

Trauma and Emotional Manipulation in *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre is one of the many narratives open to interpretation. It may as well have the characteristics of a love story, of a feminist manifesto, or of a bildungsroman. Nevertheless, we should also consider it as being a series of traumatic events that lead to ongoing emotional manipulation. The thesis of this paper revolves around the idea of trauma and the inability to differentiate between love and dependence upon the partner. I will analyse Jane's traumatic childhood and its effects on her adult self (Balaev 2008, Craig 1993, Ford and Russo 2006, Freyd 1994, Herman 1992) and Rochester's unsavoury seduction according to several classifications of the manipulator (Buss et al. 1987, Cave 2009, Freedman and Fraser 1966, Harré 1965, Parret 1993, Winn 1983), trying to offer an answer as to why Jane returns to Rochester in the end despite their troubled relationship.

Keywords: *manipulation, trauma, unsavoury seduction, Jane Eyre, Edward Rochester.*

Introduction

When Jane admits to us, the readers, that she married Rochester, some might feel a sense of injustice or amazement at her decision. The reason for this is the continuous witnessing of delicately thought psychological traumatic blows, which could only make us wonder why Jane returns to her manipulator after all the suffering she experienced both as a child and as an adult woman. To answer this question, we have to uncover the psychological relation that reveals itself between Jane and Rochester throughout the novel. My interpretation will focus on a relatively modern psychological reading centred on the relationship between the manipulator and the manipulated in a context heavily overpowered by trauma and emotional abuse. I will not make any reference to the author of the novel, nor to the literary or cultural climate of the time. This will be a textual approach, discussing characters, relations, and actions, as presented in the text. No factors that are external to the world of the novel will be used to build the argumentation.

It appears that *Jane Eyre's* many interpretations and readings have been built upon what Showalter (1981, p. 183) calls 'male critical theory', which is entirely based on male experience being put forward as a universal truth. Instead, we should perhaps try and understand this novel from a female-centred point of view, not necessarily feminist in its theoretical framework, but focusing on the experience of the woman as a potential victim of manipulation, presenting the realities of such a psychological state in a novel that does not allow us to make a definitive decision with regards to the truth of the characters.

Firstly, I will discuss how childhood trauma affects Jane both as a child and as an adult woman. Secondly, I will analyse how emotional manipulation

1 takes shape in her relationship with Rochester, focusing on behaviour patterns
2 and manipulative techniques used by the manipulator. I will reference excerpts
3 from the novel, as well as modern psychological and literary studies that have
4 been written on this topic. In the end, this study aims to highlight the role
5 played by Rochester in the adult life of a traumatized woman who seeks
6 meaningful relationships. Under no circumstance will I attest that one character
7 is fully positive or negative. My approach is meant to uncover the
8 psychological implications of such a toxic relationship as the one showcased
9 by Jane and Rochester in *Jane Eyre*.

12 **Childhood Trauma. Or How Janes Becomes an Easy Target**

14 Jane: ‘I dared commit no fault; I strove to fulfil every duty; and I was
15 termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking, from morning to noon, and
16 from noon to night’ (Brontë¹ 2006, p. 22).

17 Jane’s childhood seems to be one of physical and emotional abuse. As an
18 orphan, Jane is already prone to developing a victim mentality that could label
19 her as powerless from the very beginning. This could be the first inherent layer
20 of trauma. The second layer is brought by the family she lives with,
21 specifically Mrs. Reed and John Reed (her son), who perpetually assault her
22 verbally and physically, leading to intrafamilial trauma. John exhibits violence
23 and no sign of remorse when he attacks Jane, who falls and strikes her head
24 against the door. She begins bleeding from a deep cut and reaches a climax of
25 terror. The abuse never stops at the physicality level, for it is always
26 accompanied by reproaches and threats, such as ‘you would have to go to the
27 poor house’ (B. p. 20), ‘Missis will send you away’ (B. p. 20), ‘God will
28 punish her. He might strike her dead in the middle of her tantrums, and then
29 where would she go?’ (B. p. 20). These threats are meant to awaken in her a
30 forced sense of gratitude, to place her on a lower level on the familial scene.
31 However, Jane admits that the reproaches of her dependence become a ‘vague
32 sing-song in my ear, very painful and crushing, but only half intelligible’ (B. p.
33 20). She remembers the feelings she initially had when the reproaches started,
34 but the repetition happens only at an emotional level, for solely the reaction is
35 present, not the active comprehension of what is being said by the family
36 members.

