks on what might be perceived as voluntary exile at the end of *Hungry Hill*. Yet this is also precisely where epistemophilia is frustrated. The reasons for the retrocession of Clonmere to its original owners and for John-Henry's voluntary exile are never stated. Neither is his fate as the Brodrick heir described after the burning of the mansion, unlike that of Maxim de Winter and his wife in the opening chapter of *Rebecca*. Epistemophilia is fulfilled for *Rebecca* because the opening chapters of the book give readers "a sensation of closure" when they realise that "nothing important has been omitted in the text."[44] Readers already know what happens to Maxim and his second wife after the burning of Manderley because the dream sequence in the first chapter of *Rebecca* demonstrates that the couple remains haunted by Manderley and their experiences in the mansion, while the second chapter illustrates the dull life they lead in their voluntary exile "many hundred miles away in an alien land."[45] The unnamed narrator expresses a certain degree of contentment as she feels "boredom is a pleasing antidote to fear."[46] John-Henry, however, simply embarks on a journey into the unknown. Readers remain ignorant of the life John-Henry will lead, and how he feels about his exile. The Epilogue in *Hungry Hill* is not informative enough in these respects. Therefore, despite the fact that the conflict between the Brodricks and the Donovans is resolved, the readers' epistemophilia is in fact frustrated.

37 Du Maurier demonstrates her stylistic versatility and ability through the various forms which her prologues and epilogues take. Some of her novels, including *Rebecca*, *The King's General*, and *My Cousin Rachel*, begin by the end, though the corresponding sections are not specifically labelled; while *The King's General* concludes with a brief three-page section ("What Happened to the People in the Story") which could be perceived as an epilogue. Du Maurier's treatment of that section thus differs from those of *Hungry Hill* and *The Glass-Blowers* in the sense that, whereas the narrative of *The King's General* is complete without an epilogue, neither of the family narratives is, for it is in these sections that Du Maurier ties up the loose strands of her stories and deals with what is not settled yet (the inheritance in both novels), thereby fulfilling the reader's epistemophilia.

38 In "The Art of Fiction", Henry James mockingly asserts that a "happy ending" is merely "a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks."[47] Although Du Maurier's novels are often devoid of happy endings, they comply with this tradition to an extent, as John-Henry returns the land to Eugene Donovan, and Sophie Duval dispatches the letter that will become her family's legacy. Ultimately, though, as Mike Cadden underscores, epilogues are not about the characters, but about creating the desired reading experience for the implied reader.[48] Since closure is provided in the prologue and epilogues of *Hungry Hill* and *The Glass-Blowers*, it can be argued that these particular narrative features are employed precisely to give "a sense of what happens after the events depicted in the narrative"[49] and thus fulfil the readers' desire to know. In the experimental epilogue of *Hungry Hill* that includes a subplot in the tale, Du Maurier manipulates the hopes, relief, and disappointment felt by her readers, while in the epilogue to *The Glass-Blowers*, she simultaneously fulfils and

frustrates their expectations by both providing resolutions to key issues and writing ambiguous endings that raise still more questions. Ultimately, it is through the use of the particular narrative features of such sections, in which symbolic legacies are passed on to their rightful heirs – in the shape of a letter, or a crystal tumbler, or a castle and its surrounding woods – that the key themes of lineage, transmission, and continuation are highlighted. In the lesser-known family chronicles of Daphne Du Maurier, epistemophilia is simultaneously fulfilled and frustrated, providing a unique reading experience.

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4 Alison Light, *op. cit.*, 182, 193, 195.

5 Margaret Forster, *Daphne Du Maurier*, London: Arrow Books, 2007, 167.

6 Du Maurier provides this information in the Dedication of her novel.

7 Giuliana Adamo, "Twentieth-Century Recent Theories on Beginnings and Endings of Novels", *Annali D'Italianistica*, vol. 18, 2000, 49-76, 55. <www.jstor.org/stable/24008547>, accessed on 12 April 2020.

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9 *Ibid.*, 344.

10 *Ibid.*, 345.

11 *Ibid.*, 346.

12 Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, Third ed., London: Pearson Education, 2004, 286.

13 *Ibid.*, 55.

14 See David H. Richter, *Fable's End: Completeness and Closure in Rhetorical Fiction*, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1974. Richter does not use these two terms exactly but these are the concepts explored in the book.

15 Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature,* 8.

16 *Ibid.*, 170.

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19 Daphne Du Maurier, *My Cousin Rachel* [1951], London: Virago, 2003, 335.

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22 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Glass-Blowers* [1963], London: Virago, 2004, 11, 41.

23 Anne Hall, *The Du Mauriers Just As They Were*, London: Unicorn, 2018, 3.

24 *Ibid.*, 5.

25 *Ibid.*, 5.

26 *Ibid.*, 9.

27 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Glass-Blowers*, *op. cit.*, 367.

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31 Alan R.H. Baker, "Historical Novels and Historical Geography," *Area*, 29:3, 1997, 269-273, 272.

32 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Glass-Blowers*, *op. cit.*, 8.

33 *Ibid.*, 368.

34 Katherine Borland et al., "Introduction: Difference and Dialogism in Family Narratives," *Journal of American Folklore*, 2017, 130-518, 377-393, 438.

35 Daphne Du Maurier was aware that her great-grandfather Louis-Mathurin and her

grandfather George, despite having allowed Sophie's letter to be passed on, were in fact to some extent farceurs like their forefather Robert. George sustained Robert's fantasy of having an aristocratic lineage through portraying their forbears as French aristocrats in his own novel about family history, *Peter Ibbetson* (1891). Daphne Du Maurier herself, however, preferred to tell the truth as a family chronicler like her ancestress, Sophie Duval.

36 Alison Light, *op. cit.*, 193.

37 Daphne Du Maurier, *Hungry Hill*, *op. cit.*, 11.

38 *Ibid.*, 70.

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
'Adieu Sagesse', or Troubled Identities in Du Maurier's Fiction

Rule Britannia, Brexit and Cornish Identity

Rule Britannia, Brexit & identité cornouaillaise

Ella Westland

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Résumés

English Français

This article returns *Rule Britannia* to its own political, geographical and biographical context at a time when Daphne Du Maurier's last novel has achieved a kind of afterlife in post-2016 Brexit referendum discourse. *Vanishing Cornwall* (1967) and *The House on the Strand* (1969) drew on visions of the past in a decade when the growing tourist industry was exploiting historical representations of the peninsula, but *Rule Britannia* (1972) was a new departure, marking a reorientation of Du Maurier's relationship to contemporary Cornwall. The decision to take Britain into the European Common Market and the rise of Celtic nationalism had a clear bearing on the book. So too did Daphne's move from Menabilly to Kilmarth, her personal relationship to Cornish people, and her continuing need for Cornwall as she faced her retirement from writing fiction.

Cet article replace *Rule Britannia* dans son contexte politique, géographique et biographique alors que le dernier roman de Daphne du Maurier trouve désormais de nouvelles résonnances dans les discours sur le Brexit à la suite du référendum de 2016. Alors que *Vanishing Cornwall* (1967) et *The House on the Strand* (1969) étaient tournés vers le passé au cours d'une décennie où l'industrie touristique en plein essor exploitait les représentations historiques de la péninsule, *Rule Britannia* (1972) représente un infléchissement nouveau dans la relation que du Maurier entretient avec la Cornouailles contemporaine. La décision de faire entrer la Grande-Bretagne dans le marché commun européen et la montée du nationalisme celte eurent une incidence majeure sur le roman. Il en fut de même, sur le plan autobiographique, de son déménagement de Menabilly à Kilmarth, ainsi que de sa relation personnelle avec les Cornouaillais ou avec son pays d'adoption, alors qu'elle était sur le point de cesser d'écrire des œuvres de fiction.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : du Maurier Daphne, Rule Britannia, Brexit, Cornouailles, nationalisme celte, identité cornouaillaise
Index by keywords: du Maurier Daphne, Rule Britannia, Brexit, Cornwall, Celtic nationalism, Cornish identity

Texte intégral

1 *Rule Britannia* (1972) was created at the confluence of two currents in Daphne Du Maurier's life: her personal experience and her political environment. Where the currents mingled, Cornish identity emerged as the theme that could draw together pressing concerns affecting both her own future and the evolution of Cornwall. Although all fiction is inevitably shaped to a greater or lesser extent by biographical and contextual forces, Du Maurier's work has generally deflected scrutiny on the latter count; her last novel, however, demands an interpretative approach that draws on both elements. Written at a late turning point in her life, the book shared a setting with her famed Cornish fiction, but dismayed her publishers and many of her readers by its jarring contrast to its predecessors in topic and tone. Rather than conjuring up the past, Daphne was using political issues of the day as touch papers for her plot; instead of exploring mysterious scenery and the darker recesses of the psyche, she presented a contemporary Cornish landscape and a cast verging on caricature. *Rule Britannia*'s experimental moulding of serious concerns in the form of hammed-up fiction has repelled serious analysis, but the novel deserves a more attentive reading than it has generally received, both for its intriguing treatment of wide-ranging national issues – not least Britain's shifting relationships with Europe, the US, and its own Celtic peripheries – and for its unmistakable projection of the author herself into her ageing heroine, an eccentric incomer ready to throw in her lot with the Cornish people.

