

## Narcissistic Personality Disorder: An Application of the Psychoanalytic Theory to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: April 04, 2022

Accepted: June 26, 2022

Published: July 31, 2022

Volume: 11 Issue: 4

Advance access: July 2022

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

This paper addresses a serious psychological mental state, namely Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) which has spread all over the globe, leaving its evil effects on the individuals and the societies. Firstly, I argue that Rochester in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1848) embodies a number of narcissistic traits and suffers from NPD according to The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Fourth Edition in 1994. Moreover, I highlight the causes for his suffering from this disorder according to psychoanalysis and how Jane herself was a possible candidate to become a narcissist, but she managed to evade this psychological disorder at an early stage. Finally, I argue that Charlotte Bronte's nineteenth century novel, *Jane Eyre*, offers a proactive measurement to prevent NPD in individuals prone to suffer from this disorder, and the novel also presents an application of a psychological treatment plan that has been articulated by Psychoanalysts, particularly Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut: Jane successfully plays the role of an expert psychoanalyst who manages to offer treatment to a character suffering from NPD; this inspires readers with a possible treatment of NPD or at least provides insight into human nature.

**Key words:** Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Npd), *Jane Eyre*, Psychoanalysis, Otto Kernberg, Heinz Kohut

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research paper is to understand Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) through highlighting its meaning, causes, and some of the possible treatments for this mental and psychological illness. This is achieved by focusing on the two prominent psychoanalysts, namely Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, I offer a new reading of the characters of Rochester and Jane in Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1848). This paper argues that in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Rochester suffers from NPD according to the narcissistic traits he exhibits in accordance with The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Fourth Edition in 1994; furthermore, the present paper discusses how Jane herself could have been a victim of this mental and psychological disorder. The paper also sheds light on the possible causes that have lead Rochester to suffer from this disorder and how Bronte's nineteenth century novel, *Jane Eyre*, offers an original, unprecedented treatment that was only pronounced later by psychoanalysts in the twentieth century. Jane proves to be an innate expert psychoanalyst who manages to help Rochester through psychoanalytic treatment sessions.

The treatment of NPD is challenging for clinicians because of the complexity of the disorder (Caligor et al. 2015; Magnavita 2018). Caligor et al. (2015) emphasize that

of all personality disorders, NPD spans the broadest spectrum of severity. Indeed, NPD is a grave disorder that manifests itself as rising across the globe; the society has become an arena where narcissists impose their arrogance on others and at the same time they degrade others, making the lives of their victims intolerable. Individuals suffering from NPD are seen as family members, partners, and co-workers, and this paper sheds light on a possible treatment in mild cases of the spectrum of the disorder. If a treatment is impossible because we do not have enough empathy during the journey of treatment or because of the severity of the NPD in some cases, we are left with an insight on a human condition that we see in our everyday life.

### NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER (NPD) IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

"Narcissism" as a term is etymologically rooted in Greek mythology; it is the story of Narcissus who declines Echo's affections many times to be cursed by Nemesis to fall in love with the next person he saw, which happens to be his own reflection, and he tragically dies in a pond in which the Narcissus flower blossoms in the place of his corpse (Foster & Brunell, 2018). Krizan (2018) explains that empirical evidence reveals that narcissism is a complex construct which scholars disagree about; this applies to its definition

and measurement. Yet, it can be “broadly defined as *entitled self-importance*. Narcissistic individuals are those who view their own needs and goals as more significant than others’ and exhibit an inflated sense of importance and deservingness”; this definition emphasizes features widely agreed upon as central to narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (Krizan, 2018, p. 16).

The gravity of the issue perhaps is best described by Mosquera and Knipe (2015) who highlight the fact that empirical studies suggest that narcissistic personality traits have been rising across the globe over the past few decades and manifest in the content of pop song lyrics, self-centered use of words and phrases in books, and in the decrease in dispositional empathy. Ronningstam and Weinberg (2013) explain that narcissism ranges from healthy and proactive to pathological and malignant; moreover, pathological narcissism can be expressed in temporary traits or worsen and become a stable personality disorder. NPD is regarded as obnoxious because of narcissists’ huge arrogance and their degradation of others, making narcissists intolerable as family members, partners, and co-workers because their egocentricity makes them indifferent to the rights of others and even though the risk of having narcissists arises more in societies that encourage individualism, the narcissist in the collective society also regards himself/herself as God’s gift to them (Millon et al., 2004). Ronningstam and Weinberg (2013) assert that Narcissistic personality functioning and NPD have gained societal recognition because of an extensive documentation of exploitation of power and trust as a consequence of narcissistic attitudes at work, in contrast to the charisma of others who managed to implement constructive changes. Exploitation of power and trust is definitely problematic on the interpersonal level and the societal one.

Hermann and Fuller (2018) show concern about the fact that western societies have become less religious over the past few decades while narcissism has simultaneously become more prevailing; however, there is hope, Herman and Fuller assert, because of the recent advancements in the research on different forms of narcissism and their relationship with religion, which will shed light on religious life in the western world and beyond. Kernberg (1975) asserts that patients with narcissistic personalities may not “on the surface” present a seriously disturbed behavior; in fact, some of them “may function socially very well” (p. 227). However, a narcissistic personality presents a constellation of character traits: an enormous need to be loved and admired by others in contradiction with a very inflated concept of themselves; an emotional life which is shallow as they experience little empathy for the feelings of others and obtain very little enjoyment from life other than from the tributes which they encounter from others that feed their grandiose fantasies; they feel restless and bored when there are not new resources that feed their self – regard; and they tend to be exploitative (Kernberg, 1975).

Grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder are types of narcissism: grandiose narcissism is characterized by a grandiose self-concept; vulnerable narcissism is characterized by high levels of anxiety

and low levels of self -esteem; and narcissistic personality disorder is “a combination of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism” (Foster & Brunell, 2018, p. 318). Hence, there will always be reference to these types as they intersect at certain points. Weiss and Miller (2018) explain that the common core of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism appears to be interpersonal antagonism, but the motives behind this interpersonal antagonism differ. Vulnerable narcissism is a form of narcissism that “shares entitlement and interpersonal antagonism with grandiose narcissism but is associated with low self-esteem and introversion” (Hermann & Fuller, 2018, p. 381). Distinctions are drawn between grandiose narcissism, NPD, and vulnerable narcissism; yet, “the trait correlates of NPD and grandiose narcissism overlap quite substantially. Both narcissism constructs are composed of traits related to a strongly antagonistic interpersonal style characterized by grandiosity, manipulateness, deception, uncooperativeness, and anger” (Weiss & Miller, 2018, p.7). Recent studies “have suggested that grandiosely narcissistic individuals may experience some vulnerability, particularly the experience of anger following ego threat”; however, there is “little evidence to suggest that vulnerably narcissistic individuals experience periods of grandiosity” (Weiss & Miller, 2018, p. 9). In fact, Herman and Fuller (2018) assert that the literature on vulnerable narcissism is very limited.

Reynolds and Lejuez (2011) reprint with permission from The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Fourth Edition in 1994 by the American Psychiatric Association the nine criteria of NPD; any five or more of these criteria point to a case of NPD:

- (1) Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)
  - (2) Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
  - (3) Believes that he or she is “special” and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high- status people (or institutions)
  - (4) Requires excessive admiration
  - (5) Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations
  - (6) Is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends
  - (7) Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others
  - (8) Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her
  - (9) Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.
- (Reynolds & Lejuez, 2011, p. 18)

Section 4 of this paper focuses on six of these criteria which manifest in the character of Rochester: Rochester has a grandiose sense of self-importance; requires excessive admiration; has a sense of entitlement; is interpersonally exploitative; lacks empathy; and shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.

Mosquera and Knipe (2015) assert that NPD is associated with selfish behaviours and lack of empathy toward others. Ronningstam and Weinberg (2013) explain that there are additional characteristics which are frequently found in patients with NPD such as: feelings of inferiority, shame,

rage, boredom and emptiness. Weiss and Miller (2018) explain that there is an essential ongoing debate as to the role of the vulnerable features in NPD; one of the persistent questions is whether all narcissistic individuals experience both grandiosity and vulnerability through a pattern of oscillation even if these individuals fit into grandiose narcissism only or vulnerable narcissism only. Hence, Weiss and Miller (2018) suggest that DSM should include some presentation of vulnerability. I argue that some vulnerable characteristics such as feelings of inferiority, shame and emptiness belonging to vulnerable narcissism do appear in Rochester's character which reveal the role of vulnerable features in NPD; section 4 of this paper focuses on these vulnerable features.

### CAUSES AND TREATMENT OF NPD

Millon et al. (2004) explain that from the Psychodynamic perspective, Freud was aware that pathological narcissism could develop because of parental overvaluation, but more recent psychoanalytic opinion has been divided between the object-relations theory of Otto Kernberg and the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut. This section focuses on two main schools of psychoanalysis: Kernberg's school and Kohut's. Levy et al. (2011) explain that these two authors have been influential in shaping the concept of narcissistic personality disorder among psychoanalysts, contemporary personality researchers and theorists.

The psychodynamic history of the narcissistic personality disorder had developed over time from "Freud's intrapsychic model of narcissism as self-cathexis" to the concept that "narcissism is a pathology of early relatedness" which Kernberg has been a pioneer contributor in establishing; Kernberg established the idea that narcissists "fail to develop integrated conceptions of self and other object images" (Millon et al., 2004, p. 369). Narcissists, Kernberg (1975) explains, create a pathological "fusion" of the ideal self, ideal object, and self-image which creates a distortion of reality but is simply "a defense against an intolerable reality in the interpersonal realm" (p.231).

"Both Kernberg and Kohut see the inflation of the self as a compensation for early deprivations"; Kernberg stresses the fundamental role of the family environment that creates this pathology when caretakers are cold and indifferent or even tend to send messages that are implicitly aggressive which gives the child an inferior self-concept and triggers some defensive mechanism in the child in the form of a grandiose self; however, under this grandiose self lies a huge rage loitering in the unconscious ready to vent against anyone who does not pay enough homage to this grandiose self that hides an immense rage and aggression at the caretakers "unwilling to offer unconditional love" (Millon et al., 2004, p. 348, p. 358). Kernberg (1975) explains that in order to support their sense of grandiosity, their interpersonal relationships tend to be "exploitative" and "parasitic" (p.228).

On narcissistic personality development, Kohut has introduced the self as an integral addition to the classical analysts' pillars of human nature (the id which embodies instincts and desires; the moderating structures of ego and super ego), but at the same time the self is the central focus of development

and the essence of what it means to be human, not as a subset or a function of the ego as established in the classical model (Millon et al., 2004). Magnavita (2018) explains that Kohut developed a theory of self-psychology and provided methods of treatment of disorders of the self; Kohut focused on creating a therapeutic relationship based on both empathy and mirroring to fix deficits in the self.