37 Herman (1992, p. 33) defines trauma as an event that can ‘overwhelm the
38 ordinary human adaptations to life’, that may ‘involve threats to life or bodily
39 integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death’. A traumatic
40 event is not just a drama of the past, but also “a drama of survival” (Suleiman
41 2008, p. 280). In the novel, the major traumatic event is presented as taking
42 place in the Red Room, which becomes central to the representation of trauma.
43 The physical place of suffering becomes an identifiable source of pain for the
44 traumatized child (Balaev 2008). At a future moment of suffering, Jane will
45 have a dream of the Red Room again, more intense and frightful than how

¹This reference will be written as “B” throughout the paper.

1 reality presented itself when she was but a little girl. In the initial scene from
 2 the room, recounted later on by the narrator, Jane describes the place as ‘chill’,
 3 ‘silent’, and ‘solemn’, because it was the room where Mr. Reed ‘breathed his
 4 last’ (B. p. 21). The encounter with the mirror tells us a very unfortunate
 5 consequence experienced by the abused child: the loss of identity. Trauma
 6 creates both intrusive remembering, in the form of sudden and unexpected
 7 flashbacks, sometimes extremely intense and vivid (Loftus 1993), and amnesia
 8 accompanied by emotional numbness (Herman 1992, Freyd 1994). Another
 9 effect that traumatic events have is that they destroy identity and create fright
 10 in victims (Balaev 2008). Herman (1992, p. 86) writes that ‘the victim of the
 11 chronic trauma may feel herself to be changed irrevocably, or she may lose the
 12 sense that she has any self at all’. When she steps in front of the mirror, we
 13 discover that our character lost her sense of self and identity. She sees her
 14 reflection as a ‘strange little figure [...] with a white face and arms specking
 15 the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still’ (B. p.
 16 21). The figure is strange because it does not belong to her anymore. She
 17 describes her arms and face as if it were the first time seeing them; a new and
 18 dissociated identity of the victim tries to get to the surface.

19 Because she is locked in the room shortly after she is psychically assaulted
 20 by John, she begins experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder,
 21 which can be caused by repeated exposure to traumatic events (Herman 1992,
 22 Haaken 1996, DePrince and Freyd 2004). She believes that she sees a ‘herald
 23 of some coming vision from another world’ in the form of a ‘gleam’ of light
 24 (B. p. 23). The fast succession of intense stimuli that overwhelm her is
 25 presented to us in short sentences:

26
 27 My heart beat thick; my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I
 28 deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed,
 29 suffocated; endurance broke down; I rushed to the door and shook the lock
 30 in desperate effort (B. p. 23).

31
 32 Her episode is met with disbelief by the family, who declare ‘in some
 33 disgust’ that ‘she has screamed out on purpose’. The child fears that room in
 34 such a way that she asks her aunt to punish her ‘some other way’. The answer
 35 comes in the form of an even more aggressive behaviour from Mrs. Reed, who
 36 thrusts her back into the room and locks her in again. Soon after, little Jane has
 37 a ‘species of fit’ (B. p. 24) and loses consciousness, her coherence, as “she
 38 experiences her body as a disorganized assemblage of heterogenous portions,
 39 each of which is increasingly stimulated” (Nandrea 2004, p. 121). There is a
 40 sensory sequence that intensifies the emotional excitation felt by Jane, a proof
 41 that the little girl has begun experiencing signs of PTSD.

