

Does Marriage Produce a Happy Ending for Women in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*?

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In this essay, I will be analysing Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), in relation to the discussion of marriage and its implications on women's happiness. I will show the extent to which this discussion is valid by arguing that marriage and love are two separate entities in the novels, despite being an important expectation for both the protagonists: Jane Eyre and the symbolically nameless narrator. I will also discuss the lengths the two must go to achieve successful marriages and argue that despite the 'happy endings' that both women achieve, they cannot be prosperous because of the women's ethical standpoints shifting to make their marriages successful. It is these texts as well as exploring other critics such as Sioudina Mandibaye, David Clark and Angela Andersson that I will use to develop my argument further, as well as exploring the context of the two time periods to understand the concept of marriage during the time the two novels were written.

Du Maurier's *Rebecca* is a clear example of the female gothic intertwined with a romance plot, and has been described by critics as 'a Cornish Gothic resetting of *Jane Eyre*.'¹ In du Maurier's previous novels, the theme of difficult marriages and unattainable love is prominent, as Sioudina Mandibaye writes in her article, 'Marriage as a Private Hell in Daphne du Maurier's Novels: *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*,' 'in most of Daphne's novels, love is seen as a subject for exultation as well as for depression with some hints of unhappiness.'² The development of the narrator and Maxim de Winter's relationship echoes this sentiment; although it is only teased at the end of the novel that the narrator's wish for emotional intimacy is achieved, only through the knowledge of her husband's haunted past. In du Maurier's *Rebecca*, Marriage is first introduced by Mrs Van Hopper through speculative gossip, 'tell me, is it true the Caxton-Hyslop marriage is not a success?'³ This comment is a through line to the coming events of the text; jealousy, deceit and power all highlight the image of matrimony that du Maurier has created.

To the narrator, examples of marriage are almost non-existent until she is married, meaning that she has no way of comparing any relationships against each other to understand her expectations. One key example in the novel is Beatrice and Giles's relationship, which represents one not typical of a heteronormative marriage especially during the early 20th century. First with Beatrice, being described by the narrator as having an 'abrupt, rather masculine way.'⁴ Again with Giles, who is considered the more feminine of the two; 'He and another man, {...} dressed up as women and sang a duet. What exactly it had to do with the word in the charade nobody knew.'⁵ It is interesting to note that a marriage that would not typically be considered as happy, is the one that is maintained throughout the novel. The couple also contrasts varying ideas about the accessibility of certain social spheres amongst the middle class. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska writes in *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* that 'according to this ideology men and masculinity came to be associated with exclusive access to and participation in the public sphere of work and politics, whereas women and femininity were perceived as confined to the private sphere of domesticity and motherhood.'⁶ Although the couple has conformed in ways such as having children, Beatrice

¹ Diana Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories* (Wales: University Press Wales, 2013), 87.

² Sioudina Mandibaye, "Marriage as a Private Hell in Daphne Du Maurier's Novels: *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*," *Open Journal of social sciences* 9, no. 1 (2021) 3.

³ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. (London: Virago Press, 2003.) 18

⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁶ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth Century Britain: Social, Cultural and Political Change* (United Kingdom: Tylor & Francis, 2014), 9.

does have access to the social domain arguably as much as Giles. It could be argued that du Maurier included Giles and Beatrice as characters in the novel to demonstrate a happy marriage that readers can contrast against the narrator and Maxim's relationship. Again, the narrator comments on their marriage: 'They were both middle-aged and unromantic.'⁷ Although the couple is the best example of a successful marriage in the novel, they equally do not meet the narrator's expectations.

Bronte's *Jane Eyre* has been cited as a predecessor to *Rebecca* and contains elements of a female gothic novel similar to du Maurier's novel. Both follow a comparable plotline and demonstrate complicated marriages. As Mandibaye writes, 'indeed, many of the novel's elements; the mansion consumed by fire, the romance between an older man and a younger woman, the lurking, secret-enshrouded presence of a first wife—is similar to the plot elements of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* with a gothic quality.'⁸ Similar to the narrator in *Rebecca*, Jane also does not have any examples of marriage in her youth. However, she does have experience of having to accept negative behaviour from men from a young age, particularly her cousin John Reed, 'accustomed to John's abuse, I never had an idea of replying to it: my care was how to endure the blow which would certainly follow the insult.'⁹ This behaviour would undoubtedly affect the way Jane understands how to be treated by the men that surround her throughout her lifetime.

