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The Myth, the Story and the Romance

The Jane Eyre- Myth in *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* and *Nine Coaches Waiting*

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Introduction

Jane Eyre is a widely known novel, read in the comfortable sphere of the home, studied and taken apart at university. Many young adolescents encounter *Jane Eyre* in secondary school and occasionally it is even read as a good story-book for slightly younger children. Almost revolutionary when it was published, Charlotte Brontë wrote a novel that still fascinates many people today. Widely read as it is, it also has an enormous influence. Ever since its publication *Jane Eyre* has been haunting popular culture. The novel has been reproduced many times, in many forms. Recently another movie adaptation of the book has been shown in the cinemas. “Beyond this, the novel has sustained a varied ‘afterlife’, appearing in or as numerous sequels, prequels, simultaneous tales, stage plays, a musical, comic books, parodies, postage stamps, and, of course, literary criticism” (Hateley 2005: 1022).

Next to *Jane Eyre* itself this thesis will examine two novels, *Rebecca* and *Nine Coaches Waiting* which use the famous myth around Jane Eyre. The myth is: plain girl meets dark handsome and rich man but she does not marry him until she is independent herself. These elements give the novel the character of a bildungsroman; throughout the novel the heroine develops and grows. Significant for the myth are its ending, the character of the heroine, the Gothic elements, the romantic suspense and the form of narration. These are the basic elements of the myth and they recur in the other reproductions of *Jane Eyre*. As Hateley writes in “The End of The Eyre Affair: Jane Eyre, Parody and Popular Culture” *Jane Eyre* is “one of the consistent motifs of our culture’s self-representation” (Hateley 2005: 1022). The combination of the myth’s high literary value and its romantic suspense account for its continuing popularity. On the one hand it is a bildungsroman displaying the growth of a young lady fighting the system to become an independent woman. On the other hand, it is the classic romantic love story of a poor girl who wins the heart of a rich, outspoken character of a man. Despite the obstacles the novel has a happy ending and the couple marries. This

polarity of the myth is the main cause of its lasting popularity. Vanden Bossche characterizes Jane as a social climber, a “self-made woman” (Vanden Bossche 2005: 56). She is not merely the romantic heroine she appears to be at first sight. This thesis will be analysing the polarity of the myth by answering the following question: what causes the popularity and quality of the Jane Eyre-myth? This thesis will look at the significant elements of the myth mentioned earlier in this introduction and which recur in *Rebecca* and *Nine Coaches Waiting*.

First of all, the character of the heroine will be looked at. Jane Eyre herself has a striking character. She does not have the looks of a romantic heroine: she is plain and not really a beauty. Laurence Talairach- Vielmas writes in “Portrait of a Governess, Disconnected, Poor and Plain: Staging the Spectral Self in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*” that Jane contrasts herself with other more beautiful women such as Blanche Ingram. He argues that their beauty causes these women to be very present, whereas Jane attempts to make herself invisible, or even vanish:

[...] in *Jane Eyre*, I will contend that pictures and paintings function as such written materials, the visual tracing the vanishing of the heroine’s body as she compares herself to more attractive models of femininity and increasingly loses corporeality, ultimately becoming a voice which the blind hero can only hear (Talairach- Vielmas 2009: 128).

Jane’s shyness, her plain appearance and her insecure feelings connect to this urge to make herself invisible. However, despite these features Jane is a social climber: from an orphan she becomes a governess and eventually by marrying Rochester she becomes part of the highest social class as VandenBossche shows. Despite her meek appearance Jane fights her social status. The nameless heroine of *Rebecca* is similar to Jane. Her plain, shy character is emphasized by the fact that she remains nameless. For clarity’s sake this thesis will refer to *Rebecca*’s heroine as Mrs. de Winter and Rebecca will be referred to with her first name. Even Linda in *Nine Coaches Waiting* is very shy. All three women seek to remain in the background. This habit is part of their character, but also of the social status they have in the

novels. All three change status and become more confident throughout the novel. Moreover, Jane and the new Mrs. De Winter are opposites of their predecessors. Bertha and Rebecca were both wild and passionate. The case of Linda in *Nine Coaches Waiting* is different because Raoul did not have a previous wife. Raoul himself however is wild and passionate and it is made obvious that Linda is not really the type he would choose first.

Secondly, the Gothic elements used in the novels will be looked at. *Jane Eyre*, corresponding to the fashion of the time it was published, has certain very famous Gothic elements such as the mansion Thornfield Hall which seems haunted, Jane's telepathic connection to Mr. Rochester when she wanders the moors and most importantly the hero, Mr. Rochester, who has an aura of evil and mystery around him. Although these elements are characteristic for the Victorian era they are transferred in both *Rebecca* and *Nine Coaches Waiting*. Apparently they are an important part of the plot. Without these Gothic features the plot would rely too much on its romantic suspense. The ghost of Rebecca is not actually haunting the halls of Manderley, but just like Bertha she torments the heroine. In *Nine Coaches Waiting* the haunting ghost is a living woman. Héloïse de Valmy's presence frightens Linda.