2 The following pages trace the trajectory that led to the writing of *Rule Britannia*, a crazy novel in which the Cornish, armed with clay mining explosives, resist an American take-over of the UK that threatens to reduce the country to a theme park. This paper begins by examining Du Maurier's renewed focus on Cornwall in later life, as she worked on *Vanishing Cornwall* and *The House on the Strand* – books that strengthened her understanding of the region's identity and revealed her concern about the intrusion of tourism; it then draws attention to Du Maurier's exposure to the wider historical forces that influenced her plot, from the Second World War to Britain's entry into the European Common Market, throwing into relief her underrated awareness of contemporary issues. The article considers in some detail the growth of Celtic nationalism and Cornwall's specific sense of 'difference', crucial contexts for the novel's gestation; it discusses Du Maurier's renewed respect for the Cornish people and highlights the significance of her move from the shelter of Menabilly to Kilmarth, where she overlooked the harbour that served the local clay industry. As an incomer who increasingly felt the need to ally herself with Cornish interests, she clearly identified with *Rule Britannia*'s feisty protagonist, Mad, who takes the side of the native rebels; she also needed to hold on to Mad's irrepressible creative spirit as she faced the last years of her own life on the Cornish cliffs.

Vanishing Cornwall and *The House on the Strand*

3 In the late 1960s, reacting to major changes in her own life, Du Maurier turned

back to Cornwall in her writing: *Rule Britannia* is the last of three books representing her adopted land in different genres. After the death of her husband Tommy in 1965, she was suffering a double bereavement. She had been coming to terms with the impending loss of Menabilly, the secluded house within walking distance of Fowey that she had leased for a quarter of a century, and contemplating their future life together at Kilmarth, the nearby dower house also owned by the Rashleigh family, which sits above Polkerris beach on the Par side of the headland. But she now found herself facing a different future as a widow in her new home. Knowing that she would be unable to immerse herself in writing a novel, Daphne chose this moment to confront Cornwall in a non-fiction work, accepting a proposal from her American publisher, Doubleday, on condition that her son Kits was the photographer.[1] *Vanishing Cornwall* (1967) drew on images associated with the Cornish Revival movement which have been linked to the post-war expansion of tourism. Bernard Deacon cites *Vanishing Cornwall,* bracketed with Denys Val Baker's tellingly titled *The Timeless Land* (1973), in making the case that:

> Tourism and the associated outpouring of guide book literature on Cornwall […] created new differences and new myths often revolving around aspects of the landscape and a sense of "mystery." ("And Shall Trelawny Die?" 206 [2])

4 In her early fiction Du Maurier cast her spell over her complicit upcountry readers by deploying cultural representations of Cornwall as an alluring "Other". *Vanishing Cornwall* still bears traces of the Helford river's enchantment in *Frenchman's Creek* and the pagan scenes on Bodmin Moor in *Jamaica Inn*: the prologue ends, "The beauty and the mystery beckon still,"[3] and early editions bear the subtitle *The Spirit and History of an Ancient Land*. But according to her son, Daphne "loathed" Doubleday's provisional title of *Romantic Cornwall*, and successfully resisted the original concept of a fashionable coffee-table book, predicting that the format would turn her publication into "a tourist guide to encourage visitors."[4] She voiced no objection to discerning tourists who appreciated Cornwall in a similar way to herself, but she was reluctant to offer any further inducement to the type of holiday-maker she despised, those causing unsympathetic disruption during high season. Her editors' determined attempts to cut "anti-tourism stuff" from the text[5] failed to neutralise her caustic views on the summer invasion, when "coves and beaches covered with ice-cream cartons, cigarette-packets, corn-plasters and contraceptives daunt the intending swimmer, and the sound of radio, speed-boat and barking dogs pollutes the air."[6]

5 She was naive to suppose that an illustrated book by a celebrity would not play into the commodification of Cornwall that she derided, and on one level she understood this; on revisiting Jamaica Inn during her research, she had taken some of the blame for its touristification on herself: "As the author I am flattered, but as a one-time wanderer dismayed."[7] But as she had intended, *Vanishing Cornwall* is more than a tribute to the "beauty and the mystery" that might lure the unwanted visitor to the Celtic periphery. Although the book harks back to legend and evocative past times, conjuring up the phantoms of smugglers while unaccountably omitting Cornwall's naval significance, her heavy-duty historical research also produced informative chapters on fishermen, tinners and clay-workers. As her title indicates, she worried that the place she loved was indeed "vanishing", and in a glimpse of her last novel, when the Americans plan to use Britain as a nationwide tourist experience, she asks urgently: "What does the future hold for Cornwall? Will it indeed become the playground of all England […]?"[8] But rather than turning her away, the *Vanishing Cornwall* project played a part in the process of bringing her closer to the Cornish people. Until that point, she had been deeply immersed in the Fowey area but only patchily familiar with other parts of the region. She was now growing increasingly conscious not only of the different strands that made up the history and geography of the peninsula but also of "Cornwall" as an entity. It was no coincidence that, in the

1960s, Cornwall's sense of itself as an entity was changing too.

6 Two years after the appearance of *Vanishing Cornwall*, Du Maurier published *The House on the Strand* (1969), her time travel book. Having moved her narrator, Dick Young, into her own home at Kilmarth, she could hardly have resisted some degree of identification with him. She would certainly have understood Dick's addiction to his drug-fuelled escapes into another dimension under the tutelage of his professorial friend Magnus. Though as potently "brewed" in Daphne's imagination as her greatest novels, much to the delight of her editors and readership, *The House on the Strand* expresses dread of her creativity drying up, of no longer being able to time travel, of saying farewell to the Magnus (or magus) whose sorcery enabled her to fly. And it restates her ever-present fear of losing her personal Cornwall, the lovely places around her, in a period when the population was visibly increasing and the landscape marketed for commercial gain.[9] Within a short distance of Kilmarth Dick is faced by tourist bathing-huts "lined like dentures in an open mouth",[10] new bungalows with caravans in their driveways,[11] the "straggling shops of Par"[12] and the "sprawling tentacles of St Austell enveloping the countryside beyond the bay."[13] Even the nearby land worked by locals has been degraded: a farm building is a temporary "corrugated tin shed"[14] and a local quarry is now "a tip for useless junk."[15] Revolted by a place past its sell-by date, Dick Young transports himself to a medieval world, more vivid than his tawdry present. He is also escaping an era when the New World is blatantly in the ascendant: Dick's American wife is named Vita, as if she represents the life force of the future, while the Old World that Dick tries to cling to is fading. Like her "Young" narrator, Daphne may also have begun to feel that she had been born too late. American influence, soon to be embodied in the marines of *Rule Britannia* knocking on the door of her heroine's cliff-top home, is already permeating to the extreme headlands of Britain's far periphery.

7 But Daphne is not Dick, and *The House on the Strand* cannot be read as advocating a retreat into an imagined "romantic Cornwall." Dick, incapacitated, may be unable to face the future, but Daphne is determined to carry on. Following *The House on the Strand* – the transitional novel in her move – she did manage to settle in reasonably contentedly at Kilmarth, producing a collection of short stories (*Not After Midnight*), and apparently coming to terms with her more exposed location. As 1972 opened, she was fired up by her new project. Rather than being brewed in the Kilmarth basement or fuelled by fury about ugly beach huts, *Rule Britannia* was far more open to local economic and cultural realities, demanding that her readers take a closer look at the "real Cornwall."