In *Rebecca*, the narrator seems to have an idealised view of marriage, and she begins to romanticise this whilst her relationship with Maxim develops. 'I began to feel more like the self I wanted to become, the self I had pictures in my dreams, who made Manderley her home.'¹⁰ Although the narrator feels fulfilled whilst imagining her life with Maxim and living at his family home in Manderley, her idealised version of marriage is not. 'In books, men knelt to women, and it would be moonlight. Not at breakfast, not like this.'¹¹ Even before they are married, her relationship with Maxim is not what she would want out of a marriage. In *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change* Janet Finch and Penny Summerfield discuss 'companionate marriage,' a term that was first introduced in post-war Britain, that infers that marriage should reflect a shift 'from the idea of marriage as an institution to marriage as a relationship.'¹² It seems as though this is the type of relationship that the narrator is striving for, yet she is part of a marriage that is out of convenience, and not one out of love. Although it could be argued that the narrator's attachment with Maxim only forms into love once she can acknowledge his faults.

The theme of love and marriage being separate entities is common in both *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre*, but in *Rebecca* particularly it is manifested in the narrator's sacrifice of love for the sake of a successful marriage. Du Maurier writes, 'I don't want you to love me, I won't ask impossible things. I'll be your friend and your companion, a sort of boy.'¹³ This is again highlighted once the couple is engaged; 'We're going to get married, we're very much in love.' In love. He had not said anything yet about being in love.'¹⁴ To Maxim, it seems that marriage is just contractual with no emotional influence. The narrator's idealised version of marriage is not matched well with her actual relationship with Maxim, and the above examples demonstrate her expectations not being met. As Mandibaye writes; 'the hastiness, the coldness, and the condescension in the gentleman's marriage proposal raise the question

⁷ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. 264.

⁸ ⁸ Sioudina Mandibaye, "Marriage as a Private Hell in Daphne Du Maurier's Novels: *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*, 3.

⁹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. (Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1966.) 42.

¹⁰ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 85.

¹¹ Ibid. 58.

¹² David Clark, *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change: Writings for Jacqueline Burgoyne, 1944-88*. (London: Taylor & Francis, 2019.) 28.

¹³ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 297

¹⁴ Ibid. 63.

of whether it is a marriage for love —as the narrator would have us believe—or just a convenient arrangement.’¹⁵

Similar to the narrator, Jane has an imbalanced relationship with Rochester. Rochester like Maxim, treats Jane as if she is still staff even once their relationship begins:

The relationship between Jane and Rochester is unequal on many points; he is twenty years older than her, much more experienced, he is from a higher social group, he is rich, and she is poor, and he is her master, inequalities that were a major barrier at the time. Due to their master employee relationship, she only can talk to him when he calls for her and cannot seek his company whenever she wishes.¹⁶

Like the narrator, Jane’s relationship does not change much about her lifestyle, as her duties are much the same being a wife as being employed, and their social barriers do divide them at many points. Throughout the novel, Jane and Rochester have insightful conversations that allow them to become equals on a conversational basis. ‘I could still meet him in argument without fear or uneasy restraint: this suited both him and me.’¹⁷ Their relationship develops at a similar rate to the narrator’s and Maxim’s, including similarities in the husband’s lack of romance and compassion, ‘I rose, there was no grooms men, no bridesmaids, no relatives to wait for or marshal: none but Mr Rochester and I.’¹⁸ As stated above, Jane has no examples of marriage to match her expectations. As such, she wants to meet Rochester’s expectations rather than her own. ‘I have observed books written by men, that period extends as the further to which husband’s ardour extends. Yet, after all, as a friend and companion, I hope never to become quite distasteful, to my dear master.’¹⁹

Marriage is unattainable to *Rebecca*’s narrator, as she states, ‘I’m not the sort of person men marry.’²⁰ During post-war twentieth-century Britain, the socio-economic shift allowed more women working opportunities, although the narrator’s employment as a paid companion would have limited her probability of finding a partner for marriage. Helen McCarthy, in her article *Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-war Britain* argues that ‘working wives were seen to imperil marital harmony because of the challenge they posed to men’s ‘traditional’ identity’²¹ When the narrator meets Maxim, this argument is highlighted, as she must give up her employment to take on a similar role, but for her husband instead. ‘instead of being a companion to Mrs Van Hopper you become mine, and your duties will be almost exactly the same.’²² In the early stages of their relationship, it becomes apparent that although the dynamic of the narrator and Maxim’s relationship is not of any financial gain or because of any family orientated influence, it is seemingly not for love in the beginning either.