Millon et al. (2004) explain that Kohut postulates that the development of the self starts in a state of unawareness called primary narcissism, in which no self yet exists, where the child receives nurturing empathically from a mother who responds to his/her needs, but soon enough the child realizes that rewards come from the external world, not from inside the self, and develops self-objects; these self-objects are not basic images of others, but are interpretations of others in terms of how important they are to the self. Kohut (1971) judges the infant experiences as "undisturbed primary narcissistic equilibrium" (p. 63-64); however, it is soon disturbed by "unavoidable" shortcomings of maternal care and the child substitutes the previous perfection/equilibrium by a "grandiose self" (Kohut, 1971, p. 25). When the grandiose self is tamed by the mother via empathic mirroring, a healthy development of the self occurs, leading the adult personality to pursue his/her life in a healthy manner because the grandiose self will eventually be given up and unrealistic demands will transform into realistic ambitions; however, an unempathic parent or the absence of a parent can cause the persistence of the grandiose self, causing a developmental arrest (Kohut, 1971, 1977; Millon et al., 2004).

Rochester's father was "an avaricious, grasping man" (Bronte, 1848, p. 290) who wanted to keep the property together and could not bear the idea of splitting his estate between his two sons, Rowland and Rochester, so he unfairly passed it all to Rowland. Moreover, Rochester's father and brother committed an even worse crime by making him get married to Bertha Mason whom they knew perfectly well came from a mad family. As a care-taker, Rochester's father did not show any trace of unconditional love; had Rochester been the elder son, his course of life could have been different in the sense that he could have inherited his father's wealth and avoided a catastrophic marriage. Egocentricity prevents narcissists from taking any interest in the agendas of others except where they provide "a stepping stone" for the narcissist and eventually, as Kohut (1971) explains, most persons tire of such relationships which are based on "the destiny of remaining self-objects" for the narcissist, never known for who they are (Millon et al., 2004, p. 353). Rochester wanted to create a self-object of Jane, but Jane fights back and presents her own agenda as will be further explained in section 5 of this research.

Rochester believes he was cheated into espousing a mad woman by the name of Bertha Mason, who came of a mad family through three generations. When Rochester invites Jane and the clergyman to see his wife, Jane's first encounter upon seeing her was not being able to tell whether the creature was a "beast or human being", and "the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek" (Bronte, 1848, p. 278-279). Millon et al., (2004)



explain that traumatic events puncture the bubble of the narcissistic fantasies of a narcissist, bringing them down to earth in a crushing way, leaving them with the question: "why me?" which is pronounced with ultimate feelings of anger and rage. Rochester puts his trauma in front of the clergyman and the lawyer: "That is *my wife*," said he (Bronte, 1848, p.279).

Mosquera and Knipe (2015) explain that lack of empathy on behalf of narcissists is a piece of the damage caused, during very early childhood, by early frustrations to connect empathetically with others or is simply an imitation of what they learned from their caregiver. There is no mention of Rochester's mother at any stage in the novel; hence, there is a very good reason to assume that Rochester was deprived of his mother's empathy, which is probably why he has displayed an amount of lack of empathy towards others. The other cause is also present since Rochester's father is most probably a narcissist himself who deprives him from his share of inheritance and pushes him towards a marriage of a mad lady; this reveals a huge amount of lack of empathy towards his own child and a huge love to money and material possessions. Loewald (1986) explains that a parent is ideally involved in an empathic relationship with his child and he/she has a vision of the child's future based on parental experiences and knowledge. Mrs. Fairfax refers to the fact that "all the Rochesters were proud" and that Mr. Rochester's father "liked money" and that Mr. Rochester too "has always been careful" (Bronte, 1848, p. 251). Sedikides et al. (2011) explain that there is direct evidence that narcissism is linked to materialism and correlates positively with a desire for material possessions. This can fill in the gaps for the unmentioned details of the relationship between Rochester and his father at the early years of childhood, which probably have taught him to be a narcissist since his father's experiences and vision were all based on materialism as a priority.

Magnavita (2018) highlights the fact that the treatment of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is relatively new, emerging in the early twentieth century, and it is also challenging for clinicians because of the slight empirical evidence to escort treatment; however, there are a number of treatment approaches which have been suggested for narcissism and NPD. Most narcissists resist psychotherapy and those who choose to remain in therapy may quit therapy if their vulnerability is at stake or they may never want to leave therapy because the therapist is being too reinforcing; "For successful treatment, there must be a strong working alliance established, and confronting the narcissist's behaviors and patterns must be timed properly. A combination of interpersonal and cognitive strategies may prove the most effective treatment to decrease sense of entitlement and increase awareness of others' feelings" (Millon et al., 2004, p. 370). Section 5 of this paper explains how Jane successfully applies a combination of interpersonal strategies and cognitive strategies while treating Rochester. Kernberg describes a psychotherapy that tends to confront and dig into the conscious and unconscious anger with the goal of helping patients understand the origin of their grandiose narcissism which is "a developmental arrest caused by inadequate or defective empathy during infancy"; hence, with

constant empathy and appropriate mirroring, the patient moves beyond the need for the grandiose self (Millon et al., 2004, p. 369).

"Kohut's approach refers to the ability to empathically sense the state of the patient, and remains one of the most influential models for treatment"; moreover, clinicians should form "a trusting relationship that will allow self-examination and restructuring of the personality" (Magnavita, 2018, p. 472-473). Alliance building with a narcissistic patient and encouraging him/her to reflect upon their experiences and behavior are all part of the therapist's role (Ronningstam & Weinberg, 2013; Millon et al., 2004); furthermore, possible areas of change, which are signs of treatment include: interpersonal functioning (maintaining real relationships); emotion regulation (increasing the ability to understand and tolerate feelings of anger and shame); reflective ability (identifying own and others' perspectives); and ability to mourn (surrendering of unattainable goals and unreachable relationships) (Ronningstam & Weinberg, 2013). Section 5 of this research demonstrates how Jane has been an excellent therapist who managed to bond with Rochester and scored a great deal of change in the stated areas, symbolizing a huge leap in the treatment of Rochester.