Historical Moments: European War to European Community

8 It was a challenge that many have been reluctant to accept, not only because the book fails to take the reader back to Manderley again – or into the haunting Cornwall of *Frenchman's Creek* and *My Cousin Rachel* – but also because it blemishes a treasured picture of the author. Du Maurier fans and even some of her biographers have been captivated by the idea of Daphne as a solitary dreamer, removed from contemporary life. Daphne herself was partly responsible for this myth through the enticing trail she laid in her autobiographical writing, from the early essay "House of Secrets" to the personal passages of *Vanishing Cornwall*. Tatiana de Rosnay, in her recent biography, has willingly followed her down that path. But there has been growing resistance from academics to the wishful thinking that has skewed readings of her life and her work. As far back as 2000, Alan Kent urged Du Maurier readers to move away from the "kind of 'cult-of-personality' criticism, which fails to recognize the historical moments of the texts' creation",[16] a shift that was already under way

through the adoption of Du Maurier into the developing field of Cornish studies. Feminist critics have long been particularly sensitive to "cultural moment" in their readings, seeing the social construction of identity as a vital component of her fiction.[17] Gina Wisker, locating *Rebecca* in the years preceding the Second World War, went on to argue further against a "curiously widespread misreading of Daphne du Maurier" which saw her as "unable to face the realities of the build up to, eruption and aftermath of war around her", insisting that an apolitical reading "sells the historical engagement of her works short."[18] As such feminist readers have appreciated, a biographical approach can lead to a deeper understanding of Du Maurier's fiction when working in tandem with broader contextual analysis.

9 Daphne herself was more exposed to local and political affairs than is often assumed. Although there is a good deal of truth in the belief that she was a private person who craved solitude for her writing, her privileged Hampstead upbringing, her intimate knowledge of France, her role as an army officer's wife, her visits to the States, and her husband's post-war connections with the Royal Family were hardly calculated to cut her off from current events. As her friend Oriel Malet pointed out on the publication of *Letters from Menabilly*, her correspondence should "surely dispel the myth that she was ever a recluse."[19] The greater availability of Du Maurier's letters, more of which can now be read in full rather than through the filter of her biographers,[20] is having a noticeable influence on her current critics. And nowhere is the need for contextualisation plainer than in a reassessment of her last novel, which could hardly have been more topical.

10 The idea of exploring collaboration and resistance in an occupied land had been in the back of Du Maurier's mind for a long time. It was a strand in *The Scapegoat* (1957), set in France after the Second World War, but the location for its further development was as yet unspecified when she mentioned the idea to Oriel Malet in 1965.[21] In deciding on the South West, Daphne appears to have been prompted by recollections of the war, when Cornwall had been under serious threat of invasion from Germany. *Rule Britannia* was plainly influenced by her own experience of passing German bombers and wired-off beaches. A land-mine clearance exercise smashed three of Menabilly's windows; a soldier was blown up in her woods, and his horribly wounded colleague brought into her home.[22] Her sister Angela wrote of the arrival of the American marines before D-Day: "It was late in '43 when at last Fowey was well and properly invaded. By America."[23] Her daughter Flavia remembered the "curious Yanks" who would "swarm" around Menabilly in search of their mother's autograph, causing her to hide on the roof and "peep down on the invaders below."[24] Here we can find the origins of key incidents in *Rule Britannia*. But a compelling sequence of events, both political and personal, led to the book being set not in the past but in the imagined future of a 1970s-style Brexit.

11 The headline story that provided Daphne with the mainspring of her new plot was the UK's imminent entry into the European Community (known as the Common Market), which Parliament had endorsed in October 1971 despite bitter opposition from many politicians. *Rule Britannia* fast-forwards a few years to imagine the chaotic aftermath of Britain's sudden withdrawal from Europe following a referendum later in the decade. In post-2016 British bookshops, "Brexlit" briefly proved to be an irresistible presence,[25] but writers including John le Carré and Ian McEwan, furious about the recent referendum result, have been pre-empted by nearly fifty years by *Rule Britannia*. Daphne understandably found it strange that there were readers both in the UK and the US who did not appear to realise that her novel was "FOR Great Britain's entry into Europe."[26] With her own French heritage, it would be astonishing to assume that she thought otherwise (or voted for Brexit – if indeed she did vote – when a referendum was actually called confirming Britain's membership of the European Community in 1975). In her novel, Brexit proves catastrophic, resulting in a period of price hikes and acute unemployment until growing economic turmoil brings in the United States.

12 As *Rule Britannia*'s readers well knew, Britain had been keen to maintain strong links with its wartime ally. Fostering Britain's "special relationship" with the States during the Vietnam era had been a concern of Prime Minister Harold Wilson in the sixties, and visits to London by newly-elected President Richard Nixon during 1969 and 1970 were highly publicised. In the novel, however, American marines arrive not as D-Day saviours or international friends, but as the dominant partner in a so-called alliance which is in effect a take-over. Playing its demeaning role in USUK, Britain is being pressured into becoming a huge theme park: the incarnation of Daphne's disgust at mass tourism, and her shrewd reaction to the effect of American soft power on the United Kingdom. Du Maurier's fictional "what if" magnified her sense of American cultural and diplomatic influence over Britain into a military threat, and brought it into conflict with another rising power much closer to home: Celtic nationalism.

Celtic Nationalism and Cornish Difference

13 At the extreme end of Celtic protests was the IRA. In 1970, after her arrival at Kilmarth, Du Maurier had written "A Border-line Case", a story about an IRA bombing based on an army friend of Tommy's with later IRA links, who died in 1969[27] – yet another reminder of how far from the mark it is to think of Daphne as cut off from political life. Although she presented here a rather romanticised view of IRA violence, and even jokingly threatened to use pseudo-IRA tactics in a letter to her local Council about a proposed bye-law to keep dogs off beaches,[28] it is unlikely that she ever underestimated the seriousness of the IRA's campaign. A striking illustration of the impossibility of shutting out such current events appears in a televised BBC interview broadcast in 1971. Towards the end of Wilfred De'Ath's fifty-minute programme, filmed in and around Kilmarth, the uninviting "Private" sign on her gate is fully visible as the crew leaves the premises, followed by a final scene of Daphne alone, putting up her feet and turning on the television. What we immediately hear is the opening of the nine o'clock news on BBC One, starting with a headline about the IRA.[29] Once you let TV into your living room as Daphne had taken to doing, disquieting world news is right there, in your life, every day, no matter how removed from society you may appear to be.

14 As 1972 got under way, grim news of the conflict in Northern Ireland overshadowed the political story of Britain's imminent entry into Europe. On 22 January, the British army closed off the beach at Magilligan Strand, County Derry, where an anti-internment protest was being held, before going in with rubber bullets and CS gas. Daphne wrote to Maureen Baker-Munton:

> I am in full spate with the book, and it goes well. I doubt if it will hit the headlines [...] but I personally think its [sic] so funny that when [...] [your husband] reads it his piles will burst anew [...]. No need to tell you thst [sic] I had scarcely started writing about helicopters overhead and roped off beaches than the Drumbeat scare began! Am I psychic I ask myself?[30]

15 Only three days after this letter was written, the British army killed thirteen protesters on what became known as Bloody Sunday. These Ulster confrontations provided a martial accompaniment to *Rule Britannia*'s unfolding plot, a case on the doorstep of an occupying force cracking down on a civilian population that could be readily deployed, almost in real time, in fiction.

16 Welsh nationalism had also proved newsworthy throughout the 1960s. Members of the Free Wales Army were jailed following a trial in 1969, the same year that another Welsh group, M.A.C, managed to blow up two of their own supporters on the eve of

the investiture of the Prince of Wales. (M.A.C.'s name, pronounced "Mac", chimes rather neatly with the name of Daphne's heroine, Mad.) In *Rule Britannia*, the ostensible role of Mr Willis, the odd Welshman nicknamed Taffy who lives in the woods, is to bring the Celtic groups together. He maintains that:

> [...] Welsh nationalism and Scots nationalism have been irritants in certain governmental circles for many years now, we all know that, but the Cornish are, shall I say, more secretive behind the usual open front. They are strong underground, very strong indeed. But with mining stock that's natural, isn't it?[31]

17 Hunched over his radio, his intelligence network (if it exists at all) seriously flawed, Willis seems more like a figure left over from continental resistance movements of the 1930s and 1940s than a credible conspirator. He has saved Terry and hidden the gelignite, but has he really tapped into a vibrant and dangerous Cornish movement? Even Mad, ready to go along with the intrigue and broadcast over the airwaves at Taffy's request, is not prepared to say.

18 Although the clandestine force behind the novel's unexplained detonations was only a figment of Daphne's imagination, it was certainly true that Cornish people's sense of difference from the rest of Britain had grown more pronounced in the 1960s, giving more sense of a Celtic connection. The development of tourism and widespread immigration into Cornwall, far from weakening ethnic identity, had actually strengthened it; Bernard Deacon convincingly argues the case that a "renewed sense of 'difference' was heightened by a reaction to social change rather than submerged by it."[32] And the social and demographic changes that were bringing local people to a more conscious sense of their own Cornishness were having the same effect on Daphne.