Again, in *Jane Eyre*, marriage would have been unattainable for a woman of Jane’s stature, Mandibaye writes:

In fact, the position of women was probably worse in the 19th century than it had ever been in England. For the unmarried girl whose family, though middle-class, was not rich, there was very little chance of earning a living. Almost the only job she could take was that of a governess in a richer family. After her marriage she might have to superintend her household, but all the work would be done by servants and all the important decisions taken by her husband.²³

¹⁵ Sioudina Mandibaye, “Marriage as a Private Hell in Daphne Du Maurier’s Novels: *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*,” 4.

¹⁶ Angela Andersson, *Identity and independence in Jane Eyre*. (Sweden: Sweden University, 2011.) 12.

¹⁷ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 187.

¹⁸ Ibid. 315.

¹⁹ Ibid. 289.

²⁰ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. 57

²¹ Helen Macarthy, “Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-war Britain,” *Women’s History Review* 26, no. 1 (Feb 2016): 46.

²² Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 59

²³ Sioudina Mandibaye, “Marriage as a Private Hell in Daphne Du Maurier’s Novels: *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*,” 3.

As mentioned above, Jane is a good example of a woman of this social standing. Before she inherits her deceased uncle's, wealth and marries Mr Rochester, she had to find opportunities for work that were incredibly limited to her. Despite this, there were successful campaigns during the 19th century that achieved the expansion of women's rights such as the 'introduction of legislation in 1870 and 1882 protecting married women's property, the repeal of the contagious diseases acts in 1883 and the expansion of female participation in local government.'²⁴ Upon receiving her inheritance and Rochester's second proposal, Jane explains her newfound financial independence; 'I told you I am an independent woman sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress.'²⁵ Jane also comments on her wish to become more independent of her soon to be husband and does not want to be doted on like other wives; 'if I had ever so small an independency; I can never bear being dressed like a doll by Mr Rochester.'²⁶ It is interesting to note, however, that despite women during this time having to give up any financial and legal independence, the male characters have more of a choice between marriage and their livelihoods. St John, for example, refuses to abandon his livelihood for the sake of a relationship, 'Relinquish! What! My vocation? My great work? My foundation? {...} Must I relinquish that? It is dearer than the blood in my veins.'²⁷ Elaine Showalter, explains in *Sexual Anarchy* that if 'men did not marry {...} it was not because they were odd but because they had so many more interesting things to do.'²⁸ Although there was more opportunity for men outside the sphere of marriage during this time, Rochester was also married to a woman for the financial gain of his father and brother. 'My father and my brother Rowland knew all this; but they thought only of the thirty thousand pounds and joined in the plot against me.'²⁹ It is interesting that Brontë chose to include this inner narrative in the plot of the text, as it was more common for a woman to be married through financial gain than it was for a man to do so.

The identity of the narrator is also consistently linked to marriage. The narrator remains nameless throughout the novel, until she is married, and is only referred to as Mrs de Winter. du Maurier's choice in keeping the narrator's identity unknown emphasises her lack of independence throughout the novel, as her identity is bonded to her husband. Maxim's relationship with the narrator is problematic throughout the novel, particularly when the readers consider their twenty-year age gap, but also because of the language used when communicating with the narrator. This is particularly poignant during the preparations for the ball, 'Put a ribbon around your hair and be Alice-in-Wonderland (...) you look like it now, with your finger in your mouth.'³⁰ It is no surprise through the novel that the narrator struggles to find her own identity, as Mandibaye writes, 'Mrs de Winter is alienated, not only from the upper-class world that Manderley represents but also from the world of adult femininity, of which she remains ignorant.'³¹ The narrator's lack of identity causes her to succumb to these innocent and childlike narratives that Maxim creates around her. The separation between her societal identity, referring to her and Maxim's difference in class and expectation, is emphasised through her lack of her identity in general.