Thirdly, the narration of all three novels will be looked at and compared. Just like *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* and *Nine Coaches Waiting* are narrated in the past tense by the heroine herself. She is reflecting on her life. Jane has been changing her social position very actively until she marries Mr. Rochester. She settles down in marriage and only then does she tell her story. Mrs. de Winter does not actively fight her social position. She sticks to her social position out of insecurity. It is Maxim who pulls her out of this position and gives her a higher social status. Mrs. de Winter also reflects when she is living the quiet life of a middle-aged couple with Maxim. She has been very uncomfortable with the life she is reflecting, with her position and with her own insecurity. Linda in *Nine Coaches Waiting* is also narrating her story in the

past tense. However, the actual moment in time when she starts reflecting is not given. This thesis will be analysing whether all three women are in fact dissatisfied with their ending, as has been claimed of Jane's fate. Vanden Bossche remarks:

Even the role of genteel wife of Edward Rochester is not a final, achieved identity. Jane's compulsion to write her story ten years after the last events recorded in the novel demonstrates that the marriage that satisfies her need for kinship and community does not represent an ultimate preference for gentility over entrepreneurial autonomy, or even for genteel marriage made viable through middle-class autonomy. (VandenBossche 2005: 58)

Lastly, the matter of narration is closely connected to the ending of the plot. It is the cliché of romantic suspense that the heroine gets the hero, and on the surface it seems to be a good and happy ending. In the plot a big twist is made, from being dependent the heroine has become an independent and confident person, whereas the hero turns from independent to depending on his lover. Mr. Rochester is blind and Jane Eyre, as his wife, takes care of him. Mr. de Winter depends on the nameless heroine to keep Rebecca's murder a secret. The ending of *Nine Coaches Waiting*, however, seems entirely different. It seems as if Linda does not even need any confirmation that Raoul loves her. Nonetheless Raoul utters the three words which make him depend upon her.

While the plot is narrated in the past tense, it can be questioned whether the heroines are content with their final positions. Settling down in married- life does not seem to fit the struggle of emancipation Jane has fought, but also Mrs. de Winter and Linda have struggled. Moreover, in *The Eyre Affair* by Jasper Fforde the novel *Jane Eyre* has an alternative ending and thus it displays a subversive view of the classic ending. In this ending Jane does not hear Rochester's call, but instead agrees to St. John's proposal. In the world with *Jane Eyre*'s alternative ending readers acknowledge the literary value of the novel, but are highly unsatisfied with its ending. *Jane Eyre*'s classic ending seems to "[gesture] toward feminist discourse while ultimately promulgating and reinforcing conservative romantic endings in the

service of patriarchal culture” (Hateley 2005: 1034), writes Erica Hateley. This can be connected to the fact that the narration is a reflection, which sheds a different light on the myth.

By analysing these various elements of the Jane Eyre- myth this thesis will show that although the romantic suspense is a very important feature, the myth has deeper layers. Behind the romantic suspense of the myth lives a deep literary value which accounts for the continuing popularity of the Jane Eyre- myth.

Chapter I

A Heroine, Plain but Strong

Jane Eyre is known as ‘plain Jane’, the new Mrs. de Winter does not even have a first name and both are characterized as strikingly ordinary. Linda Martin in *Nine Coaches Waiting* is not particularly described as ordinary, but she comments on her looks: “I myself must have just that drab, seen-better-days shabbiness that Daddy’s old case had, dumped there among the sleek cabin-class luggage” (Stewart 1958: 4). Linda has lost her wealth and together with this wealth she has lost her attractiveness. None of the women have the looks of a romantic heroine. As Mrs. de Winter remarks: “I thought of all those heroines of fiction who looked pretty when they cried, and what a contrast I must make [...]” (DuMaurier 1938: 44).

Esther Godfrey writes in “Jane Eyre, from Governess to Girl Bride” that the display of femininity is connected to wealth and only for the higher classes. These women have time to dress up: Blanche Ingram in *Jane Eyre* is a good example. By drawing Blanche’s portrait and comparing it with her own portrait Jane contrasts herself to Blanche. With her background of Lowood, which is characterized by Godfrey as place for the working-class, Jane is used to dress very simply. Moreover, her features are not strikingly beautiful. Jane and Linda’s position as governesses, belonging to the middle-class, is marked by non-sexuality. Linda thinks she is plain like Jane. She has known wealth in her childhood, but now: “I myself must have just that drab, seen-better-days shabbiness that Daddy’s old case had” (Stewart 1958: 4). To Linda her looks are combined with her social position. She thinks very low of herself, even more so because she is not able to be in position higher than a governess. Linda’s low self-esteem reaches a height when she falls in love with Raoul, but Raoul is able to see her beauty:

‘Why me? [...] And *you* – you could have anyone. So...why?’

‘Do you want to know why?’ His hands turned me round to face the mirror again, holding my back against him. I could feel his heart hammering against my shoulder-blade. His eyes met mine in the glass. ‘You don’t have to be humble, *ma belle*. That’s why.’ (Stewart 1958: 227)

Raoul shows Linda her own beauty and by his marriage proposal he offers her an opportunity to escape the position of governess. As a companion to Mrs. Van Hopper, Mrs. de Winter does not have such a determined non-sexual position as Jane and Linda. Her relationship to Mrs. van Hopper is paradoxical: “She is not really a friend”, I told him, ‘and ‘she is an employer [...], I looked up the word “companion” once in the dictionary’, I admitted, ‘and it said “a companion is a friend of the bosom” (duMaurier 1938: 25). Mrs. de Winter is paid to fulfil the role of a friend, but a true friend cannot be paid. And although Mrs. de Winter’s definition suggests equality, the “friend of the bosom” has to fulfil all her employer’s desires. Maxim compares the sale of friendship to a slave-market. Whereas Jane and Linda have a little freedom in their education of their pupils, Mrs. de Winter does not have such freedom. She is always at the disposal of Mrs. Van Hopper. She does not have a life of her own. Although Mrs. Van Hopper tries to teach Mrs. de Winter a lady’s manner, she does not have the feminine features to function as a companion in high society. Mrs. Van Hopper is resentful when Mrs. de Winter is engaged to be married to such a good party and stresses her own superiority in their goodbye. Mrs. de Winter ascribes this to a “feminine reason”, suggesting she herself does not have such reasons: “I suppose her attitude was deliberate, and for some odd feminine reason she resented this marriage; her scale of values had received a shock” (DuMaurier 1938: 66). In their professions the three heroines are neutral and they do not have to display a strong femininity which corresponds to their plain appearances.