19 This trend was marked by the improving fortunes of Mebyon Kernow, an organisation set up in the 1950s to promote Cornish culture and celebrate Cornish "difference", which was growing more politically active; in the following decade, MK began to field candidates in local elections, and in 1970 put up its first parliamentary candidate (Deacon et al. 44-58).[33] In *Vanishing Cornwall*, Daphne observed that Cornish people "are in the main indifferent to mushroom growth and change", which they associate with economic gain; by contrast, "That stalwart band of Cornish nationalists, Mebyon Kernow, would go to the other extreme and put the people into black kilts, speaking the old Cornish language, with a Parliament west of Tamar." She argued that instead they should seek ways of "preserving Cornish individuality and independence, keeping the coast and countryside unspoilt, with people fully employed."[34] MK responded by inviting Daphne to join the party. She wrote to Oriel Malet with amusement:

> I have been made a Member of the Nationalist Party of Cornwall, called *Mebyon Kernow* (Sons of Cornwall) and given a badge to wear, and a thing to stick in my car, and I can hardly wait to go and blow up a bridge, like your Welsh Nationalists![35]

20 And some months later she reported:

> I'm having rather fun with the Cornish Nationalists, *Mebyon Kernow*. I wrote the article for their paper, and am all in with the editor, and now it seems that M.K. are vaguely in league with the Welsh Nationalists, and the Breton ones too [...].[36]

21 MK was not the only party vying for Cornish votes. The 1960s saw a parallel rise of the Liberals in Cornwall, who were becoming a potent political force under the influence of young David Penhaligon, an immensely popular local politician with a strong Cornish accent. Penhaligon was adopted as the Liberal Party's prospective parliamentary candidate for the Truro constituency in 1971, committed to fighting

hard to give Cornwall more weight at Westminster. Daphne's long-time friend Arthur Quiller-Couch was an active supporter of the Liberals; her local Member of Parliament between 1964 and 1970, Peter Bessell, with whom she had a brief correspondence about Rhodesia,[37] was both a Liberal and a member of MK. With her personal connections and the Cornish media's regular coverage of local politics, Daphne would have been well aware of these developments, and her involvement with Mebyon Kernow shows that her views were far from neutral.

22 If the Cornish did not flock to MK in large numbers, and showed little enthusiasm on the question of Cornish independence, that is not to say that they did not have a growing sense of Cornwall's separateness from the rest of England and their distance from what we currently call the "metropolitan élite." The sentiment to which Penhaligon appealed was memorably articulated in the words of an elderly lady I was canvassing before an election a few years ago on her doorstep in the Clay Country: "They up there don't care about we"[38] and has recently been reinforced annually in the press by the dismay expressed by Westminster politicians unable to find a decent mobile phone signal on their summer holidays.[39] Such continuing anti-London attitudes have undoubtedly been a factor in the recent rise of UKIP, who successfully put six councillors onto Cornwall Council in 2013, and in the majority of voters in Cornwall who opted for Brexit in the referendum of 2016 (56.5%). A recent analysis of the split in the country as a whole marked by the Remain/Leave divide has been compared to opposing groups of Anywheres and Somewheres: Anywheres are happy to be mobile throughout their lives, whereas Somewheres can hardly conceive of leaving the community where they were born.[40] That model certainly fits Daphne's perspective. One of her strongest early impressions of the Cornish was their feeling of belonging, which tied the four generations of the Coombe family in *The Loving Spirit* to "Plyn" (Polruan), and made Mary Yellan in *Jamaica Inn* homesick for the Helford. Although her own sympathies would surely have remained with those voters who believed that Cornwall would have a better future within the European Union, she would certainly have understood the gut reaction expressed by the Leavers in the 2016 referendum.[41]

The Cornish People and the Clay Country

23 From her early experience of Cornwall, Daphne began to appreciate the distance and difference of Fowey from London, and began to adopt the view from the periphery. She came to detest patronising attitudes to the Cornish, epitomised in *Rule Britannia* by Emma's father, a merchant banker, who talks of "the hoi polloi of your precious peninsula" and maintains that "once you cross the Tamar you might as well be in Tibet"[42] – sentiments that do not come across as exaggeration once you have listened to public schoolboys *en route* to their summer holiday in Rock referring to locals as "peasants." Daphne herself was undeniably class conscious, keeping her children out of Tywardreath School when the family arrived at Menabilly and showing annoyance at their determination to sneak out and play with the local "honks."[43] She was in the privileged position of bringing paid help into the house – cooks, housekeepers, and the cleaners she sometimes referred to as "minions" – and references to local staff in her letters can be less than flattering. Characters playing these roles in her work are rarely depicted memorably: Mrs. Tucket, the daily woman in *September Tide*, a play set at Ferryside, is presumably Cornish, though she is used mainly as a comic foil to the yachtees and artists in the drama, and on the page the dialect does not come across. But these instances are far from painting the full picture, and Daphne clearly knew and liked local people of many different backgrounds.

24 Daphne saw a good deal of the Cornish writer Arthur Quiller-Couch, Commodore of the Royal Fowey Yacht Club, and his daughter Foy, from the 1920s onwards. She came to know some of the local gentry, including Angela's friend Anne Treffry at Place House in Fowey, and became great friends with Clara Vyvyan of Trelowarren on the Lizard Peninsula. Some of the first local people she met were from the Slade boatbuilding family in Polruan, the inspiration for the Coombes in *The Loving Spirit*; it was Harry Adams (married to the granddaughter of Jane Slade) who became the Du Maurier family's boatman, taught Daphne to fish and sail, and gave her access to the family letters and the ship's figurehead that formed the basis of the novel. Daphne stayed in touch with the family, always spoke of them warmly, and in 1943, was able to buy and save one of the Slade boatyards.[44] She was also regularly in contact with the Bodinnick boatbuilder George Hunkin and his wife Adeline, who had brought about her first meeting with Tommy and attended her wedding;[45] their son Charlie took on the management of the Brownings' boatyard in Polruan. Daphne's young daughters enjoyed spending the occasional day at the Hunkins' home during the war, when Adeline's sister (the Brownings' cook, Mrs. Hancock, known as 'Hanks') was living there,[46] and later George used to call on Thursday afternoons for tea with Daphne at Menabilly.[47] On her move to Kilmarth, Daphne's relationship with Esther Rowe, a young Cornish woman who ended up being her housekeeper for thirty-one years, grew closer when Esther moved next door. She continued to show her ready admiration for Cornishmen involved in traditional trades like boatbuilding, fishing and farming: on first meeting her tenant farmer at Kilmarth Daphne liked him immediately, describing him as "the real old-fashioned Cornish type."[48]

25 Daphne's sympathy with the Cornish does not, however, translate into convincing characters in her later novels. Bit parts in *The House on the Strand* include the daily woman, Mrs. Collins from Polkerris, and dependable Tom, "a stalwart fellow with a ready smile", whose yacht, mackerel lines, and motor-boat converted from an old lifeboat, conflate the commendable Cornish types of sailor, fisherman and life-saver.[49] Even in *Rule Britannia*, despite its Cornish theme, local people can be read as affectionate caricatures rather than serious attempts to engage with regional representation. But then that, I would argue, is the nature of this larger-than-life fiction. The local doctor is called Bevil, a tribute to the Royalist hero of the Civil War, Bevil Grenville; the fishmonger is named Tom "Bate", and comes out with dialect lines like "Go to it, me old 'andsome";[50] the farmer Jack Trembath is "a big man with powerful shoulders, who used to wrestle for Cornwall against Brittany in his younger days."[51] Their common traits are dependableness and practical abilities, loyalty to Cornwall and bravery in the face of an invasion that threatens their way of life. Only the publican goes over to the enemy, selling his birthright for a quick buck from the marines. The most despicable sentiments among the working classes come from the Bristol-born ham-slicer in the supermarket – hardly surprising, since he hails from the wrong side of the Tamar.[52] This supporting cast is consciously constructed from stereotypes: in *Rule Britannia* it is not three-dimensional Cornish characters at stake, but the Cornish spirit.[53]