Similar to the narrator, Jane is treated like a child by Rochester, but instead of accepting his behaviour as does the narrator, Jane argued against it. Again age seems to be the external factor in this situation for Rochester that he uses to assert his dominance over Jane, and she argues herself that it does not influence over superiority, especially in

²⁴ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth Century Britain: Social, Cultural and Political Change*, 9.

²⁵ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 459.

²⁶ Ibid. 297.

²⁷ Ibid. 400.

²⁸ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), 25.

²⁹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 333.

³⁰ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. 219.

³¹ Angela Andersson, *Identity and independence in Jane Eyre*. (Sweden: Sweden University, 2011.) 12.

relationships; 'I don't think so sir, you have the right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience.'³² Jane's argument proves true to her character. Throughout the novel, she combats ideas of superiority not just from Rochester, but from Mrs Reed, St John and even her cousin John when she is a child. 'In the novel, we follow the protagonist's development from childhood to becoming a young woman. An orphan, forced to battle a cruel guardian, patriarchal society and rigid social order.'³³ As Angela Andersson writes in *Identity and Independence in Jane Eyre*,

The novel can be seen as a journey of Jane finding her true self. Jane fights convention by resisting the male dominance, on her quest for identity and independence she remains true to herself by putting herself first and caring for her own wellbeing, even though she is longing for love and kinship.³⁴

Jane's relationship with Rochester is always imbalanced through class division and age, although the experiences Jane has been situated with arguably makes her more self-aware in comparison to Rochester. Jane's ideas about love and marriage are second to her strive for education and experience. In comparison to the narrator whose ideas of love and marriage surpass her outlook on her independence throughout the novel, the narrator is more content with her life even in a marriage that does not give her an outer purpose.

The narrator's role as a wife does not differ much from the expectations of women during the time the novel was written. During the early 20th century, 'married women had virtually no legal rights and were little more than chattels of their husbands for as long as their marriage lasted.'³⁵ This idea is prominent through the narrator and Maxim's relationship, with the narrator comparing her status within the house as with Maxim's dog Jasper, "'That's what I do, Jasper,'" I thought. "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."³⁶ The narrator accepts her place as an accessory in Maxim's life than as an equal counterpart, posing the question of the level of happiness that could survive within a marriage that acceptance of inequality overrides the wanting for respect as an equal counterpart. Their relationship also becomes a routine that the narrator must accept as the doting wife; 'The performance of the day was repeated, the placing of the table, the laying of the snow-white cloth, the putting down of cakes and crumpets, the silver kettle of hot water placed on its little flame.'³⁷ This description by du Maurier of a monotonous routine emphasises the narrator's lack of outer enjoyment from her relationship and stresses the narrator's submissive attitude towards her marriage as a representation of something that makes her happy. Feminist critic Hélène Cixous describes this form of subservience that the narrator emulates through *activity/passivity*: which Cixous claims is the idea that women are associated with roles such as marriage, motherhood and family dynamics, which are seen as passive through a hierarchal standpoint. Men, however, are associated with roles such as work, being involved in social spheres and financial dominance, which are associated with activity. Cixous writes: 'Male privilege, shown in the opposition between *activity* and *passivity*, (...) the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition *activity/passivity*.'³⁸ It could be argued that the narrator is passive throughout her marriage, accepting the faults of her husband and the traditions that follow a marriage where the wife is subservient to her husband. This binary approach is

³² Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 165.

³³ Angela Andersson, *Identity and independence in Jane Eyre*. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 1.

³⁵ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth Century Britain: Social, Cultural and Political Change*, 9.

³⁶ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. 114.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 132-133.

³⁸ Julie Rivkin and Michel Ryan., *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004,) 349

constructed through social expectations, the narrator acts on this by questioning her future expectations of expectation of motherhood in marriage, and comments on the expectation she feels from people outside her marriage ‘wondering, with that swift downward glance given to all brides, if I was going to have a baby.’³⁹ Although it is Beatrice who discusses this topic with the narrator, commenting on the expectancy of children and the possibility of a marriage ending if that possibility is not fulfilled. du Maurier writes:

After all, brides of today are up to everything. It’s damn nuisance if you want to hunt and you land yourself with an infant in the first season. Quite enough to break a marriage up if you are both keen. Wouldn’t matter in your case. Babies needn’t interfere with sketching.⁴⁰

Although the narrator’s interests are not something Beatrice describes as affecting her prospects of having children, the above quote infers the sacrifices that would have to be made for the narrator to have children and to have a successful marriage. This again infers that the success of her marriage is dependent on her willingness to sacrifice the things that prove to make her happy in the novel.