Their social position requires the three heroines to remain at the background. Jane Eyre has an urge to make herself invisible as is remarked by Laurence Talairach- Vielmas in the context of the scene with the Reed family in which Jane is excluded from the other children. Jane has to acquire “a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and

sprightly manner – something lighter, franker, more natural as it were” (Brontë 1847: 9) before she can “be part of the picture” (Talairach- Vielmas 2009: 128). Jane is excluded from her cousins and from the party at Thornfield Hall. Mrs. de Winter suffers the same social exclusion: when she is alone in the hotel at Monte Carlo, the servants do not want to serve her with the same care as when they serve her in company of Mrs. van Hopper or Maxim. Linda has trouble making herself unnoticed, although her position requires that. She likes to speak her mind and has to get used to the fact that she cannot do this in her position as a governess: “I remembered perhaps rather late that I was a servant and this was my employer” (Stewart 1958: 37). Léon de Valmy often tries to evoke Linda to let her reserve go.

While Bertha Mason haunts the halls of Thornfield Hall with her screams, Rebecca haunts the thoughts of Mrs. de Winter. Mrs. de Winter feels the full weight of the fond memory of Rebecca, which the inhabitants of Manderley cherish: “You see, I know that all the time, whenever I meet anyone new, they are all thinking the same thing – How different she is to Rebecca” (duMaurier 1938: 147). Mrs. de Winter does not know how to handle the staff, feeling that she does not belong in the position of a lady. In contrast to Mrs. de Winter Rebecca was extremely feminine. Héloïse de Valmy, fully conscious and alive, haunts Linda, because of the presence of the child Philippe. Héloïse wants to restore her husband’s power and Linda is supposed to be one of her tools to achieve this. Linda, however, is not meek and resists. Her unknown ability to speak French gives her power. To Mrs. de Winter Rebecca is a standard she cannot live up to. Bertha as the mad woman in the attic is a dark foreboding of what becomes the fate of the Rochester’s wife:

The young women are somehow linked to the former wives: Jane, who does not know about Rochester’s first marriage, is portrayed similarly to Bertha. [...] But in contrast to Bertha Jane can and does express her longing for freedom, self-realisation and equality. [...] Du Maurier’s protagonist, in contrast, feels intimidated but also attracted by the former Mrs. de Winter. On the wrong assumption that Rebecca is the perfect woman, an ideal she has to imitate to earn the true love of her husband, she

collects information about Maxim's former wife. This longing for emulation is intensified by Mrs Danvers. Only Maxim's confession that he never loved his first wife and that he was the one who killed her, initiates a sudden maturation of the second Mrs de Winter. (Nungesser 2007: 210)

The heroines' contrast to the former wives is what attracts Maxim and Mr. Rochester. Jane is characterized as a fairy-like creature and as a child by Mr. Rochester: "Childish and slender creature! It seemed as if a linnet had hopped to my foot and proposed to bear me on its tiny wing" (Brontë 1847: 309). Mrs. de Winter is referred to as innocent by Maxim, and he claims she has lost her innocence when he has told his dark secret: "It's gone forever, that funny, young, lost look that I loved. It won't come back again. I killed that too, when I told you about Rebecca... It's gone in twenty-four hours. You are so much older..." (DuMaurier 1938: 336). Linda is more aware of the way of the world and is not characterized with innocence or childlike features, but she is compared to Jane Eyre by her employer: "Léon de Valmy's 'Goodnight, Miss Eyre', with its wholly charming overtone of mockery, followed me to the door" (Stewart 1958: 110). She has more experience, knowing her way around the upper classes, and she does not fear Léon. Godfrey argues that Rochester's reference to Jane as a girl bride emphasizes the ambiguous sexual position of Jane. When Jane is characterized as a childlike person it strengthens Mr. Rochester in his masculinity. The same goes for Maxim: Mrs. de Winter's insecurity and innocence give him the opportunity to command her and show his power. However, Verena- Susanna Nungesser in "From Thornfield Hall to Manderley and Beyond" mentions that after the revelation both men change their superior attitude. After Maxim confessed his secret Mrs. de Winter quickly matures, she is able to handle the servants with more severity and she occupies her place next to her husband to support him. Maxim now depends on her mercy: he needs her love, but she is in the position to dismiss him. Jane has found the means to be independent in contrast to Mr. Rochester: being blind he depends on others. Linda's comparison to Jane Eyre is only mockery by Léon de Valmy. Their relationship is different not in the least because they do not court each other.