26 Similarly, the plot's engagement with local clay industry is more symbolic than naturalistic. Although clay-workers are not represented among the *dramatis personae*, they presumably provide the explosives that blow up the warship and drive away the American fleet in the book's final pages. It is a striking dénouement that can plausibly be attributed to Daphne's move to Kilmarth, which gave her, physically and mentally, a new orientation. Although she had moved only a mile from Menabilly as the crow flies, the Clay Country around St Austell was tangibly closer, meaning that she now had to incorporate local industry into her daily experience of Cornwall. She was living nearer to the village of Par (the novel's "Poldrea"), and having taken up driving again, she would have encountered more local people than before on her regular shopping trips, inevitably meeting families involved in the local clay industry.[54] More powerfully, the impact of Par Harbour on her personal landscape

would have struck her nearly every day, when any walk from her new home onto the cliffs above Polkerris gave her a close-up view of the cargo ships and the recently rebuilt clay drying sheds across the water, a strikingly different scene from the more picturesque coastal vistas she adored.[55] In an essay on "A Winter's Afternoon, Kilmarth", written in 1970, she embraces her view of Par's working harbour:

> The port is jammed with shipping. Every berth seems full. Derricks appear to intertwine, crisscrossed at every angle, and now that the wind has shifted a few points west it brings the welcome sound of industry, power plants at work, engines whining, men hammering, chimneys pouring out great plumes of smoke, white and curling like the sea. Pollution? Nonsense, the sight is glorious! [...] The white waste from the clay, regretted by some, scatters a filmy dust upon the working sheds, and the bay itself has all the froth and dazzle of a milk churn spilt into a turbulent pool. Tourists may seek the golden sands of holiday brochures if they like, but to swim in such a sea is ecstasy – I have tried it, and I know![56]

27 Living in the Fowey area, it was impossible to ignore the Clay Country, the strange pyramids of spoil visible on the horizon on your route into St Austell, the white "Cornish Alps" asserting their spectacular presence as you drove inland. In *The Loving Spirit*, Daphne had noted the ships exporting clay from the port on the Fowey river, vessels which the Du Mauriers had watched as they passed Ferryside;[57] *Castle Dor* briefly surveyed the "ugly villages" and the "great white clay peaks themselves, turning the moorland landscape into an unlikely range of mountains."[58] Daphne paid closer attention to the atmospheric landscape of her local industry in research for *Vanishing Cornwall*, claiming that:

> These clay-heaps, with their attendant lakes and disused quarries, have the same grandeur as tin mines in decay but in a wilder and more magical sense, for they are [...] mountains formed out of the rocky soil itself [...].[59]

28 She also acknowledged that "The clayman, like the tinner, is an individual with his own traditions",[60] a way of life that outsiders cannot fully comprehend. Shelley Trower, discussing representations of the Clay Country by writers and film-makers, points to their typical adoption of an outsider's response to its environmental destructiveness or weird beauty; in her analysis of *Vanishing Cornwall*, however, she acknowledges that Du Maurier at one point "recognises a crucial difference [...] between the perspective of the clay-worker and the visitor"[61] in her observation: "[...] the clay-worker will continue to blast and excavate, the wanderer to stare in fascination upon this strange white world of pyramid and pool".[62] On coming to live on the cliff opposite Par Harbour, Daphne would find that this distance between wanderer and worker was to shrink, with immediate consequences for her imaginative world.

29 In *Rule Britannia,* readers never enter the Clay Country, but we know that Terry's friends working at the pits can get hold of gelignite while the dockers at "Poldrea" Harbour have access to the American ships.[63] Nanpean, mentioned as the location of an explosion and one of the few unchanged place names in *Rule Britannia,* is situated in the heart of the clay area.[64] This industry has reshaped Du Maurier's concept of Cornwall, not in the sense of supplying a new landscape or local characters, but through her recognition of another dimension in the Cornish economy. Here is a class of skilled men to match the maritime boat-builders, the sea-going fishermen and the rural farmers who had previously impressed her. Alan Kent, the Cornish academic whose first novel was entitled *Clay*, in considering writers from the clay area, has proposed that "the Cornish imagination tends to embrace the 'anti-pastoral' for telling it like it is", resisting romantic Revivalist modes for a harsher industrial realism.[65] In acknowledgement of her new-found relationship with her adopted homeland, Daphne can be seen as turning almost instinctively towards this grittier literary tradition.

The Incomer in League with the Locals

30 Du Maurier, particularly in the later phase of her career, has been grouped with those "outsiders who synthesized their own personal identity with Cornwall."[66] The Cornish themselves like to make an issue of identity, generally falling back on a definition where "local" means (at least) second generation. But notions of insideness and outsideness will of course always be contested. In her recent book on visual representations of Cornwall, Rachel Moseley has adopted a "view from the bridge" as a way of avoiding "any essentially different view of knowledge of place based on some idea of an ethnically authentic Cornishness"; her use of the term "insider" indicates not ethnicity or established habitation but, more loosely, "a connectedness to place which comes through significant and meaningful experience of it over both time and space."[67] This goes some way towards understanding Du Maurier's use of Cornwall in earlier novels, but connection with a place is not necessarily the same as connection with a people, an important distinction at this later point in Daphne's life. And Moseley's insider is not necessarily the same as a settled incomer, someone like Daphne whose origins were elsewhere – in her case, among the "metropolitan élite" – but who lived for decades in the same part of Cornwall. The closest she came to defining her own relationship with her Cornish-bred neighbours was in *Vanishing Cornwall*, where she included herself in a single category of "elderly natives by birth or by adoption."[68] Sharply distinguishing herself from those "more recent newcomers" who threaten disruptive change, she is one of "the people who came to settle and put down roots."[69] What she had discovered was the significance above all of an incomer's allegiance, shifting over time, which overcame any other annoyance with contemporary Cornwall. The most marked shift of all appears to have taken place in the course of Daphne's move to Kilmarth with her creation of Mad, an indomitable old woman in league with the locals.

31 Initially intended as a tribute to the actress Gladys Cooper, a long-time friend of the Du Maurier family, 79-year-old Mad became a batty incarnation of Daphne herself. This theatrical character, revelling in disruption and resistance to authority, may have seemed to the novel's first readers unrecognisable as the respectable Lady Browning. But Daphne had always felt herself to be a rebel in spirit, a theme that runs convincingly throughout Margaret Forster's biography. In "A Winter's Afternoon, Kilmarth", she had depicted herself on the cliffs in her new incarnation very much in the guise of her future heroine, down to her description of herself in a dog-walking outfit with radical Russian overtones: "Dressed like Tolstoy in his declining years, fur cap with ear flaps, padded jerkin and rubber boots to the knee";[70] Mad's costume, described two years later, is further exaggerated, sartorially and politically, as "a combination of Robin Hood and the uniform worn by the late lamented Mao Tse-Tung."[71] Did Daphne fantasise about an eccentric old age as a final escape from the dilemma foregrounded by feminist critics, as twentieth-century women looked for "ways out of the blind alleys into which flights from respectable womanhood seemed to lead"[72] and tried to negotiate "the precarious state of the aged woman in Western society"?[73] Intriguingly, Tolstoy, Robin Hood and Chairman Mao are all, of course, men.

32 Even as a child in the nursery Daphne had identified boyishly with the diminutive outlaw Peter Pan, while her sister Angela was content to play the part of J.M. Barrie's domesticated Wendy; Gladys Cooper, the younger Daphne's *alter ego*, took the role of Peter when Angela later acted Wendy on stage.[74] In *Rule Britannia*, the troop of Lost Boys brandishing bows and arrows, mothered by the Wendy-like character of Emma, turn the older Daphne's *alter ego,* Mad, into another incarnation of Peter Pan, now a mischievous boy in an ageing body.[75] The main action of the book shows Mad allying herself not with Cornish women but with the men who play traditional roles – with fisherman Tom Bate at the Town Hall meeting, with farmer Jack

Trembath and Dr Bevil Summers in Operation Dung-Cart, with the Celtic rebel Willis in the woods and, through her adopted son Terry, with the clay-workers. And it also shows her exercising as much bloody-mindedness as the locals, determined to keep a piece of the action for herself.

Conclusion

33 During her move from Menabilly, Daphne must have felt at her most vulnerable; despite her triumphant production of *The House on the Strand*, this haunting book nevertheless revealed her anxiety about fomenting more fiction. But on turning to face the clay works, she had found the inspiration for one more novel. By harnessing the Cornish spirit of self-reliance, their determination to pull through and resist oppression, she had summoned the energy to carry on writing. She must have been wondering, though: would Cornwall in the 1970s keep her spirit going through what had effectively become her retirement at Kilmarth? Could she come to terms with the new Cornwall rather than hanging onto the past? One explanation for *Rule Britannia*'s extravagant bravura may be the huge effort required to mask her fears. She desperately wanted to keep the get-out-of-jail card that was her creative spirit, expressed in Mad's dying belief that we are all mountebanks and players to the end.[76]

34 In fact she never published another novel, but at least she still had Cornwall, which was as vital to her as it had been since her discovery of Ferryside nearly half a century before. During the Menabilly years, she had perhaps felt more of a connection to the place than the people; on her move to Kilmarth, she had come full circle, reverting to the respect for the Cornish that had imbued her first book, *The Loving Spirit*. She could never forgive the post-war defacement of a much-loved land, but she must have felt, on completing *Rule Britannia*, that if anything could sustain her to the end, it would be Cornwall – not only the place where she had put down deep roots, but also its rebellious people.