When Maxim must travel to London, it is more obvious that the narrator feels liberated from her obligations as a wife and gives the reader a sense that the narrator is happier in her own space than when sharing it with Maxim, ‘Now I could relax, none of these things mattered. Maxim was in London. How lovely it was to finally be alone.’⁴¹ In Susan Ferguson’s critical analysis of *A Vindication of The Rights of Women*, she argues that marriage as an institution can be an ‘eternal prison-house for women,’⁴² and that women are advised to marry even if the character of the husband contrasts the wife’s, as a married woman is deemed as more successful and secure compared to a single woman, even if the single woman is happier alone.⁴³ The narrator’s relief of being without her husband emphasises this point; that even though she is legally bound to her husband, she would quite possibly be happier alone.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane doesn’t marry Rochester until the final chapter of the novel. Although her relationship with Rochester signifies a change in the way she views her lifestyle. Brontë writes:

The incident had occurred and was gone for me: it was an incident of no moment, no romance, no interest in any sense: yet it marked with change one single hour of monotonous life. My help had been needed and claimed: I had given it: I was pleased to have done something (...) and I was wary of existence all passive.⁴⁴

It could be argued that Jane’s role as a wife begins before their matrimony, as the above example occurs before the two are engaged. Although Jane rejects the passive lifestyles of married women at the beginning of the novel, this is the first instance where the reader witnesses Jane begin to understand her desire to be needed in the same way a wife would be. On the morning of Jane and Rochester’s attempted matrimony, Jane contemplates her new identity as the wife of Rochester and whether the expectations of her new identity would match the reality of it. ‘I would wait be assured she had come into the world alive before I assigned to her all that property.’⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that through Brontë’s writing this moment in the novel acts as a rebirth for Jane, and her identity shifts. It could be argued that Jane is concerned that her life as a married woman would be more restricting than her life as

³⁹Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. 132-141

⁴⁰ Ibid. 199.

⁴¹ Ibid. 170.

⁴² Ferguson, Susan. “The Radical Ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 32, no. 3 (1999): 447

⁴³ Ibid. 447

⁴⁴ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 147.

⁴⁵ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 303

it was. Andersson writes that her analysis of the novel ‘suggests that Jane’s desire to have independence and equality as a married woman cannot be achieved’⁴⁶

To contrast this point, after Jane discovers Rochester’s marriage to Bertha the outlook of her prospects shifts. Previous to her relationship with Rochester, Jane rebuffed the examples given to her of the conventional women she interacts with throughout the novel, ‘the women in Jane’s life are traditional, submissive women, but because Jane is not satisfied with their passive lives, she rejects the traditional behaviour they represent.’⁴⁷ However, after she accepts that she will not marry Rochester, her views are the ones similar to the women she has disregarded. ‘almost a bride was a cold, solitary girl again: her life was pale; her prospects were desolate.’⁴⁸ This point fits the narrative of the argument that marriage has impacted Jane’s success, as she previously believed her life as a governess was enough; now she feels her life is ‘desolate,’ and that she has limited prospects, even though marriage would have limited her more so.

As with *Rebecca*, the idea of love being interrelated with marriage in the novel is questioned throughout its narrative. First by Mrs Fairfax, who questions the reasoning behind Rochester’s proposal, ‘Is it really for love he is going to marry you?’⁴⁹ Love becomes an important aspect of marriage for Jane, like the narrator she becomes more interested in having a successful marriage rather than that marriage being one that is loving and happy. ‘He will never love me; but he shall approve me.’⁵⁰ However, when her marriage to Rochester is prevented, Jane decides that despite her love for Rochester, she must leave and not return. ‘When the marriage is stopped Jane turns down a comfortable life as Rochester’s mistress because even though she loves him, (...) to Jane independence is very important and she will not sacrifice her integrity and dignity.’⁵¹ Jane is loyal to her respectability and the reparation that she has created for herself, and this moment in the novel redeems the readers feeling that Jane’s independence means more to the character than her relationship with Rochester.