42 Moreover, exposing herself to the trauma inflicted by the Reeds, she
 43 begins not only losing her identity, but fashioning a new one, dictated by the
 44 opinion of the abusers (Winn 1983). She is permanently told: ‘What we tell
 45 you is for your good’ (B. p. 20) and the verbal violence she is subjected to
 46 makes her believe that *she* is the ‘discord in Gateshead Hall’ (B. p. 22). At

1 dawn, her ‘habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression’ turns
2 into ‘decaying ire’, and she wonders whether she is not really ‘wicked’ (B. p.
3 22). She is, in a way, captive both psychically (in the Red Room and in the
4 Reed family) and mentally (in the role of a victim). In these situations of
5 captivity, the batterer or the abuser becomes extremely powerful and shapes the
6 actions and the beliefs of the victim (Herman 1992). However, even if Jane
7 wonders whether she really is what the family tells her, her child self cannot
8 help but see this as an injustice, as something that cannot be understood by a
9 logical mind:

10
11 Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, forever
12 condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win
13 anyone’s favor? (B. p. 21).

14
15 She is justly confused, as any other child would be, and tries to understand
16 the reasoning behind Mrs. Reed’s rage. Nevertheless, this does not change the
17 traumatic triggers that are already set into motion.

18 Jane’s case is a case of intrafamilial trauma or developmental trauma
19 (Hughes 2018), which is caused by the trauma of absence (absence of her real
20 parents, of understanding, of appreciation, of love), among many other
21 traumatic factors. This places the child at risk when it comes to creating strong
22 bonds with people later on in life because their attachment pattern might be
23 toxic and disorganized. Here, the secure attachment between the child and the
24 caregiver is completely missing. It could only be established by a nurturing
25 touch and positive effects (Levy and Orlans 2014). Children who lack these
26 elements of secure relationships during childhood will eventually become
27 adults who fail to promote the same secure attachment with their adult partners
28 (Sroufe et al. 2005). In the second part of the study, we will discuss exactly
29 how the adult Jane is affected by this childhood trauma in the context of her
30 relationship with a manipulator. Maltreated and abused children have the
31 highest rates of future anxious attachment (Crittenden 1985, Osofsky 1994),
32 with cases of memory impairment and intrusive thoughts (Osofsky 1994). In
33 the novel, it is clear that her relationship with Rochester is complex,
34 complicated, and brings her intense anxiety at times, feelings and sensations
35 caused by childhood abuse.

36 In terms of the presence of trauma in *Jane Eyre*, Balaev (2008. p. 150)
37 discusses the term ‘trauma novel’, which ‘refers to a work of fiction that
38 conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels’. The
39 trauma novel has some distinguishing features: (a) the victim is transformed by
40 an external experience that is often terrifying (in our case, the Red Room seems
41 to be the triggering point for Jane’s PTSD), (b) the traumatic event may
42 involve both collective human or natural disasters and personal traumas, such
43 as violence or sexual abuse (Jane suffers physical as well as emotional violence
44 in the Reeds house), (c) the victim comes to terms with the memory that
45 informs them of the existence of a new perception of the self and the world
46 (adult Jane admits that she understands why she suffered so during her

1 childhood, although she does not overtly share the reason with us). The
2 protagonist is an ‘everyman’ (or rather an everywoman): an individual who
3 suffers and fights their own anguishes and demons, but who also paints the
4 landscape of an entire culture and historical period, so the experiencer
5 oscillates between the public sphere and the private life. Jane desires
6 independence both socially and personally, and we learn that at the end of the
7 novel, when her words to Rochester reveal that she gained said independence
8 and she can make her own choices.

9 Trauma seems to be an important part of Jane’s childhood years, turning
10 her into an adult with attachment issues, oftentimes naïve in response to
11 Rochester’s seduction, and quite anxious and indecisive. In the following
12 section, we will see exactly how Rochester manipulates this trauma riddled
13 young woman and how she responds to all of it in the end.