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1 Margaret Forster, *Daphne Du Maurier,* London: Chatto & Windus, 1993, 351.

2 Bernard Deacon, "And Shall Trelawny Die? The Cornish Identity," *in* Philip Payton (ed.), *Cornwall Since the War: The Contemporary History of a European Region*, Truro: Institute of Cornish Studies / Dyllansow Truran, 1993, 200-223, 206. Deacon's reference to Du Maurier and Val Baker appears in footnote 33 of the same article, page 221.

3 Daphne Du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall* [1967], London: Virago, 2007, 8.

4 Christian Browning, Introduction. *Vanishing Cornwall* by Daphne Du Maurier, London: Virago, 2007, v-viii, vi.

5 Margaret Forster, *op. cit.*, 1993, 360.

6 Daphne Du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall*, *op. cit.*, 171.

7 *Ibid.*, 140.

8 *Ibid.*, 185.

9 This was not simply Du Maurier's jaundiced perception. See Mitchell on "The 1960s Population Turnaround" (Peter Mitchell, "The Demographic Revolution," *in* Philip Payton (ed.), *Cornwall Since the War: The Contemporary History of a European Region*, Truro: Institute of Cornish Studies / Dyllansow Truran, 1993, 135-156, 140-142), and Williams and Shaw on the impact of tourism: "The growth of mass tourism in Cornwall brought with it the demand for cheaper holiday accommodation. This was met by chalets, caravan and camping sites [...] there was a 310% increase in the number of chalets between 1954 and 1964" (Allan M. Williams and Gareth Shaw, "The Age of Mass Tourism," *in* Philip Payton (ed.), *op. cit.*, 84-97, 87).

10 Daphne Du Maurier, *The House on the Strand* [1969], London: Virago, 2003, 2.

11 *Ibid.*, 89.

12 *Ibid.*, 41.

13 *Ibid.*, 2.

14 *Ibid.*, 173.

15 *Ibid.*, 90.

16 Alan Kent, The Literature of Cornwall: Continuity, Identity, Difference 1000-2000, Redcliffe P, 2000, 178.

17 Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *Daphne Du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination,* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, 2, 186.

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19 Oriel Malet, Foreword. *Letters from Menabilly*, London: Orion, 1994, xiii.

20 For example, recent acquisitions by the University of Exeter Archives, and the Rowley's sale catalogue for "The du Maurier Collection" (particularly Daphne's regular correspondence with Maureen Baker-Munton, much of it written from Kilmarth), which was generously shared on line at rowleyfineart.com for a short period in 2019. The Papers of Sir Victor Gollancz at the University of Warwick reveal Daphne's interest across a spectrum of political matters from apartheid to nuclear disarmament.

21 Daphne Du Maurier, *Letters from Menabilly: Portrait of a Friendship* [1993], London: Orion, 1994, 190-191.

22 Flavia Leng, *Daphne Du Maurier: a Daughter's Memoir*, Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1994, 102. See also du Maurier's letter to Tod [Maud Waddell], 24 Jan. 194[4], University of Exeter Archives.

23 Angela Du Maurier, *It's Only the Sister* [1951], Truro: Truran, 2003, 242.

24 Flavia Leng, *op. cit.,* 67. See also Du Maurier's letters to Tod, 26 Sept. 1943 and Easter Monday [1944], University of Exeter Archives.

25 For example, Ali Smith, *Autumn* (Hamish Hamilton, 2016) and Jonathan Coe, *Middle England* (Viking, 2018). Ian McEwan, who took 1980s Britain out of Europe in *Machines Like Me* (Jonathan Cape, 2019), followed up with his satirical post-referendum novella *The Cockroach* (Vintage, 2019). A key character in John le Carré's *Agent Running in the Field* (Viking, 2019) fulminates against the referendum; even Julian Barnes, publishing a biography

on a completely different subject, *The Man in the Red Coat* (Jonathan Cape, 2019), has been unable to resist adding an author's note on the country's deluded departure from the European Union.

26 Quoted in Tatiana De Rosnay, *Manderley Forever: The Life of Daphne du Maurier* [2015], translated by Sam Taylor, Allen & Unwin, 2017, 288.

27 Margaret Forster, *op. cit.,* 377-378; Du Maurier, *Letters,* 220-221.

28 Rowley's sale catalogue, 4 October 1976: "If a bye-law is passed, forbidding the dog-owners of Cornwall to walk in the above places, I will personally guarantee to organise a campaign next season beside which the activities of the I.R.A. in Northern Ireland will seem like a curate's tea-party." The IRA connection shockingly surfaced again in 1979, when news came through to Daphne and her son on a picnic at Chapel Point that the distinguished war-time commander Lord Mountbatten, whom she had known through her husband, had been blown up on his fishing boat in County Sligo.

29 *Daphne Du Maurier,* BBC, 31 August 1971, accessed via BBC i-player; from 48 mins.

30 Rowley's sale catalogue, 27 January 1972.

31 Daphne Du Maurier, *Rule Britannia* [1972], Virago, 2004, 299.

32 Bernard Deacon, "And Shall Trelawny Die?," *op. cit.*, 209.

33 Bernard Deacon, Garry Tregidga & Dick Cole, *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism*, Cardiff: Ashley Drake, 2003, 44-58.

34 Daphne Du Maurier*, Vanishing Cornwall, op. cit.,* 187-188.

35 Letter to Oriel Malet, 10 November 1967, 212.

36 3 February 1969, 225. The editor of MK's party magazine, *Cornish Nation,* at this time was Derek Tozer (Deacon et al., *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism,* 58 note 30). Possibly taking her cue from Du Maurier's earlier letter, Forster (*Daphne Du Maurier*, 372) confusingly uses capital letters to refer to MK as the Cornish Nationalist Party; a breakaway party under this name was founded in 1975 – not to be confused with the Cornish National Party, founded in 1969 (Deacon et al. *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism,* 56, 65-66).

37 Margaret Forster, *op. cit.*, 440 note 8.

38 For similar comments, see Joanie Willett, Rebecca Tidy, Garry Tregidga & Philip Passmore, "Why did Cornwall vote for Brexit? Assessing the Implications for EU Structural Funding Programmes," *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, vol. 37, no. 8, 2019, 1343-1360, 1354.

39 See for example, *The Telegraph*, 22 June 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/10918171/David-Camerons-holiday-phone-signal-is-so-bad-he-calls-world-leaders-from-the-top-of-a-Cornwall-hill.html>, accessed on 20 May 2019.

40 Goodhart contends that, although the Remain/Leave divide does not map "straightforwardly" onto his Anywhere/Somewhere groupings, "the values, attitudes, preferences and intuitions of most Leave voters match up with a large part of the Somewhere world view" (David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*, London: Hurst, 2017, 26).

41 The vote in Cornwall was based on competing assumptions, and on this occasion Mebyon Kernow backed Remain. In 1975, MK had supported the other side, while the newly formed Cornish Nationalist Party had upheld the idea of a stronger Cornwall in a united Europe; overall, though, regionalism did not have a significant impact on the 1975 referendum debate, and MK's position on this issue does not appear to have made deep inroads into Daphne's thinking. *Rule Britannia* was to her a clear statement of support for Britain's place in Europe, a position that is implied in the novel by the repercussions of withdrawal, rather than explicitly raised.

42 Du Maurier, *Rule Britannia,* 176-177.

43 Margaret Forster, *op. cit.*, 181; Flavia Leng, *op. cit.*, 89, 105-106.

44 Helen Doe, *Jane Slade of Polruan*, Truro: Truran, 2002, 99-105.

45 Daphne Du Maurier, *Myself When Young* [first published as *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer*], London: Gollancz, 1977, 154-157.

46 Flavia Leng, *op. cit.*, 54.

47 Forster's note on George Hunkin (Margaret Forster, *op. cit.*, 431 note 2) shows some confusion. Daphne, in her own name, bought the Slade boatyard below East Street in Polruan, not George's boatyard at Bodinnick, and sold it in the mid-1960s. George's tea-time visits to Menabilly are recalled by Christian Browning.