#### CRITERIA OF NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER (NPD) EXHIBITED IN *JANE EYRE*

##### **Rochester has a Grandiose Sense of self-Importance; Requires Excessive Admiration; has a Sense of Entitlement; and shows Arrogant, Haughty Behaviours or Attitudes**

Rochester reveals himself as a character of an unquestioning, grandiose sense of self-importance and haughtiness that is extremely dominating; he has his own way of putting his orders in a way which leaves no room for anything but complete obedience. The excuse he gives for asking Jane to move her chair closer to him, even at the very beginning of their relationship, reveals a high level of haughtiness, typical of a narcissist. Rochester commands: "Miss Eyre, draw your chair still a little farther forward: you are yet too far back: I can not see you without disturbing my position in this comfortable chair, which I have no mind to do" (Bronte, 1848, p.121). Upon this command, Jane did as she was bid although she would have preferred to stay in the shade; "but Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly" (Bronte, 1848, p.121).

Rochester suffers from swings of mood; Jane notices these swings at the beginning of their relationship: "... , when he would sometimes pass me haughtily and coldly,... , and sometimes bow and smile with gentleman – like affability. His changes of mood did not offend me,... (Bronte, 1848, p.119-120). Caligor et al. (2015) emphasize that many individuals with NPD swing between grandiose and depleted states according to circumstances. When their relationship strengthens, an alliance is formed, and Rochester himself admits to Jane that he is capricious and indeed "the very devil to women" who please him "only by their faces", but prove

to be “trivial” (Bronte, 1848, p. 247). The narcissist inside him makes him believe that he is entitled to both attractive and smart women, and if they fail to meet his standards, he is entitled to deal with them as he pleases. Entitlement is a defining feature of narcissists; it is “as if they should hold diplomatic immunity to rules and conventions” which are easily dismissed if they constitute any restriction to narcissists’ desires (Millon et al., 2004, p. 349).

It is no surprise that Rochester insists on making “the world acknowledge” Jane “a beauty” and plans to “attire my Jane in satin and lace, . . . ; and I will cover the head I love best with priceless veil” (Bronte, 1848, p. 246). There is a huge urgency of a narcissist to feel “not just good”, but “great about themselves” through “conspicuous consumption” which glorifies the narcissistic disposition and compensates for inner fragility (Sedikides et al., 2011, p.383). Hence, the narcissist is a lover of appearances and looks because this fuels their sense of arrogance. Rochester wants to buy Jane “a rich silk of the most brilliant amethyst dye, and a superb pink satin” to which Jane objects and miraculously succeeds in convincing him to allow instead “a sober black satin and pearl-gray silk” for the time being although he wishes to see her “glittering like a parterre” (Bronte, 1848, p. 254-255). This is because glittering means that they will most probably be excessively distinguished; “Evidence indicates that narcissists prefer symbolic over mundane products” because they desire to be “unique” and feel “privileged”, and it has been proved that “narcissists are unlikely to opt for the ordinary... They will seek the exclusive, flashy, and scarce” (Sedikides et al., 2018, p. 291, p. 296). Narcissists invest a great deal in their public image because it is a means, Millon et al (2004) explain, to be perceived as confident and in control. Rochester insists on making Jane glitter because narcissistic people “put much energy” into looking “better than others” (Mosquera & Knipe, 2015, p. 48). Krizan (2018) explains that grandiose individuals have a sense of superiority over others as well as exaggerated appraisals of status-related attributes such as attractiveness; therefore, “dogged ambitions at being the best, the most influential, and the centre of attention” fuel these qualities (p. 18-19).

Narcissists unconsciously demonstrate arrogant behaviours; narcissists push everyone aside, even the ones they claim to love, because they love to be the centre, the spot of attention and admiration. When Jane asks Rochester to sing, he insists that she plays the accompaniment; however, she was “swept off the stool” and was “pushed unceremoniously to one side”, so he “usurped my place, and proceeded to accompany himself” playing the piano and singing (Bronte, 1848, p. 257). Czarna et al (2018) explain that narcissists have a tendency towards self-absorption and self-focus, so they pay less attention to other people and their emotional states. This explains the piano incident and the solo demonstration by Rochester.

### **Rochester Lacks Empathy and is Interpersonally Exploitative**

Narcissists exhibit social dominance rather than social warmth (Campbell and Baumeister, 2006); they have acquaintances,

but not friends because too much interpersonal involvement would lead to dependence which is equivalent to weakness according to narcissists, and that is why they prefer to stay above the need for relationships (Millon et al., 2004). The narcissist inside Rochester makes him highly regard his demands and exploit people to reach his goals; the end justifies the means for Rochester. Jane asks him: “Why did you take such pains to make me believe you wished to marry Miss Ingram?” and the answer is that of a Machiavelli: “. . . I wished to render you as madly in love with me as I was with you; and I knew jealousy would be the best ally I could call in for the furtherance of that end.” (Bronte, 1848, p. 249). He manages to extract from her the confession that she loves him, and Miss Ingram was nothing but a step (a self object) to make Jane admit her love. Grandiose narcissists are “less likely to catch the emotions of others”, an outcome of low empathy (Czarna et al, 2018, p. 260). Rochester enjoyed Jane’s sobbing at his confirmation that he was surely getting married to Miss Ingram; it was some kind of fuel that nourished him with no sense of empathy towards her. In fact, he builds a lie after the other and even provides the very minute details of his lies; Rochester claims that he found a place for her to work as a governess in Ireland teaching the five daughters of “Mrs. Dionysius O’ Gall of Bitternutt Lodge, Connaught” (Bronte, 1848, p. 238).