14 15 16 **Emotional Manipulation. Or Rochester’s Unsavoury Seduction**

17
18 Rochester to Jane: ‘I’ll just—figuratively speaking—attach you to a chain
19 lie this’ (B. p. 262).

20 Manipulation does not only involve some form of overpowering, but also
21 an abuse of that said form of power, an exercise of illegitimate influence by
22 means of discourse targeted to emotion and actions that the victim would not
23 otherwise do, actions that are in the interest of the manipulator and against the
24 interests of the victim (Van Dijk 2006). Manipulation as it is can be exercised
25 directly by means of discourse, behaviour, and reactions that are meant to
26 wheel the volition of the manipulated person in the direction wanted by the
27 manipulator, and indirectly¹ via pictures, films, or photos (Van Leeuwen 2005).

28 Manipulation comes in many forms². Cave (2007) offers some examples
29 that fall under the following categories: manipulation by means of deception,
30 by threat, by seduction, by artificial constraint, or unintentional manipulation
31 (even if, morally speaking, most cases of manipulation are intentional).
32 Usually, the perfect victim is a nurturer, a champion of the disadvantaged; they
33 trust people and they have never developed a self-protecting mind. Also,
34 women who believe that they have few relationship options usually ignore the
35 “red flags” and their desire and need to believe the manipulator are higher than
36 their subconscious wish to know the truth. Once the manipulator feels that he
37 earned his victim’s trust, he can revert to his main personality type; he can be

¹Nowadays, we also encounter a form of multimodal manipulation, mostly through advertising and social media (see Day 1999, Messaris 1997).

²In a series of studies addressing manipulative behaviours, six major tactics were identified (Buss et al. 1987): (a) charm (this is where we might also place seduction); (b) silent treatment (for example, he ignores her until she does what he wants); (c) coercion (for instance, he screams at her until she does what he wants); (d) reason (for example, he gives her a list of reasons why she should do what he wants; most of the time, these reasons strictly refer to his needs); (e) regression (for example, he behaves childishly until she does what he wants); (f) debasement (for instance, he might place himself in a lower position so that she accepts to do what he wants).

1 jolly when it suits his purpose and aggressive when contradicted or opposed
 2 (McCoy 2006). However, the victim will already have created an attachment
 3 for the captor in the absence of other human connection (Herman 1992).

4 One might euphemise the word ‘manipulation’ and translate it as
 5 ‘persuasion’ (King 2016). Clearly, the two are psychological concepts found in
 6 a social relationship and they both involve two partners (the one who does the
 7 persuasion-manipulation and the one who receives it). However, the former
 8 entails the pre-existence of the psychological state of being persuaded, whilst
 9 the latter involves the lack thereof, which means that the receiver is not aware
 10 of the influence exerted by the transmitter. Even if that might sometimes be the
 11 case when it comes to persuasion, this act also involves a positive moral
 12 implication, when the persuader (the orator) has the hearer’s interests in mind,
 13 engaging him or her in some sort of dialogue through the art of rhetoric (Harré
 14 1985). Manipulation, on the other hand, involves not only a negative use of
 15 rhetoric, but also physical engagement in the form of aggression. If persuasion
 16 targets mostly the intellectual side of the hearer, manipulation targets the
 17 emotional one, where the victim’s weaknesses can be easily found. Nowadays,
 18 persuasion and rhetoric have strayed far from the original virtuous meaning,
 19 leading to a ‘rhetoric of emotional manipulation’ (Ulanov 1966, p. 404), a clear
 20 combination of the two. However, in this study I will keep persuasion and
 21 manipulation separate because it is my belief that the latter has a negative
 22 connotation, one that involves types of aggression that we could not find in the
 23 former.

24 To see what techniques of manipulation Rochester uses, let us observe the
 25 following excerpts from the novel:

26
 27 (A)

28 You are cold, because you are alone: no contact strikes the fire from you
 29 that is in you. You are sick; because the best of feelings, the highest and
 30 the sweetest given to man, keeps far away from you. You are silly,
 31 because, suffer as you may, you will not beckon it to approach, nor will
 32 you stir one step to meet it where it waits you (B. p. 194).