Léon de Valmy is in a powerless position. He is disabled and contrary to Maxim and Mr. Rochester he does not have the manor and estate in possession, he only maintains it. Linda instantly sees the evil features of Léon, but she does not realise their impact: “Just because the man looked like Milton’s ruined archangel and chose to appear in the hall like the Demon King through a trap-door, it didn’t necessarily mean that I had to smell sulphur” (Stewart 1958: 36). Léon’s desire to possess the estate is a definite danger for Philippe’s life. Linda does not see that Léon’s physical power is his wife: Héloïse is the one who executes their plans to kill Philippe. Her position as the second wife is very insecure: without a son of her own there is no guarantee that Raoul will protect her once his father is gone. To safeguard her position she is making Léon indebted to her, by trying to make him heir of the beloved Valmy-estate. Linda directly speaks her mind to Léon and is not afraid of him. Linda has less to fear for she has not invested her love in him and she is able to confront him with his crimes. She fears Héloïse when it comes to her position as governess. When her attachment to Raoul has reached Héloïse, Linda loses all fear and has the courage to run away with Philippe. Therefore, Linda has a stronger position than the other two heroines. Nonetheless, her position is also more dangerous. Her attachment to Raoul and her run with Philippe enable Héloïse and Léon to fire her and damage her reputation. Moreover, she risks her own life to rescue Philippe.

“Both the link and the need to set herself apart from the other woman embodying her dark and destructive counterpart are as important as the heroine’s love for the man who is dominant and helpless at the same time” (Nungesser 2007: 217), writes Nungesser in comparing *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, but this love seems to be shattered when the truth about the first wives comes out. Both Jane and Mrs. de Winter need to distance themselves from their lovers. Linda has not fallen in love with the dark hero and the discovery of the truth leads her to the direct need to keep Philippe safe. This need pushes her feelings to the

background. It seems as if Raoul is also part of the conspiracy, and he can only win Linda's heart back by saving Philippe. The discovery of the truth for all three heroines is the moment they have to mature. Jane and Mrs. de Winter are in a stronger position, but Linda has to acknowledge her love for Philippe and Raoul. Up to this point she has remained fairly independent, but to save Philippe she has to accept the help of others. The change that is made in the character of the heroines is characteristic for the Bildungsroman. In a Bildungsroman the protagonist goes through a development that changes his character. Often a Bildungsroman shows the protagonist on his way to adulthood. Carol Lazzoro-Weis defines the female Bildungsroman as finding the female identity. It is a process by which the female protagonist self-consciously develops her own character. The heroines determine their identity by changing their position in love and society.

As Chris Vanden Bossche describes *Jane Eyre* is the story of a self made woman, a Bildungsroman of the rise of the middle-class. Jane changes social position: from member of the working-class at Lowood to the middle-class governess to Rochester's wife. Jane actively seeks a new position. When Rochester is still bound in marriage to Bertha Jane chooses to run away only to return when she is independent. Mrs. de Winter is not actively changing her position. Her marriage with Maxim overcomes her. When Mrs. van Hopper is about to leave for America Mrs. de Winter realizes she cannot part with Maxim upon which Maxim proposes to marry her. She is not happy with the new social status she gained by her marriage, because she cannot live up to Rebecca. Both Jane's and Mrs. de Winter's social position required them to remain at the background and they displayed non-sexuality in their modest behaviour and dresses. However, when they have matured they capture the place of the wife next to their husband. Although they do not gain good looks, they have gained a feminine position in the high class. Linda was degraded after the death of her parents, returning to France is an attempt to return to wealthier times. Linda is a very active heroine seeking to

improve her position and Philippe's life. When Philippe is in danger she does not hesitate to act and save him. She is the one who brings the conspiracy at the Valmy-estate to light. Moreover, Raoul shows Linda she is not like Jane Eyre and she is allowed to display her beauty. Her suggested attachment to Raoul also suggests that she has gained a higher social position.

Chapter II

A Ghost, a Dark Hero and a Haunted House

While *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre* have definite Gothic features, *Nine Coaches Waiting* does not. However, the novel repeats certain elements of *Jane Eyre* which hide a dark secret. These Gothic elements serve as a counterbalance to the romance plot of Jane and Mr. Rochester. The place of action, the large and beautiful mansion Thornfield Hall, seems haunted and Jane has a telepathic connection with Mr. Rochester. Except for Rochester's call over the moors every mysterious element can be explained. The ghost of Thornfield Hall is Bertha Mason, mad and locked away in the attic. Rochester's dark and mysterious air also serves as a Gothic feature. *Rebecca* also uses this to balance its plot. There are no supernatural elements, but a great sense of uneasiness is part of every page in the novel. According to Verena- Susanna Nungesser both novels make use of famous fairy-tales to construct the development of the protagonists, but in particular the tale of "Bluebeard" (Nungesser 2007: 215) echoes through these two novels adding the uncanny to the plot. Both Mr. Rochester and Maxim hide a dark secret in a forbidden room. Jane and Mrs. de Winter are fascinated by this secret.

When Jane arrives at Thornfield Hall for the first time, the screams in the halls of the mansion inspire fear. Despite her fear she becomes fascinated by the supposed ghost of Thornfield Hall. Mrs. Fairfax, however, denies the existence of a ghost. It is the locked away secret that attracts Jane. Mrs. de Winter is not tormented by mysterious screams, but has to live with the memory of Rebecca. Maxim has woven a strange web of mystery around her existence. Everything Mrs. de Winter learns about Rebecca she learns from others, Maxim keeps quiet. Héloïse de Valmy in her attempts to safeguard the Valmy estate for her husband has become obsessed with Philippe. Like Rebecca and Bertha she haunts the halls of the mansion, as a sleepwalker she visits Philippe at night:

Her robe whispered across the carpet. She stopped near the head of the bed. In the dim room her shadow threw a yet deeper darkness over the sleeping child. She put out a hand slowly, almost tentatively, to touch his face. [...] This was Philippe's nightmare. This had happened before. (Stewart 1958: 301)

She does not directly torment Linda; it is Philippe who is truly bothered by her ghostly appearances. However, she is a significant threat. Héloïse can dismiss Linda and she will no longer be able to protect Philippe.