Rochester gets involved in several sexual relationships; Celine Varens and two more mistresses, an Italian, Giacinta; and a German, Clara. Foster and Brunell (2018) explain that several studies show that narcissists desire sex outside marriage. Moreover, he hides his marriage from Bertha. Hiding the fact that Rochester was married is a crime in itself, yet this is not enough with Rochester; he lies to Jane when she affirms the figure she saw in her bedroom was not Sophie, Leah, Mrs Fairfax or even the strange Grace Poole. He insists at first that it must have been one of them, but then takes advantage of Jane’s fear and description of the woman she described dressed in white, as she describes the figure, to suggest that it was a ghost, insisting that “ghosts are usually pale” (Bronte, 1848, p. 269). When Jane tells him that the figure had “dark lips” and “black eyebrows”, and that she lost consciousness from terror, and she asks who the lady that approached her bed was, he lies to her as a typical narcissist and manipulates her to doubt her own senses, asserting that the figure she saw was a creature of “an over-stimulated brain” (Bronte, 1848, p. 270). Weiss and Miller (2018) explain that experts believe that there are several other traits that are relevant to NPD, including manipulations, callousness and deceitfulness. Hence, when Jane insists that her nerves “were not in fault” and that the veil was torn from top to bottom in two halves, he goes back to the first lie, assuring her that the woman “must have been Grace Poole” (Bronte, 1848, p. 270-271).

Narcissists tend to be exploitative; they take advantage of others to attain their goals. Narcissists’ “relationships with other people are clearly exploitative and sometimes parasitic. It is as if they feel they have the right to control and possess others and to exploit them without guilt feelings-and behind a surface which very often is charming and engaging, one senses coldness and ruthlessness” (Kernberg, 1975, p. 228). Rochester exploits Jane when he hid the fact that he

was already married and would be escorting her to an illegal marriage. Rochester's religious stand can be comprehended in the light of the amount of grandiosity that he displays, particularly when we bear in mind what Hermann and Fuller (2018) confirm: "there is consistent evidence that grandiose narcissists lack intrinsic religious motivation" (p. 381).

When Rochester sets a goal, he achieves it regardless of other people's emotions even the ones he loves; Rochester sets his mind to dress Jane in satin and lace and jewellery, he does not pay much attention to her objections: "And then you won't know me, sir; and I shall not be your Jane Eyre any longer"; however, he "pursued his theme, however, without noticing my deprecation" (Brontë, 1848, p. 246) announcing his verdict to accompany Jane to Millcote to buy her some dresses and to be married in four weeks. Mr. Rochester's reaction to the announcement "Mr. Rochester has a wife now living" reveals how he has no empathy: "... , without seeming to recognize in me a human being, he only twined my waist with his arm and riveted me to his side." (Brontë, 1884, p. 274). Rochester's behaviour demonstrates an immense amount of stubbornness, a vast deal of recklessness to religious dictates, and a complete disregard for the human being by his side. Narcissists do not "really relate to others as separate, different human beings" but as "objects" at the disposal of "a personal need" (Mosquera & Knipe, 2015, p. 47). To Rochester, Jane is a self object ready to fulfill his needs and follow his agenda. Rochester deals with her more like a possession, which reveals the maniac control narcissists possess and their lack of empathy. "I will myself put the diamond chain around your neck, ... and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings." (Brontë, 1848, p. 245-246). He even tells her that after marriage his control will even escalate: "...once I have fairly seized you..., I'll just...attach you to a chain like this" (Brontë, 1848, p. 257), and he points to his watch-guard. Rochester's diction (chain, clasp, and load, seized, attach to a chain) is that of a jailer and a possessor or a parasite.

### The Vulnerable Traits of NPD in Rochester's Character

Recent research has confirmed "two types of NPD, one grandiose, arrogant, assertive, and aggressive and another vulnerable, shy, insecure, hypersensitive, and shame-ridden"; at the same time, there is a chance that "each individual presentation of NPD can include traits and patterns of both phenotypes" (Ronningstam & Weinberg, 2013, p. 168). Rochester exhibits the character of the individual who includes traits from both types of NPD. He confesses that he married Bertha Mason for her beauty, accomplishments and has some vulnerable feelings as result: "Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act...agony of inward contempt masters me." (Brontë, 1884, p. 290) Many theories postulate that the narcissist needs to act as if they were "superior or better than others to compensate the inner, hidden self-definition of being a failure or mediocre." (Mosquera & Knipe, 2015, p. 47). Caligor et al. (2015) even argue that the DSM criteria has the limitation of not including "core" psychological features of NPD, which they believe should

be included such as: vulnerable self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, emptiness, and boredom. Roepke and Vater (2014) assert that although feelings of shame were removed from the main criteria of DSM-IV of NPD and were only listed as one of the associated features, feelings of shame are still used in clinical conceptualization of pathological narcissism. Czarna et al (2018) explain that it has been suggested that narcissists self-aggrandizement is a result of an internal conflict developed in early childhood when parents place unrealistic demands on a child and upon their failure to achieve them is rejected from his/her parents with the drastic result of the child developing a dissociation between the positive and negative self representation and this process establishes the ground for an on-going interplay between shame and pride.