33
 34 Rochester is frustrated because Jane will not share his feelings. He uses
 35 covert manipulation tactics (Birch 2015) to convince her that she is the one to
 36 blame for her suffering and for her loneliness. We might call it ‘crazymaking’
 37 (Birch 2015) or guilt (Nepryakhin 2019); this method is oftentimes used by
 38 Rochester to make Jane doubt her own feelings and decisions. The manipulator
 39 tries to plant the seed of doubt in the victim’s mind (doubt regarding their
 40 personal future and their life far from the controlling hand of the manipulator),
 41 expecting positive reinforcements instead (that he is right and that she is indeed
 42 alone without him).

43
 44 (B)

45 What love have I for Miss Ingram? None: and that you know. What love
 46 has she for me? None: as I have taken pains to prove; I caused a rumour to

1 reach her that my fortune was not a third of what was supposed, and after
 2 that I presented myself to see the result; it was coldness both from her and
 3 her mother. I would not—I could not—marry Miss Ingram. You—you
 4 strange, you almost unearthly thing!—I love as my own flesh. You—poor
 5 and obscure, and small and plain as you are—I entreat to accept me as a
 6 husband. [...] I must have you for my own—entirely my own (B. p. 247).

7
 8 Here, he uses what Birch (2015) calls triangulation, which involves using a
 9 third person to make the victim feel insecure, unworthy of the manipulator's
 10 attention and affection. It is meant to keep the victim in a state of obsession and
 11 anxiety, waiting for the manipulator to make a decision and choose between
 12 the two persons. If they are confronted, they will shift the focus or intentionally
 13 cause the victim to have an emotional meltdown. He admits that the "games"
 14 he plays have the purpose of making her jealous. However, he also insults her
 15 and, by doing so, places her outside of her respected self, in a position of
 16 inferiority. Non-conventional language, even though it might sound rude,
 17 becomes a means of intimacy for Rochester (Craig 1993). The final statement
 18 shows how possessive he is when it comes to Jane's love and affection. His
 19 desire is to establish control over all aspects of the victim's life, to enslave Jane
 20 so he can satisfy his need of power. Herman (1992) argues that this is the
 21 perpetrator's first goal in the process of controlling the other person (making
 22 sure he has complete control and authority over the victim).

23
 24 (C)

25 'His fury was wrought to the highest: he must yield to it for a moment,
 26 whatever followed; he crossed the floor and seized my arm and grasped
 27 my waist. He seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically, I
 28 felt, at the moment, powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow
 29 of a furnace: mentally, I still possessed my soul, and with it the certainty of
 30 ultimate safety [...], his grip was painful, and my over-taxed strength
 31 almost exhausted.

32 'Never,' said he, as he ground his teeth, 'never was anything at once so
 33 frail and so indomitable. A mere reed she feels in my hand!' (And he
 34 shook me with the force of his hold.) 'I could bend her with my finger and
 35 thumb: and what good would it do if I bent, if I uptore, if I crushed her?'
 36 (B. p. 306).

37
 38 Here is maybe the most important passage from the book in terms of
 39 violent manipulation. We can clearly see that Rochester decides to use violence
 40 as a coercion device. Jane describes feeling 'powerless' confronting his 'fury';
 41 his speech becomes odd because he talks as if he were alone, disregarding the
 42 presence of the woman. We can recognize what Herman (1992, p. 42) calls a
 43 'state of surrender' manifested by the victim. She describes it as the shutdown
 44 of the person's self-defence system. Instead of trying to physically escape her
 45 torturer, the victim shifts her perspective and her consciousness into her mind.
 46 This is a response of defeat and helplessness that Jane adopts as well:

1 ‘Physically, I felt, at the moment, powerless [...], mentally, I still possessed my
2 soul.’ (B. p. 306). As a psychological *va-et-vient* that is meant to startle and
3 confuse her, he suddenly shifts his behavioural pattern:

4
5 You will not come? You will not be my comforter, my rescuer? My deep
6 love, my wild woe, my frantic prayer, are all nothing to you? (B. p. 307).