Jane and Mrs. de Winter become fascinated by the woman that is kept hidden from them. Their fascination is connected to a location: the room in the attic and the boathouse, which is a forbidden area for Mrs. de Winter. The secret that captures Linda's attention is not connected to a room. Both Rochester's as well as Maxim's motivation to marry was possession. As a second son Rochester needed to have a means of living like a gentleman. Bertha, the daughter of a rich planter would provide this: "Mr. Mason, he found, had a son and a daughter; and he learned from him that he could and would give the latter a fortune of thirty thousand pounds: that sufficed" (Brontë 1847: 302). By marrying Bertha Rochester gained his own wealth, but once he is married both his father and brother die and Thornfield Hall is his. He no longer needs Bertha and she is locked away in the attic. Maxim keeps up appearances in his marriage with Rebecca as for the benefit of Manderley: "[Rebecca:] I'll look after your precious Manderley for you, make it the most famous show-place in all the country, if you like" (DuMaurier 1938: 305). Léon has a great love for the Valmy estate: "Léon seemed to me to spend his whole time, indeed, his whole self, on the place" (Stewart 1958: 67), but he is only a trustee. Initially the estate belongs to Philippe. His passion is not satisfied with merely stewardship, Léon wants to own the place. In order to achieve this goal Philippe has to die. His desire has to be kept hidden from Linda, but Linda is fascinated by his behaviour. Jane is fascinated by the ghost that haunts Thornfield Hall with screams and Mrs. de Winter "feeds off Rebecca's memory" (Wisker 1999: 31), as she continually compares herself and her relationship to Maxim to Rebecca. Rebecca creates a sense of displacedness to

Mrs. de Winter. The real uncanny feature in *Rebecca* is not a ghost or a madwoman, but rather the fact that Rebecca causes a “refusal of closure” (Wisker 1999: 22) even dead she is present in the second marriage. What is worse is that after Mr. and Mrs. de Winter have left Manderley they cannot leave Rebecca’s influence behind. They will always be on the run, because Maxim killed her.

Rochester, Maxim and Léon have an air of mystery surrounding them, strengthened by the fact that they try to conceal something. They are moody, have dark features and sharp remarks. Their appearances inspire awe and fear. With these characteristics they are examples of the Byronic hero. Rochester, like Bluebeard, is a rich gentleman who seeks “another wife” (Stoneman 2011: 113). Maxim is in the same position, whereas Léon is not a Bluebeard. He and Linda are not lovers, but she is fascinated by his dark features. Linda compares him to a demon king and she describes him tending to arrive unnoticed and seeming to know everything: “He was watching us, of course. A shadow at the centre of the kaleidoscope” (Stewart 1958: 243). Although Linda knows better, it is almost as if Léon has supernatural powers. This is strengthened by the fact that he does not move like an able person, but has to make use of a wheelchair. Moreover, he is not limited by his disability, it has become his strength. This is the reason why Linda cannot grasp him. Léon desires to possess the Valmy estate to gain full power. When he is not able to get this, he kills himself. He is not able to change, whereas Rochester and Maxim change their attitudes. When their dark secrets have been revealed, Rochester and Maxim lose their distance and become more attached to their lovers. Jane discovers Rochester’s soft side: “As he turned aside his face a minute, I saw a tear slide from under his sealed eyelid, and trickle down the manly cheek. My heart swelled” (Brontë 1847: 439). Rochester is no longer a Bluebeard and he needs Jane to take care of him. After having confessed Rebecca’s murder Maxim desperately needs Mrs. de Winter’s

affection: “He went on kissing me, hungry, desperate, murmuring my name” (DuMaurier 1938: 300), whereas previously it was Mrs. de Winter who sought attention.

When the three heroines have discovered the secrets they are in a powerful position. Rochester has power over Bertha, but Jane is still free to walk away. And she does, leaving a desperate Rochester behind. In contrast to Jane, Mrs. de Winter chooses to remain at Maxim’s side. She is bound to Maxim by marriage and has lost her insecurity. Linda, taking her responsibilities, runs away with Philippe. In “Haunted Heroines: The Gothic Imagination and the Female Bildungsromane of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and L. M. Montgomery” Kathleen Ann Miller explains that the Gothic intrusion serves as a social instruction for the heroines, to discipline them. Jane, Linda and Mrs. de Winter are fascinated by the dark secret, although they are warned to keep away. When truth comes out they have to face adulthood and make a choice.

Rochester’s call over the moors also forces Jane to make a decision. At that point, she has already chosen Rochester: “I am coming! [...] Wait for me! Oh I will come!” (Brontë 1847: 415). Rai argues that every supernatural event is explained in *Jane Eyre* except for Rochester’s outcry. Moved by Rochester’s call Jane is “beyond all reason” (Rai 2003: 244) and acts without actually knowing what motivates her. This supernatural connection, according to Rai, is motivated by sympathy. It is only sympathy that remains unexplained. Rochester’s cry is heard by Jane because she has feelings for him. Whether this is love or sympathy, Jane feels compelled to take care of Rochester. They marry. In *Rebecca* there is no such relief. When the sky turns red and the night seems magical it does not offer relief, but a climax: Manderley is on fire. With no home to return to Mr. and Mrs. de Winter will always be on the run. The main reasons for the uncanny in *Rebecca* have disappeared: Mrs. de Winter no longer feels displaced and she is not competing with Rebecca anymore. Mrs. de Winter and Maxim cannot settle down, whereas Jane and Rochester can. When the mysteries around

the attacks are cleared and Philippe is safe, Léon, the one with the gothic features, is removed. He, deprived of his power and position, killed himself: "...Even if Raoul and Hippolyte and I had agreed to hush the whole thing up for Philippe's sake and the sake of the family – what was there left for Léon de Valmy?" (Stewart 1958: 439). Now Linda is free to live her own life.