There is a constant interplay of excessive pride and shame in grandiose and vulnerable versions of narcissism, where pride is just a mask to cover an embarrassed face: "In William Blake's words: Pride is Shame's cloak" and this pride is not an "authentic pride" arising from a real achievement, but rather a "hubristic pride" fueled by an inauthentic sense of self achievement (Czarna et al, 2018, p. 257). Some vulnerable feelings are admitted by Rochester: "Ten years since, I flew through Europe half mad: with disgust, hate, and rage as my companions;..." (Brontë, 1884, p. 246). Ronningstam (2011) explains Kohut's belief that the narcissistic individual either flights/withdraws or fights/rages as a response to narcissistic injury or a shame-provoking event; this narcissistic rage can lead to self-destructive means and suicide. Rochester's drinking habits highlight these vulnerable feelings as well; abuse of alcohol, Millon et al. (2004) explain, provide relief from painful feelings of inferiority and self-doubt experienced by narcissists. Otto Kernberg suggests that narcissistic aggression can lead to suicide (Ronningstam, 2011), and so does Diana Diamond who asserts that narcissists may commit suicide when their grandiose self collapses (BorderlinerNotes, 2020). That is why, it could be argued that Rochester's attempt to save Bertha and the servants when Thornfield was on fire was an unconscious attempt to commit suicide after Jane deserted him.

### JANE AS A PSYCHOANALYST AND HER TREATMENT OF ROCHESTER

Narcissism is mostly perceived to be a forecaster of "relationship damaging behaviors and thoughts"; however, relationships do not always end in tragedy "when narcissism and romance intertwine" (Foster & Brunell, 2018, p. 317). Rochester and Jane's relationship is a perfect proof of this statement. Any personality disorder does not exhibit a singular pattern and this is true of narcissism as well; its pattern ranges from "muted to highly brazen" (Millon et al, 2004, p. 351). Perhaps Rochester's narcissistic pattern is what helped in his treatment and in the successful relationship between them at the end. Jane proves to be a good analyst of characters as a psychoanalyst should be; she manages to analyse Rochester's body language, attitude, behaviour and discourse.

Jane provides an empathic, corrective treatment, and Rochester confided to Jane, as a patient does to his/her



therapist, which enhanced Rochester's chances of healing. The "empathic listening and attention to narcissistic problems as seen from the patient's perspective are, in addition to interpretations, the most important therapeutic approach" (Ronningstam, 2011, p. 51-52). Jane gained Rochester's confidence from the very first moment he met her, and he later admits that he felt that Jane would save his life although he refused her help at the beginning to escort him to his horse as a typical narcissist does. This in itself is a crucial step in the treatment of a person suffering from NPD; clinical treatment reports assert that one basic key treatment of NPD is to form a strong alliance with the client which is "crucial" to encourage the patient "to remain in therapy" (Campbell and Baumeister, 2006, p. 427).

Rochester goes through what Heinz Kohut (1977) calls "transformations of narcissism", an evolution of the ego ideal characterized by modifying the demands of the ego ideal into more attainable goals, which will never take place by a simple conscious decision on behalf of the narcissist, but may be achieved by psychotherapy or through significant life experiences. The significant life experiences of Rochester's losing his eye sight as well as Jane's precious therapy sessions are landmarks in the transformation of Rochester's narcissism; destiny teaches him a lesson and Jane teaches him that not every person is ready to follow his agenda and that religion and principles exist to abide by them. She does so with great patience; Weinberg and Ronningstam (2020) highlight that therapists must have exceptional patience and sensibility to the patient's feelings of shame, defeat and humiliation.

I may argue that the first introductory session of their acquaintance was the very first therapy session of Rochester: Jane was very honest with him about his looks when Rochester asked her; she asserted that he was not handsome, and she did not pamper his vanity - a role practiced by the narcissists' circle and played by many as Celine Varens and Miss Ingram. Jane's understanding of Rochester's character is quite impressive as if she is reading from a psychology reference that reveals more about the character of narcissists and their behaviour. Jane anticipates how his character will change after marriage, and she bluntly states this to Rochester: "For a little while you will perhaps be as you are now- a very little while; and then you will turn cool; and then you will be capricious; and then you will be stern, and I shall have much ado to please you; but when you get used to me, you will perhaps like me again-*like me*, I say, not *love me*" (Bronte, 1884, p. 247). This is a very accurate description of a narcissist's behaviour after marriage for they regard their wives as self objects, very crucial in the sense of serving them. To narcissists, "others are seen only as appendages of the narcissist's ego, not as a partner" (Millon et al., 2004, p.369).

Psychoanalysts speculate that romantic relationships involving narcissists are often enjoyable at the early stage but "tend to sour as they progress to long-term committed relationships" and partners of narcissists endure more costs and receive less benefits during these relationships (Foster & Brunell, 2018, p. 318). This could have been a potential scenario had not Jane initiated and resumed with the behavioural therapy with Rochester. Foster and Brunell (2018) explain

that there are also some optimistic findings about long-term relationships that at some instances function well even with a narcissist as a partner.

Jane herself was a potential narcissist as she was from the beginning doomed by being an orphan, longing to be loved, and admired; this has made her the fierce child that infuriated Mrs. Reed. Jane was subject to several mental devastation moments: she was once punished in the red room and fainted there for the first time in her life; she was constantly punished and unloved by Mrs Reed and her cousins; she was unfairly accused and punished at Lowood Institute; and she was a witness to Mr. Brocklehurst's fake extrinsic religiosity. However, it is through religion, and empathic characters, as Helen Burns and Mrs Temple, that Jane was luckily not allowed to develop pathological narcissism. It is Mrs Temple's kindness exemplified in the hot tea and cake she served Jane and Helen as well as the words of encouragement she imported to Jane that meant a lot to Jane. It is also Helen's authentic religious character that taught Jane her first lessons of patience and taught her to forget about her urge to be loved by humans and seek the love of God instead. Hermann and Fuller (2018) assert that empirical research has found that intrinsic religiosity is positively correlated with psychological well-being, contrary to extrinsic religiosity which is negatively correlated with psychological well-being. It is religion that maintained Jane's psychological well-being, and it is religion that played a crucial role in Rochester's treatment as spelled out by Jane; she developed what some psychologists refer to as "healthy narcissism" or "normal narcissism".