7
8 *He* is now the powerless one, who needs to be rescued, placing Jane in the
9 role of the rescuer. When she answers that she indeed desires to leave, he
10 becomes helpless and pitiful, begging her to consider his pain: ‘remember, you
11 leave me here in anguish [...], cast a glance on my suffering—think of me’ (B.
12 p. 307). She is obviously affected by this sudden burst of affection and
13 helplessness, and she returns: ‘I had already gained the door; but, reader, I
14 walked back—walked back as determinedly as I had retreated’, and yet she still
15 finds the strength to say ‘farewell forever’ (B. p. 307). The night she leaves
16 him, her childhood trauma haunts her and she has a ‘trance-like dream’ (B. p.
17 308) in which she promises herself that she will flee temptation. And this is
18 understandable because, as far as we, as readers, can see, this is the second
19 moment of intense trauma, so it is natural that flashbacks containing past
20 trauma, and even intense memories of the traumatic event, overwhelm the
21 victim, who selectively preserves the episodes in her memory (LaBar 2007).
22 Jane begins experiencing PTSD again as a result of Rochester’s paradoxical
23 behaviour towards her (one moment he is aggressive and brutal, the next he is
24 humble and worthy and pity). This ever-shifting behaviour is bound to render
25 anyone anxious, especially if they have a past of trauma, attachment issues, and
26 bonding issues. Unfortunately, even if Jane showcases signs of independency,
27 her ambition comes not from a place of positive motivation, but from an
28 inherent desire to break free. Rochester’s violence stands now at the top of the
29 manipulation pyramid.

30
31 (D)

32 ‘‘It is your time now, little tyrant, but it will be mine presently; and when
33 once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I’ll just—figuratively
34 speaking—attach you to a chain like this’ (touching his watch-guard)’ (B.
35 p. 262).

36
37 In this passage, we witness a covert threat towards Jane, both verbal and
38 non-verbal (the touching of the chain, to somehow show her what expects her
39 if she does not obey). At the beginning of their relationship, Rochester might
40 be seen as the ‘buddy’ type and the prosecutor (Nepryakhin, 2019), trying to
41 verbally wheel her in his desired direction using the foot-in-the-door technique
42 (Freedman and Fraser 1966), while also critiquing and belittling her.
43 Rochester’s threat is all the more certain because it is not a matter of ‘‘if’’ but of
44 ‘‘when’’ he will seize and chain her. Jane, as any manipulated woman who
45 becomes involved with a batterer, might see these initial outbursts of honesty
46 as romantic and even flattering, but as he becomes more possessive and

1 dominant, she might excuse his behaviour and find a way to adapt to his
2 desires (Herman 1992). As the relationship progresses, he becomes the despot
3 type, characterized by high levels of aggressiveness, showcasing strength and
4 control, and usually humiliating the victim.

5
6 (E)

7 ‘Here is Miss Eyre, sir,’ said Mrs. Fairfax, in her quiet way. He bowed,
8 still not taking his eyes from the group of the dog and child.

9 ‘Let Miss Eyre be seated,’ said he; and there was something in the forced,
10 stiff bow, in the impatient yet formal tone, which seemed further to
11 express, ‘What the deuce is it to me whether Miss Eyre be there or not? At
12 this moment I am not disposed to accost her.’ (B. p. 125)

13
14 Here, he is the passive-aggressive manipulator (McCoy 2006). He uses the
15 technique of silent treatment (Buss et al. 1987) to make Jane doubt herself and
16 his opinion about her. He also manifests a shift in his behaviour towards her,
17 another particularity of the manipulator. Birch (2015) also calls this
18 intermittent reinforcement: the manipulator creates a climate of doubt and
19 anxiety that compels the victim to appreciate even the smallest crumbs of
20 affection and positive reinforcement, depending on how they would like the
21 manipulated part to behave. The more the manipulator uses intermittent
22 reinforcement, the greater the bond between him and the victim will be, as the
23 latter will eventually become “addicted” to the spoon-fed appraisals of the
24 manipulator.