Chapter III

A Story, a Heroine and a Reader

This chapter will look at the narration of *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* and *Nine Coaches Waiting*. According to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan a text implies someone who writes it, on a first level this is the author. However, the story of a text is told by a fictional narrator, who is separate from the author who produced the text. Narration is the act or process of production as defined in *Narrative Fiction*. In *Jane Eyre* Jane narrates her own story. It is commonly known that the novel often displays a separation between the narrator Jane and the focalizer Jane. A “focalizer is a character within the represented world” (Rimmon-Kenan 2009: 75). This separation makes it possible for Jane to reflect on her own behaviour. Jane narrates her story when she is already married to Mr. Rochester. The same goes for Mrs. de Winter who begins her story with the famous sentence: “last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again” (DuMaurier 1938: 1). *Nine Coaches Waiting* is narrated in the past tense as well, as if Linda is looking back on her life. However, Linda is not often reflecting her behaviour: she is merely telling her story. In all three novels there is a gap between the narration and the focalisation. This gap causes tension and is partly responsible for the suspense in the novels.

Rebecca begins with a dreamlike flashback, which tends to become a nightmare. Manderley is a ruin, nature has taken over and the narrator resolves: “There would be no resurrection” (DuMaurier 1938: 4). In her waking moments she wants to think of Manderley how it “might have been” (DuMaurier 1938: 4). Once awake she does not want to tell Maxim about her dream. The novel continues describing the life Maxim and Mrs. de Winter lead, a calm quiet life, but moving from hotel to hotel. The events at Manderley remain unspoken between them. Despite her earlier resolve and almost accidentally, Mrs. de Winter begins to recall how all this came into being. She wants to speak the unspoken. The uneasiness inhabiting the entire novel has been established here, by the nightmare and the emphasis on

Manderley as the forbidden word. *Nine Coaches Waiting* starts promptly when the action begins: Linda arrives in France and is about to be picked up by Madame de Valmy. Linda stresses her relief at being in the country again: “But I was here, home after nine years. Nine years” (Stewart 1958: 4). Linda’s reflection at this moment is merely the reflection of the event which happened a moment ago: “And I must not let it happen. It was another thing I must remember. I was English. English” (Stewart 1958: 5). The reflection has no knowledge of the future, whereas with *Jane Eyre* Jane’s reflection on the behaviour of the child Jane is made from an adult position: “I could not answer the ceaseless inward question – *why* I thus suffered now, at the distance of – I will not say how many years- I see it clearly” (Brontë 1847: 17).

In *Jane Eyre* Jane is continuously excluded, having no family of her own. According to Peter Allen Dale these exclusions at Gateshead, Lowood and the social exclusion at Thornfield Hall form the expectations of the reader that Jane “must eventually find some inside, some proper and permanent home” (Dale 1986: 111). When she reaches the Rivers family it seems as if she has found this home. But as Dale rightly expresses “the story is not over” (Dale 1986: 111). St. John calls on her religious duty which appeals to Jane. “He offers nothing less than the plot of her redemption, with damnation the only alternative” (Case 1999: 104). Surely, when leaving Thornfield Hall Jane has fled temptation: “My daughter, flee temptation” (Brontë 1847: 316). However, the narrative emphasizes this call was made outside Jane. When St. John makes his offer, Jane once again is summoned by a supernatural call. Again Jane lays all claims for this decision outside herself. The home, the reader must have been expecting, is rejected. As is explained in the introduction, in *The Eyre Affair* Jane is not summoned by Rochester’s voice calling her over the moors. Fforde’s version of the novel rejects “romantic closure” (Hateley 2005: 1023), and leaves Jane to answer her religious duty. In *The Eyre Affair* this ending is characterized as unsatisfactory, because of the lack of

“romantic closure”. Nonetheless, in a loveless connection to St. John Jane has room left to develop herself whereas in her marriage with Rochester she is fully consumed by him: “No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” (Brontë 1847: 446). There is no room left for her to develop her identity further, as she has been doing throughout the novel. When Jane describes the completeness of her marriage the focalizer and narrator are the same. Jane has actively been plotting her own story, but now she is stuck. Her individual identity has been lost in her marriage. She is consumed by Rochester. However, through Rochester Jane establishes her power as narrator as Allison A. Case writes. The narrator makes a distinction between Rochester and the reader. Jane withholds information from him, but not from the reader:

Reader, it was on Monday night- near midnight- that I too received the mysterious summons: those were the very words by which I replied to it. I listened to Mr. Rochester’s narrative, but made no disclosure in return. The coincidence struck me as too awful and inexplicable to be communicated or discussed. (Brontë 1847: 442)

Jane gradually doses the story of her return to Rochester, to make him trust she will stay.

Hereby she shows the reader she is in control of her story.