In both relationships in the novels, their successful marriages are entirely dependent on the downfall of the male characters. In *Rebecca*, this is concluded when it is revealed to her that Maxim murdered Rebecca, and in fact, never loved her. ‘I held his hand against my heart. I did not care about his shame. None of the things that he had told me mattered to me at all. I clung to one thing and one thing only. Maxim did not love Rebecca. He had never loved her.’⁵² It could be argued that their marriage would have remained without affection if the narrator was not told of these events. As Mandibaye writes, ‘the narrator thinks little of Maxim’s murder confession, but instead is relieved to hear that Maxim has always loved her and never Rebecca.’⁵³ This again leads to the argument that love is more important to the narrator and that she is willing to sacrifice her integrity of being married to a murderer as long as he can love her. This part of the novel also highlights the narrator’s shift from being viewed an adolescent to being the dominant force in the relationship, ‘I felt better and stronger. It was I know who was taking care of him. He was tired, pale. I had gotten over my weakness and fatigue and now he was the one to suffer from reaction.’⁵⁴ For the narrator’s marriage to be successful, she must sacrifice her ethical standpoint in accepting that her husband is a murderer, this is again emphasised when Maxim expresses no regret in his

⁴⁶Angela Andersson, *Identity and independence in Jane Eyre*. 13.

⁴⁷Ibid. 14.

⁴⁸Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 323.

⁴⁹Ibid. 293

⁵⁰Ibid. 430.

⁵¹Angela Andersson, *Identity and independence in Jane Eyre*. 12.

⁵²Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. 306.

⁵³Sioudina Mandibaye, “Marriage as a Private Hell in Daphne Du Maurier’s Novels: *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*,” 3.

⁵⁴Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca*. 422.

actions, 'I'm glad I killed Rebecca. I shall never have any remorse for that.'⁵⁵ This point reinforces the argument that the narrator cannot be truly happy in her relationship if she has had to sacrifice her morality for her marriage.

In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester's downfall is most notably when Bertha Mason burns down Thornfield Hall, killing herself and leaving Rochester blind. When Jane finds Rochester once again, similar to the narrator, her relationship dynamic changes leaving her to be the one who cares for Rochester. 'I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector.'⁵⁶ As Andersson writes 'he now needs Jane to be his eyes and care for him.'⁵⁷ Meaning that Jane's purpose has shifted. However, Andersson also argues that at the end of the novel, 'Jane found the love and kinship she longed for without sacrificing her own identity and independence.'⁵⁸ This point contradicts Jane's independence, as the only reason their relationship is on equal ground, is because Rochester is now blind and is dependent on Jane to care for him.

Jane must sacrifice her ethical standpoint which comes in the form of her religious beliefs to be able to have a successful marriage with Rochester. Brontë writes, 'he stood between me and every thought of my religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun.'⁵⁹ A proposal more accustomed to her religious beliefs comes in the form of St John, who offers to take her as his wife to India to become a missionary. However, Jane rejects his proposal as she believes that a union without love will shorten her life. Jane's rejection of St John's proposal infers that the love she will receive from Rochester is more important than her religious integrity. This again poses the argument that despite the happy ending of marriage in the novel; marriage is built on Jane having to sacrifice a part of herself. From the examination of the two texts, it is clear that both protagonist's marriages have negative implications on their lives. In *Rebecca*, the narrator must accept that her husband is a murderer for her marriage to succeed, and in *Jane Eyre*, Jane must sacrifice her religious beliefs and ethical standpoint to be able to marry Rochester, inferring that both protagonists cannot be happy in marriages that has taken so much of their identities. Regarding the argument of marriage and love being separate entities, this is also accurate for the narrator as it is only when her husband can become reliant on her that he shows her any true affection. Again, in *Jane Eyre*, Jane and Rochester's marriage is built on possibly more affection than the narrator and Maxim's, but Jane's relationship is only based on equal ground because of Rochester's disability, and Rochester's love for Jane is consistently questioned throughout the novel. Both the novels and their historical contexts show the lengths that these protagonists will venture to achieve a successful marriage, and both authors have managed to lay down foundations that infer the future of both relationships. Both du Maurier and Brontë have produced novels that demonstrate the plight of women and the expectations of matrimony in both the 19th and 20th centuries.

⁵⁵Ibid. 336.

⁵⁶Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 470.

⁵⁷ Angela Andersson, *Identity and independence in Jane Eyre*. 14

⁵⁸ Ibid. 14.

⁵⁹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 302.

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