25
26
27 (F)

28 ‘[...] and while he spoke my very conscience and reason turned traitors
29 against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him. They spoke
30 almost as loud as Feeling: and that clamoured wildly. ‘Oh, comply!’ it
31 said. ‘Think of his misery; think of his danger—look at his state when left
32 alone; remember his headlong nature; consider the recklessness following
33 on despair—soothe him; save him; love him; tell him you love him and
34 will be his. Who in the world cares for YOU? Or who will be injured by
35 what you do?’ (B, p. 305).

36
37 In this passage, we can observe Jane’s inner struggle, intensified by the
38 sight of a pitiful Rochester. Here, the manipulator plays the victim part
39 (Nepryakhin 2019), assuming the role of the helpless person¹. Noticeably, he
40 uses what Birch (2015, p. 43) calls ‘the pity play’. Jane is consumed by the
41 thought that she might be blamed for Rochester’s unhappiness, and because he
42 successfully plants the seed of self-doubt in her mind, she wonders who else
43 would love and care for her, if not her manipulator. This is the special

¹Ironically, he does become helpless at the end of the novel, and the dynamic of their relationship seems to shift dramatically, because Rochester becomes the dependent one and Jane plays the role of the master.

1 relationship brought about by the prolonged contact between Jane and
 2 Rochester, one in which the perpetrator uses ‘a combination of force,
 3 intimidation, and enticement’ (Herman 1992, p. 74). The fact that Jane
 4 experiences extreme highs and lows, always left in a state of uncertainty as to
 5 where the relationship will go, feeling inadequate and obliged “to save face”
 6 and care for a man who plays the role of a pitiful and helpless lover, could only
 7 strengthen the master-slave relationship that Rochester carefully establishes.

8 Cave (2009, p. 236) calls this type of behaviour ‘unsavoury seduction’, a
 9 subspecies of sexual seduction, which ‘involves not just initial sexual
 10 unwillingness, but its conversion to willingness’. Even if, from an ethnical
 11 perspective, seduction is perceived as evil and the seductor is a corruptive force
 12 (Parret 1994), most of the time there is a subjective desire that comes both
 13 from the one who seduces and from the one who allows the seduction to occur.
 14 To go from sexual seduction to unsavoury seduction, the seductor must appeal
 15 to motive manipulation (Cave 2007), which ‘is the attempt to move another by
 16 inducing changes in her motivational structure’ (Cave 2009, p. 237).
 17 Nonetheless, unsavoury seduction is not categorically immoral, like rape, nor is
 18 it seemingly innocent, like courtship, but it is wrong (Cave 2009) provided that
 19 the initial intent is to change the other person’s mind using manipulative
 20 techniques; it ‘violates an important and widely accepted moral principle
 21 prohibiting agents from undermining other’s capacity to reflectively manage
 22 their own motives’ (Cave 2009, p. 244). This is irrefutably a form of
 23 manipulation, whether we call it motive or emotional manipulation, the
 24 purpose is still to change something in the other person’s thought pattern and
 25 decision-making process, so that it can serve the manipulator-seducator’s selfish
 26 intentions.

27 And the purpose was her accepting his marriage proposal, so that the
 28 possessiveness would be complete. And so, Jane accepts and ‘succumbs to a
 29 new level of degradation, one that adds sexual enslavement to her prior
 30 experiences of physical victimization’ (Sun-Joo Lee 2008, p. 324). As the story
 31 develops, we find proof that the relationship between the two resembles the
 32 relation between a master and a slave. Jane admits that he is somewhat superior
 33 to her, that he has a certain control over her:

34
 35 He smiled; and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful
 36 and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched (B. p.
 37 261).