Mrs. de Winter tells her story in a “cyclic way” (Beauman 2002: 434). She begins at the end, with herself and her husband living in exile in Europe, for reasons that as yet are unclear. “Their activities, as they move from hotel to hotel, sound like those of two elderly expats” (Beauman 2002: 434). Sally Beauman stresses the surprise the reader must feel when it becomes clear the narrator is still a young woman. As narrator, Mrs. de Winter withholds this information and that emphasizes the tragic position she is in. In contrast to Jane and Linda, Mrs. de Winter is very passive. She is paralyzed by her inability to equal Rebecca. However, it is only Mrs. de Winter’s perspective of Rebecca. In her insecurity she paints a picture of an ideal marriage between Maxim and Rebecca. Her fantasy plays with this picture, opposing it to her own cold life with Maxim at Manderley.

Whereas Jane establishes her power as narrator by withholding information from Rochester and giving the reader that information, Mrs. de Winter does not manipulate Maxim. However, she manipulates her readers in withholding her own negative judgement of Rebecca. While Rebecca's negative characteristics are narrated by Maxim, the reader cannot form a true judgement about her. On the one hand this is creating suspense, on the other hand it stresses the insecure position of Mrs. de Winter as focalizer. She is unable to morally judge Rebecca, whereas Maxim severely condemns her with his words: "She was vicious, damnable, rotten through and through" (DuMaurier 1938: 304). Moreover, Maxim ultimately condemns her by killing her. While Maxim shows Rebecca's behaviour in a dark light Mrs. de Winter remains passive. Mrs. de Winter opposes herself in two ways to Rebecca. Firstly, because she feels she cannot equal her. Secondly, she is the wife who stands at her husband's side. Rebecca, obviously, did not. Nonetheless, Mrs. de Winter has not won. She and Maxim have to live the secluded life of an elderly couple, always in hotels, never settling down. Moreover, whereas Rebecca has a first name, Mrs. de Winter receives her only identity through her husband's name. As Sally Beauman remarks: "Long after the book has been closed, which character reverberates in the memory? Rebecca. And which of the two women are readers drawn to, which of these polar opposites fascinates and attracts? Rebecca, again [...]" (Beauman 2002: 438). Rebecca leaves the biggest impression on the reader. The narrator draws herself to the background by emphasizing Rebecca's influence, but also by leaving a true judgement to others.

The reader's expectation for Jane is a home and family as Dale writes, but in *Rebecca* this expectation is that the barrier Rebecca forms between Maxim and Mrs. de Winter will be resolved. By allusion to *Jane Eyre* the expectation in *Nine Coaches Waiting* hints at Linda's attraction to Léon. When Raoul enters the story, Linda's feelings for him become obvious. In his looks he is still linked to his father: "The man who was striding towards me in the

moonlight was not Léon de Valmy, though thirty years ago Léon de Valmy had probably looked exactly like him” (Stewart 1958: 129). Linda consciously narrates this connection. Hereby she herself confirms the link made to Jane Eyre as Léon mockingly does. Like Jane she falls for the dark hero. However, she makes a difference between Léon and his son. Whereas Léon is given the place of the bad guy, Linda takes all blame away from Raoul. The narration does not mention Raoul’s attachment in the conspiracy at all, until Berthe links Raoul to the benefits of Philippe’s death. Only then Linda, as narrator, allows her doubt to show: “The obsessive question burst from me. ‘Is Raoul helping you to kill Philippe?’ ” (Stewart 1958: 304). Up to this point Raoul has been the solid factor to the reader and to Linda herself. As Berthe points out, she cannot turn to him or the police and Linda does not see another solution than running away. Linda’s fear becomes obvious, but she does not let Philippe see her fear. Throughout the novel, Linda has been withholding information from him for two reasons. First, with the same purpose Jane withheld information from Rochester: to make him attached to her. Second, she does not tell him everything about the conspiracy to allow Philippe to be a child. The rescuer eventually is William Blake. As an Englishman, he remains blissfully ignorant of the trouble. William is neutral, because he does not speak the language. Nonetheless the narrator compares him to Raoul: “William was, I thought, as good a driver as Raoul [...]” (Stewart 1958: 424). Even Hippolyte, the uncle who puts matters right and thus is the ultimate saviour of Philippe and Linda, is compared to Raoul in the narrative: “[...] or to think how like Raoul’s his voice was” (Stewart 1958: 443). At that point Linda has given up all hope for her attachment to Raoul, but as a narrator she cannot let him fully go.

In the narration Linda is aware of her irrational behaviour. However, at the moment Raoul is cleared from all suspicion Linda, as focalizer, just has to run: “If I had stopped to think I should never have done what I did. But I was past thinking” (Stewart 1958: 447). Then the focalizer reaches the same conclusion as the narrator:

I began to see him as he really was – not any more as a projection of my young romantic longings, not any more as Prince Charming, the handsome sophisticate, the tiger I thought I preferred [...] He and I had hoed the same row, and he for a more bitter harvest. (Stewart 1958: 453)

Although the gap between the narration and focalisation in *Nine Coaches Waiting* has not been as big as the gap in *Jane Eyre* or *Rebecca*, like the other novels the end of the story is a closed circle. The gap has disappeared.

In contrast to *Jane Eyre* and *Nine Coaches Waiting* *Rebecca* does not end with “romantic closure”. It ends where Mrs. de Winter’s nightmare starts. Although Jane seems to give in to “romantic closure” as Hateley calls it, in marriage she has to fix her identity. The fact that she narrates her story ten years afterwards shows that her identity has been stuck in marriage. Jane forms a unity with Rochester, but has lost her individuality: “I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine” (Brontë 1847: 445). Of the three heroines, Linda is the only one who has truly reached “romantic closure”. Any doubt of the heroine’s happiness cannot be found, because the gap between her focalisation and narration is not that big. While Jane and Mrs. de Winter reflect their story from a fixed point in the future of the narration, Linda does not. The gap in her narration is not defined. The only details about her ending are her feelings for Raoul and his statement of love: “That I love you, I love you, I love you” (Stewart 1958: 455). There is no negative information which would subvert the “romantic closure” of *Nine Coaches Waiting*.