48 Daphne Du Maurier, *Letters, op. cit.*, 202.

49 Daphne Du Maurier, *Rule Britannia*, *op. cit.*, 148.

50 *Ibid*., 58.

51 *Ibid*, 54.

52 *Ibid*., 50.

53 Local people may read the novel differently. Cornishman Bert Biscoe was unconvinced by my argument on stereotyping, when we shared a platform at Fowey Festival in May 2019, pointing out that in the case of Jack Trembath, there were still wrestling matches with Brittany in the 1960s. It is also worth noting that traditional occupations like fishing and mining continue to hold symbolic potency in Cornwall. A persuasive motif of the pre-2016 referendum debate was the effect of European restrictions on fishing rights, even though the industry makes a relatively small contribution to the Cornish economy.

54 Margaret Forster, *op. cit*., 356.

55 See *Daphne du Maurier,* BBC, 31 August 1971, accessed via BBC i-player; from 10 mins.

56 Daphne Du Maurier, "A Winter's Afternoon, Kilmarth" [1970], *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories,* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980, 284-294, 288.

57 In her 1978 foreword to Philip Varcoe's booklet, *China Clay*, Daphne describes her parents' initial concerns about Ferryside's proximity to the noisy loading port at Fowey, and records her own 'admiration for all that the china clay industry had done for Cornwall and Cornish men and women' (3).

58 Daphne Du Maurier, *The Loving Spirit*, London: Heinemann, 1931, 197.

59 Daphne Du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall*, *op. cit*., 145.

60 *Ibid*., 146.

61 Trower, 203.

62 Daphne Du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall*, *op. cit*., 148.

63 Daphne Du Maurier, *Rule Britannia*, 82, *op. cit.*, 269.

64 *Ibid*., 114.

65 Alan Kent, "A Sustainable Literature? Ecocriticism, Environment and a New Eden in Cornwall's China-Clay Mining Region," *Cornish Studies*, Second Series, vol. 17, 2009, 51-79, 60.

66 Bernard Deacon, *A Concise History of Cornwall*, Cardiff: U of Wales P, 2007, 185. See also Kent, who notes earlier evidence of more active engagement with Cornish culture in Daphne's contribution to *Castle Dor* and identifies a further "shift in du Maurier's consciousness, and assimilation into the wider Cornish Revival" in later life. Alan Kent, *The Literature of Cornwall: Continuity, Identity, Difference: 1000-2000*, Bristol: Redcliffe P, 2000, 183-184.

67 Rachel Moseley, *Picturing Cornwall: Landscape, Region and the Moving Image*, Exeter: U of Exeter P, 2018, 5-7.

68 Daphne Du Maurier, *Vanishing Cornwall*, *op. cit.*, 171.

69 *Ibid*., 187. In correspondence from Kilmarth she discourages fans contemplating a move to Cornwall, warning them of the degradation brought about by tourism, while insisting that her own "deep" roots could not allow her to live anywhere else. See, for example, Du Maurier's letter to Mrs Warmby, 6 August 1975, University of Exeter Archives.

70 Daphne Du Maurier, "A Winter's Afternoon, Kilmarth," *op. cit*., 285.

71 Daphne Du Maurier, *Rule Britannia*, *op. cit*., 12.

72 Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars*, Oxon: Routledge, 1991, 181.

73 Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *op. cit*., 185.

74 Angela Du Maurier, *It's Only the Sister*, *op. cit*., 15, 76-86.

75 Ella Westland, "Introduction," *Rule Britannia* by Daphne Du Maurier, London: Virago, 2004, viii-ix.

76 Daphne Du Maurier, *Rule Britannia*, *op. cit*., 307.

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When Ella Westland moved to Cornwall in 1989, on taking up a lectureship at the University of Exeter, she continued to publish on feminist issues and Victorian fiction. Intrigued by different representations of Cornwall, she edited a collection on *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place* (1997) in collaboration with the University's Institute of Cornish Studies. An enthusiast for du Maurier's work, Ella became a founder of the annual Daphne du Maurier Festival (now Fowey Festival) and the organiser of two associated conferences. She has published *Reading Daphne: A Guide to the Writing of Daphne Du Maurier* (2007), contributed to Virago's *Daphne Du Maurier Companion* (2007), and written the introduction to the Virago edition of *Rule Britannia* (2004).

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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
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Daphne Du Maurier: a Critical Bibliography

Daphne du Maurier : bibliographie critique

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Texte intégral

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19 "A Man of Straw", *The Bystander* (27 November 1929): 482-484, 488.

20 "Portrait of an Actress", *The Saturday Review* (23 May 1931): 753-754.

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25 *Happy Christmas*, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1940; London: Todd, 1943. Also rpt. in *The Fireside Book of Christmas Stories*. Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1945. 459-468.

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27 *Kiss Me Again, Stranger: a Collection of Eight Stories Long and Short*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953. Contains two new stories on top of the six in the British ed. of *The Apple Tree*: "Split Second", and "No Motive."

28 *Early Stories*, London: Todd, 1954 (no illustrations); London: Todd, 1955 (with illustrations). Contains eighteen stories: "Panic", "La Sainte Vierge", "A Difference in Temperament", "And Now to God the Father", "Adieu Sagesse", "Frustration", "Piccadilly", "Tame Cat", "Mazie", "The Supreme Artist", "Angels and Archangels", "Indiscretion", "Fairy Tale", "The Closing Door", "The Lover", "Leading Lady", "Nothing Hurts for Long", and "Week-end".

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30 *The Breaking Point*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959. Contains one new story on top of the eight in the British ed.: "The Limpet", later reproduced in *The Doll: Short Stories*, London: Virago, 2011.

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33 *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980; London: Gollancz, 1981. Contains "East Wind", on top of "The Rendezvous" and ten other previously published stories.

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34 *Come Wind, Come Weather*, London: Heinemann, August 1940 (1st ed.) and November 1940 (2nd ed.); New York: Doubleday, 1941. The first UK ed. contains an introduction, ten stories ("The Admiralty Regrets...", "George and Jimmy", "Over the Ration Books", "A Nation's Strength", "A Miner's Tale", "'Physician, Heal Thyself'", "Spitfire Megan", "The Revolutionary",

"London: 1940?", "Mrs. Hill and the Soldiers"), and an epilogue. The 2nd UK ed. adds an eleventh story ("In a London Air-Raid Shelter") while the US ed. opens with "A Word to America".

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48 MALET Oriel (ed.), *Daphne Du Maurier: Letters from Menabilly*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1992.

Daphne Du Maurier Archives

49 *The main archive is housed in the Special Collections of the University of Exeter.*

50 The library holds the following papers relating to Daphne Du Maurier and her family: EUL MS 144, 206, 207, 276, 301, 307, 341, 342, 346, 351, 354, 359, 363, 400.

51 *Other Daphne Du Maurier papers, particularly her letters, are held at various repositories, including:*

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Articles du même auteur

Introduction [Texte intégral]
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'Other Books Like *Rebecca*? Are There Any?': The Singular Fate of a Novel [Texte intégral]
« Des livres comme *Rebecca*, y en a-t-il d'autres ? » : le destin singulier d'un roman
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The Enduring Appeal of Daphne Du Maurier's Fiction
Recension

Jacqueline Fromonot, *Figures de l'instabilité dans l'œuvre de William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863). Étude stylistique*

Max Véga-Ritter

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Texte intégral

De l'instabilité dans le rapport à la Vérité, et de ses vertus créatrices, et de ses défauts

1 Madame Jacqueline Fromonot vient de publier *Figures de l'instabilité dans l'œuvre de William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863). Étude stylistique*. Il faut du courage pour s'attaquer à cette figure de « Janus Bifrons » comme Jacqueline Fromonot le qualifie elle-même, à une époque où celle-ci paraît injustement vouée à glisser dans l'oubli. Elle le fait en s'étant armée des sciences « dernier cri » de la critique littéraire, en écartant d'emblée celles qui paraissent le plus en défaveur, la

psychanalyse et même la psychobiographie. Elle s'en tient au texte qu'elle scrute impitoyablement, sous tous les angles, armée de son souci d'objectivité et de sa connaissance de l'œuvre de W.M. Thackeray, qu'elle possède à fond.