Millon et al. (2004) explain that a normal narcissist will possess traits as self-confidence and healthy assertiveness, which help the individual get ahead in the society, not the grandiose self-regard and ultimate disregard for other people. To Rochester's question, "who in the world cares for you?", Jane gives him her own agenda, not that of a self object of Rochester's narcissism, the agenda of a healthy narcissist: "I care for myself...I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man.... Laws and principles are not for times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, ...If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth?" (Bronte, 1884, p. 302). Jane checks some of the narcissists' misconceptions about rules, which are allowed to be dismissed if the rules "introduce too much red tape" or prove to be an obstacle for "free action" (Millon et al., 2004, p. 349).

Jane, a healthy narcissist, gives the perfect agenda to lead a healthy life; she abides by the law given by God and respects principles. Being an orphan could have had a detrimental effect on Jane, could have simply created a narcissist, but instead she was excited by the fact that St John, Diana and Mary were her cousins more than being an heir of twenty thousand pounds, which she very generously divides among herself and her cousins. She tells St. John that the craving she had for fraternal and sisterly love was beyond imagination. When St. John wants her to be his missionary wife, she insists that she could not because she would not survive long in that climate; upon criticism from St. John, she spells out the very definition of healthy narcissism: "God did not give me my life to throw away; and to do as you wish me would,

I begin to think, be almost equivalent to committing suicide" (Brontë, 1884, p. 395- 396).

The confrontation after the secret of Mr. Rochester's marriage is revealed demonstrates a crucial treatment session; Rochester insists that he never intended to make Jane his mistress and that with a lunatic wife as Bertha, he can not count himself married. Narcissists demonstrate intolerance to any flaw in the perfection of the self; hence, they often "use rationalisation" as "a defence mechanism" to construct "alternative realities" that draw on the actual events but change "their significance" to excuse exploitations and once they figure out a new scenario "that saves the face", it becomes the new model of reality used by the narcissist. (Millon et al., 2004, p. 345, p. 369). That is why Rochester gives his narcissistic reality of not counting himself as married. However, Jane sets boundaries and puts Rochester on the right track by correcting any verbal manipulation: "Sir, your wife is living: that is a fact acknowledged this morning by yourself. If I lived with you as you desire - I should then be your mistress: to say otherwise is sophistical-is false" (Brontë, 1884, p. 289). Mosquera and Knipe (2015) explain that the therapist must accompany the long process of dismantling the dysfunctional personality structure with a high degree of attentiveness to the emotional safety of the narcissist, but at the same time teach them accurate principles; "We are often teaching our clients with narcissism to accept the reality of another person's accurate attunement— something that the client did not receive nearly enough of during childhood" (Mosquera & Knipe, 2015, p. 53-54). This is exactly what Jane does when she calls things by their names without any manipulation or icing.

Grandiose individuals tend to engage in exploitative and self-serving social transactions that suit their desires; "You're here for my pleasure" relationship mentality is revealed by higher promiscuity and lower level of commitment (Krizan, 2018, p.18). Earlier in the novel, Jane checks his principles in what we may call another therapy session. When she asks Rochester about Miss Ingram's suffering as a consequence of deserting her, he answers that it was "impossible" for Miss Ingram to suffer, so Jane steps in to check his judgement: "You have a curious, designing mind, Mr. Rochester. I am afraid your principles on some points are eccentric." (Brontë, 1884, p. 249). Rochester's answer: "My principles were never trained, Jane: they may have grown a little awry for want of attention" (Brontë, 1884, p. 249) reflects that he understands and admits some of the causes of his problems, which is a huge leap in the treatment of a narcissist. Narcissists have a huge problem with admitting mistakes and their causes because they hold themselves in a position higher and better than admitting any error. In this session, Rochester moves a step further in the therapy procedure by admitting his need for attention and his principles lacking training, and Jane proves to be an excellent therapist exactly as Mosquera and Knipe urge therapists to do with their clients with narcissism. Rochester reflects on Jane's "healing" effect on his psyche, asserting her enormous role in treating him, shifting from hate and rage for ten years while visiting Europe to a new status: "now I shall revisit it healed and cleansed, with a very angel as my comforter" (Brontë, 1884, p. 246)

Narcissists love to be admired and hailed which gives them positive energy; when Rochester asks Jane if she likes his voice, she affirms that she likes it very much. "I was not fond of pampering that susceptible vanity of his; but for once, and from motives of expediency, I would e'en soothe and stimulate it" (Brontë, 1884, p. 257). As an idealistic therapist, Jane instinctively manages to avoid a number of common mistakes, which Ronningstam and Weinberg (2013) highlight: directly criticizing grandiosity, over-attending to the patient's grandiosity, and engaging in a competitive, controlling relationship with the patient. She neither pampers his vanity all the way through, nor hurts it and instead engages in a harmonious, soothing, corrective relationship.