Conclusion

The Jane Eyre- myth of a plain girl who meets a dark, handsome and rich man, only to marry him when she has gained independence herself is used in many novels. This thesis has looked at *Jane Eyre* in relation to two other novels: *Nine Coaches Waiting* and *Rebecca*. In the introduction the following question was asked: what causes the popularity and quality of the Jane Eyre- myth? This thesis has shown the balance between the romance plot and the literary value, by analysing various elements of the different plots. As Erica Hateley writes there is a competition within all the reworkings of *Jane Eyre* between a feminist discourse and romance. The element of the Bildungsroman found in all three novels balances this competition. Coral Lazzaro- Weis defines the female Bildungsroman as a means of finding the female identity. The heroines determine their identity by changing their position in love and society.

When Jane is characterized as a childlike person, it strengthens Mr. Rochester in his masculinity. The same goes for Maxim, Mrs. de Winter's insecurity and innocence give him the opportunity to command her and show his power. Linda is more aware of the way of the world and is not contrasted to Héloïse de Valmy. However, she forms an obstacle to Héloïse's plan to kill Philippe. After the discovery of the dark secrets of the heroes, the heroines mature. Maxim now depends on Mrs. de Winter's mercy. Jane Eyre has found the means to be independent in contrast to Mr. Rochester's physical dependence. Linda's relationship with the dark Léon is very different. They are not bound by love. Evil features and love separate Léon and Raoul. Whereas Léon is the dark Byronic hero, Raoul becomes Linda's lover. Linda, therefore, can quickly distance herself from the situation and run away with Philippe. Emotionally bound to Rochester, this is much harder for Jane. For Mrs. de Winter it is impossible, because she is bound by marriage to Maxim.

Jane is actively changing her social position in the novel in leaving Lowood and marrying Rochester. Jane is a self-made woman as Chris Vanden Bossche describes her. Mrs. de Winter is a very passive heroine, paralyzed by her own insecurity. Her marriage to Maxim more or less overwhelms her. Linda is also an active heroine, seeking to improve her own position as well as Philippe's.

Both Maxim and Rochester have married their first wives in their obsession to preserve Manderley and Thornfield Hall respectively. Their first wives pick up the worst in both men, which they hide. Rochester conceals his marriage and Maxim tries to cover up the murder of Rebecca. Héloïse haunts the Valmy-estate in her desire to help her husband. Léon, in his obsession with the estate, feels the need to kill Philippe so he will gain full possession of it. Jane, Linda and Mrs. de Winter are fascinated by the secret the dark hero tries to hide. Mrs. de Winter "feeds off Rebecca's memory" (Wisker 1999: 31), Jane is determined to find out what monster is hidden in the attic and Linda connects Léon's obsession with the strange attacks on Philippe's life. There are no definite supernatural elements in the three novels. In *Jane Eyre* all the supernatural elements are explained. According to Rai, Jane's connection to Rochester is based on sympathy. *Nine Coaches Waiting* and *Rebecca* are marked by a general sense of uneasiness. The real uncanny element in *Rebecca* is the "refusal of closure" (Wisker 1999: 22) which is evoked by Rebecca's memory. In *Nine Coaches Waiting* the threat of actual danger is rather uncanny.

There is a gap between the narration and the focalisation in the myth. The narrator has the power to withhold information and to reflect. In withholding information or giving the reader extra information Jane establishes her power as narrator. Mrs. de Winter establishes her position as narrator by withholding personal moral judgements on Rebecca, whereas she allows this freedom to other characters in the novel. With this action she contrasts herself to Rebecca as a wife who supports her husband through and through. Linda does not firmly

establish her power as narrator. Only by raising certain expectations when alluding to *Jane Eyre*, but not realizing them, she shows she is in control of her story.

In contrast to *Jane Eyre* and *Nine Coaches Waiting* *Rebecca* does not end with “romantic closure”, it ends where Mrs. de Winter’s nightmare starts. Although Jane seems to give in to Hareley’s “romantic closure”, the fact that she narrates her story ten years afterwards shows that her story is not romantically closed. A marriage is the ultimate happy ending, but against her nature of changing Jane has to fix her identity. She forms a unity with Rochester, but has lost her individuality. She is stuck in her marriage. Of the three heroines, Linda is the only one who has reached a closed “romantic closure”, because the gap between her focalisation and narration is not that big. No doubt about the heroine’s happiness can be found.

The fame of the Jane Eyre-myth is concealed in the fact that the myth can be read in two ways. It can be read as the ultimate romantic-suspense story: the two lovers will live happily ever after. It can also be read as a struggle to mature, a struggle between husband and wife which will not be solved by the ending. However, it is also a struggle for independence and identity. While the heroines search for their identity they fight their social positions as women, especially Jane fights for independence. Moreover, the myth’s strength is to create a great sense of uneasiness, an element which is brought to the extreme in *Rebecca*. *Nine Coaches Waiting* alludes to many literary classics, but never fails to maintain the Jane Eyre-myth. The myth’s combination of fairy-tale elements like Bluebeard, a multi-interpretable ending, the Byronic heroes and the very uncanny anti-heroines is the perfect package to appeal to many readers. To conclude with the words of Thursday Next in *The Eyre Affair*: “*Jane Eyre* is bigger than me and bigger than you” (Fforde 2001: 288).

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