2 Appuyée sur une culture classique solide, elle saisit la figure de l'auteur dans ce qui constitue son essence, en « tension entre les figures tutélaires d'Horace et de Juvenal, entre l'irénisme d'un narrateur tolérant vis-à-vis des figures humaines et l'agonisme d'un moraliste intransigeant, adepte d'un humour léger « charitable », mais aussi de l'ironie typique d'un *eiron* sapant les certitudes de *l'alazon* arrogant » (20). C'est ainsi qu'après avoir salué la culture classique de l'auteur, elle analyse avec subtilité et rigueur son penchant pour les recours à « l'anticlimax et ses chutes imprévisibles », savamment rendues telles, qui constituent le fond de sa méthode favorite, faite de contradictions et d'oppositions, savamment tendues au lecteur.

3 L'auteur procède à l'analyse des manières dont W.M. Thackeray construit son pouvoir quasi absolu d'auteur-narrateur dans le roman, tout en affectant de n'en revendiquer quasiment aucun, tantôt se présentant modestement comme un auteur qui refuse de revendiquer toute autorité, pour mieux la reprendre, voire la confisquer tout simplement, ce que Jacqueline Fromonot démontre admirablement dans son commentaire, un modèle du genre, du célèbre mot de Thackeray à propos de *Vanity Fair* « *a novel without a hero* » (51). Elle repère la tension entre une force centripète resserrant les fils sur l'intrigue et une force centrifuge dilatoire et vagabonde. Elle analyse l'art subtil avec lequel il reprend les fils tout en imprimant à son discours une portée prédicatrice pleine d'humour.

4 Son travail reprend la difficulté qui nargue le lecteur depuis le lieu où elle se dissimule, celle de la Vérité, comme l'avait noté Raymond Las Vergnas, notre maître commun, qui voyait en Thackeray « un homme sensible au pour et au contre, accablé par la partialité des choses et qui nous présente à chaque instant le spectacle d'un homme double chez qui la contradiction s'est imposée en maîtresse ». L'autrice marque l'impossibilité d'atteindre à la vérité absolue, « d'où découlent deux plans irréconciliables, réfractaires à toute peinture unifiée » (75).

5 Jacqueline Fromonot note avec piquant que, pour illustrer son propos, Thackeray utilise l'image du cadavre dans le placard, dans *The Newcomes* (« skeletons rôtis » [76]), entre autres, avec le risque de suggérer quelque secret inavouable. Oui, mais quel secret ? On aurait aimé que l'auteur s'attaque à cette question qui renvoie immanquablement à la biographie de l'écrivain, sujet tabou dans la méthode adoptée par l'écrivain du livre. Dommage. De la part d'une autrice dont l'information surabonde et qui nous aurait réservé quelques surprises, à coup sûr.

6 C'est dans le chapitre 3 « Trouble dans les langues » qu'elle ménage pour le lecteur quelques bonnes surprises. Si elle relève que la langue de l'auteur est sans détour ni bizarreries, et pourtant pleine d'interventions saillantes, elle note sa polyglossie, et son « pérégrinisme », terme par lequel elle évoque le détour par la langue étrangère. Elle montre son aisance dans l'utilisation des langues étrangères, du français, qui coule de source dans son emploi, mais pas seulement, de l'allemand aussi, de l'hindou etc. Elle y voit la volonté de se présenter lui-même, mais aussi un monde européen comme allant de soi, naturels, par opposition à des britanniques engoncés dans leur langue et leur conscience de soi.

7 Peut-on parler d'un auteur véritablement européen, par la culture et sa connaissance intime des langues européennes (et non européennes) ? La question méritait d'être posée.

8 Dans la formule célèbre de Virgile, reprise par W.M. Thackeray, « Sure, love *vincit omnia* » dans *Pendennis* (441), l'anglais donne un sujet naturel au verbe latin et l'intégration s'accomplit. Cependant, Jacqueline Fromonot cite des cas plus difficiles. Ces liens peuvent alors se révéler antagonistes et opposés irréductiblement (98).

Cette opposition, dans ces cas, peut se révéler créatrice. En faisant de Becky Sharp une française d'origine (aujourd'hui une binationale), en lui faisant rejeter par la portière de la voiture qui l'emmène de l'école, le *Dictionnaire* du Dr Johnson, Becky

Sharp pose un geste fondateur. Elle reproduit à sa manière l'acte du régicide français dont elle est pour sa part l'héritière. W.M. Thackeray répudie l'acte et reconnaît tout à la fois la part révolutionnaire qui l'habite intimement. Le personnage illustre l'élément irréductible et contradictoire de Thackeray dans Becky Sharp, et le récuse. Mais l'opinion peut être tentée de rejeter Amelia comme trop prude, et se détourner des deux. La duplicité de Becky Sharp lui nuit-elle dans l'esprit des lecteurs ? L'a-t-il trop chargée ? Ou celle de W.M. Thackeray se retourne-t-elle contre lui-même ? Cependant, le personnage de Becky Sharp met en lumière par contre- coup les défauts de la société victorienne, sa corruption notamment.

10 À vrai dire, la démarche de Becky Sharp dans *Vanity Fair* est porteuse d'un élément novateur qui va faire son chemin nuitamment et trouvera un écho, quelque temps plus tard, avec la décision du refus d'une princesse de partager son royal époux avec sa maîtresse, dans le ménage. L'opposition entre la vérité et le mensonge trouvait, là, un épilogue qui n'aurait pas dû surprendre les lectrices et lecteurs de W.M. Thackeray. Les observateurs de la société britannique avaient déjà noté que W.M. Thackeray avait relevé la place centrale qu'occupait le conflit entre l'Aristocratie anglaise et sa bourgeoisie avide de pouvoir, en particulier en raison du fait que les Gentlemen « forment une sorte d'enclave dans la bourgeoisie à l'usage de la Gentry en même temps qu'ils servent de tremplin pour les bourgeois en marche vers la *upper class* » (François Bedarida, *La Société Anglaise, 1851-1973*), dans un processus de renouvellement et de remise en question des institutions. Il faut remarquer, bien sûr, qu'arracher les masques aux mensonges pouvait exposer leurs auteurs à quelque déconvenue en raison même de la place stratégique qu'ils occupaient dans la société.

11 En limitant volontairement son propos au monde imaginaire, « figuré », de W.M. Thackeray, en excluant tout recours à la biographie, pour discuter de sa vérité romanesque, Jacqueline Fromonot ne s'est-t-elle privée délibérément d'un volet important ? La longue discussion sur le concept de vérité, de vraisemblance qui occupe son dernier chapitre incline le lecteur à poser la question. Est-il raisonnable de laisser de côté, en raison de sa durée sans doute relativement brève, son mariage avec Isabella Shawe et sa fin dramatique, ou encore la personnalité de l'auteur et les épisodes de sa relation agitée avec ses amis : Jane and William Brookfield, à laquelle l'époux mit un terme. Peut-on nier que l'essentiel de son œuvre se situe entre *Vanity Fair* et *Henry Esmond* ?

12 Faudrait-il voir dans l'ensemble des romans de W.M. Thackeray un « Jeu de reflets » (219) comme l'affirme un des sous titres de l'œuvre de madame Fromonot, dans son dernier chapitre ? Ce serait suivre le romancier dans ses fantaisies dont il perdait le fil, lui-même, mais comme à dessin, comme le montre le travail de l'autrice. Ce serait réduire l'écrivain à être un raconteur d'histoires, ou de sornettes dont il serait le maître arbitraire. Oui, si l'on coupe ses romans de la réalité qu'elle prétend copier et recréer, celle de la Société Victorienne, à laquelle elle s'oppose et qu'elle prétend révéler à elle-même, et dont elle critique la réalité de toutes ses forces, où elle puise pourtant sa sève et sa substantifique moelle, à qui elle donne son sens et contre laquelle elle s'arcboute de toutes ses forces dans une protestation violente mais dont elle recherche l'acquiescement du fond d'elle-même. C'est à mes yeux toute sa noblesse.

13 La question de la vérité se pose dans l'œuvre de W.M. Thackeray, parce que telle est la volonté de l'écrivain. Avec ce rapport à elle, le critique butte sur une faille fondamentale dans la personnalité de l'auteur. Le travail de Jacqueline Fromonot met en exergue avec profondeur et justesse le rôle capital joué dans son œuvre par l'anticlimax comme moyen de mettre en œuvre une vérité ou de nier son apparition tout en lui faisant une place. Il s'agit de la mettre au centre de façon paradoxale, sans puritanisme. Le grand mérite de l'œuvre publiée et sa contribution au savoir est d'avoir mis en lumière son rôle et avoir ainsi éclairé le débat sur son œuvre.

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Articles du même auteur

Loi et identité féminine dans *Jane Eyre*. Lecture psychocritique [Texte intégral]
The Making of Feminine Identity and Law in *Jane Eyre*. A Psychocritical Reading
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