Jane asserts him that the "pagan idea" of his future wife dying with him does not exist on her agenda and that she will die when her time comes, and there was no need to "be hurried away in a suttee" (Brontë, 1884, p. 259). To his asking to be forgiven for "the selfish idea" as he admits, she does not; the result was: he "fretted, pished, and pshawed", upon which she simply gave him the answer: "you may fume and fidget as you please:..." (Brontë, 1884, p. 259, p. 260). Cazarna et al (2018) explain that aggression is an instrumental response to a threat to their position of superiority and dominance. Jane was taming him, setting boundaries, and avoiding some of the pitfalls that Weinberg and Ronningstam (2020) warn therapists against, namely indulging grandiosity or challenging it directly and instead use empathy with caution. That is why in a later confession session, Jane manages to extract a confession from Rochester when Jane asks him if it did it not seem to him in the least wrong to live in that way and he asserts that he "did not like" and "should never like to return to it." (Brontë, 1884, p. 296). Later, he confesses more of his mistakes, particularly that it was wrong to attempt to deceive Jane into an illegal marriage.

When Jane refuses to yield to Rochester's pleas and inquires about what to do in life and whom to keep company, she gives him the best prescription that heals both. In fact, Jane spells out concrete, realistic goals that Rochester must achieve: "Do as I do: trust in God and yourself. Believe in heaven. Hope to meet again there." When Rochester explains that this verdict she pronounces only means that Jane condemns him to "live wretched, and to die accursed", Jane explains, "I advise you to live sinless, and I wish you to die tranquil." (Brontë, 1884, p. 301) Weinberg and Ronningstam (2020) explain that one of the crucial Do's is to help the patient identify concrete, realistic goals that the patient can identify with and pursue.

At the end of the novel, Rochester shifts from the narcissist maniac about worldly possessions, fine clothes and jewels to the man who acknowledges that they are of no real value: "The third day from this must be our wedding day, Jane. Never mind fine clothes and jewels, now:..." (Brontë, 1884, p. 427). Sedikides et al. (2018) explain that narcissists are materialistic, tend to desire material possessions, and are prone to compulsive buying. However, this is only true of Rochester, the narcissist, and not Rochester, the healed.

Rochester healed from narcissism when he started having a new perspective to life: the great value of God, destiny, morals, and the low value of material possessions, compared



to spiritual essences. Rochester indeed regretted his sins and administered his great pride of his strength into a humble person. Rochester became more pious, thanking his Maker that “in the midst of judgement”, He has “remembered mercy” and prays that God gives him strength to lead “a purer life” than he has ever done; his blind eyes see better now as he realises that God “judges not as man judges, but far more wisely”. Rochester admits his sins and accepts that “Divine justice pursued its course” when he defied it and snatched his “innocent flower” when he “breathed guilt on its purity” and he was forced to a mighty punishment that left him blind and crippled, a lesson that has “humbled” him “for ever”, for he was once so “proud” of his “strength” (Bronte, 1884, p. 428, p.429).

Religion is of extreme importance in the treatment of narcissists: Christianity has helped individuals to enhance their sense of self and meaning in life in the face of threats as guilt or death, and this effect applies to Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and other religions (Herman & Fuller, 2018). Hence, we can conclude that Rochester’s shedding off a great portion of his narcissism resorts to revisiting religion. Rochester began to acknowledge God’s wisdom and to embrace God’s doom: “I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom. I began to experience remorse, repentance, the wish for reconciliation to my Maker. I began sometimes to pray: very brief prayers they were, but very sincere” (Bronte, 1884, p. 428).

## CONCLUSION

This paper advocates that *Jane Eyre* presents Rochester’s character as suffering from NPD: he embodies six out of nine criteria of this disorder according to The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Fourth edition. Rochester suffers from six criteria: he has a grandiose sense of self-importance; needs excessive admiration; has a sense of entitlement; is interpersonally exploitative; lacks empathy; and shows arrogance as well as haughty behaviors or attitudes. Rochester suffers from NPD because of the absence of his parental empathy; there is no mention of his mother, and this suggests her death at an early stage of his childhood or a possible kind of separation that deprived Rochester of his mother’s love, and as for Rochester’s father, he does not show any sign of love or empathy towards his son. Hence, early deficiency of love, as suggested by Kernberg and Kohut, is the cause behind Rochester’s NPD. Rochester’s character also includes some vulnerable traits such as vulnerable self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, emptiness and boredom related to NPD and suggested by many theorists and clinicians to be included in the DSM.

NPD is a serious psychological, mental condition; however, there is always hope for the treatment of a narcissist if the narcissist has enough confidence in his/her therapist, particularly in romantic relationships, and if the therapist manages to show enough empathy and sets clear boundaries between the right and wrong. Jane could have become a narcissist, a very possible candidate, with the deprivation of her parents’ love as an orphan, together with Mrs Reed unempathic practices, and the sour experiences at Lowood institution, but Jane managed to evade this destiny by having faith

in God, abiding by His dictates, and by being lucky enough to have some empathic characters in her life as Mrs Temple and Helen Burns. *Jane Eyre* provides a valuable insight into the human condition and how to treat it or at least how to recognize individuals suffering from NPD and understand why they act in such manners that make them obnoxious in their working environment or romantic relationships. On the practical level, psychoanalysts may come up with important recommendations on how to avoid NPD even when all the odds are against an individual. *Jane Eyre* is a pioneer in offering a proactive measurement to prevent NPD as seen in the case of Jane who was spared the doom of becoming a narcissist herself; perhaps the world needs more of Mrs Temple and Helen Burns to stretch a hand for the emotionally deprived. Moreover, Charlotte Bronte was definitely ahead of her time when she offered a possibility of a psychological treatment of NPD, articulated by psychoanalysts in the modern age, via an alliance with the patient: the treatment is always achieved by being empathic, but at the same time corrective of the narcissist’s cognitive and behavioral standards which tend to overlook religion, laws, and principles.

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