38
 39 He is a ‘sultan’ and she is his mere ‘slave’. Pell (1977, p. 414) observes
 40 that ‘his demand for mastery and dependence upon such a woman recalls
 41 Hegel’s description of the relationship between master and slave’. This theory
 42 states that one is self-sufficient and the other exists only to please the master
 43 (Hegel 2018). Hegel describes in detail the relation between master and slave
 44 in neutral contexts, not necessarily referring to men and women. Simone de
 45 Beauvoir (1953, p. 59) is the one to make this connection, writing that some
 46 passages ‘in the argument employed by Hegel in defining the relation of master

1 to slave apply much better to the relation of man to woman'. And this makes
2 perfect sense in *Jane Eyre* because Rochester is the self-sufficient one, always
3 in control of the situation and of his own emotions, and Jane is the dependant
4 one, never able to break free from the emotional chains that tie her to her
5 master. However, the relation shifts towards the end of the novel, when we find
6 that Rochester has a physical handicap now and he depends on Jane.

7
8 Rochester loses his sight and his right hand. But if we move beyond
9 psychoanalytic theories, we can also see that Brontë deprives Rochester of
10 literacy—the ability to read and write. Jane becomes “his vision” and “his
11 right hand” (Sun-Joo Lee 2008, p. 327).

12
13 So, the manipulator (unconsciously) becomes the victim type, establishing
14 an unbreakable relation between the caregiver (the victim) and the helpless
15 man.

16 However, we notice that Jane fights his manipulation from the very
17 beginning by displaying what Ford and Russo (2006, p. 336) call ‘avoidance’:
18 ‘A traumatized individual may use avoidance as a means of shielding herself
19 from experiencing unbearable emotions’. After Rochester's room is set on fire
20 and Jane wakes him up and saves his life, he is manifesting what appear to be
21 strong feelings of gratitude, which are normal under these circumstances.
22 However, they begin to bother Jane: ‘Strange energy was in his voice, strange
23 fire in his look [...]. But he still retained my hand, and I could not free it’ (B. p.
24 154). Rochester begins to show his emotions towards Jane, but with a ‘strange’
25 behaviour, which makes her reluctant when it comes to returning his feelings
26 and which urges her to avoid him:

27
28 I both wished and feared to see Mr. Rochester on the day which followed
29 this sleepless night: I wanted to hear his voice again, yet feared to meet his
30 eye (B. p. 155).

31
32 As Ford and Russo (2006) state, avoidance is a way of protecting yourself
33 from the event or the person that traumatized you. To somebody else, the way
34 Rochester behaves may not translate as the catalyst of tumult or emotional
35 struggle, but to Jane, who experiences a traumatizing childhood of abuse and
36 violence, Rochester is a source of confusion and novelty, that can lead to
37 negative emotions. And yet this confusion begins to feel warm and familiar to
38 her. *Manipulation* begins to feel warm and familiar, and so Jane feels tied to
39 this sense of comfortableness, even if it is harmful to her psychological,
40 physical, and emotional wellbeing. In this sense, Rochester is indeed the
41 perfect manipulator.

42
43
44

1 **Conclusion**

2
3 Why does Jane come back to him after all these years? Why would she
4 return to the source of her trauma? Chase accuses her of cowardice for refusing
5 to stay with Rochester. He writes that Jane “sees only two possible modes of
6 behaviour: meek submission or a flirtatious, gently sadistic skirmishing
7 designed to keep her lover at bay” (1962, p. 107). However, the accusation is
8 quite unfounded, because during her time at Gateshead and Lowood Jane
9 complains of her isolation and longs for human companionship. One possible
10 answer is given by Herman (1992, p. 211), who admits that traumas never
11 disappear and one can never fully recover from them: ‘resolution of the trauma
12 is never final; recovery is never complete’. When Jane speaks to the blind
13 Rochester, she admits yet again that he is her master: ‘My dear master, [...] I
14 am come back to you’ (B. p. 412). However, she returns as an independent
15 woman. Even so, she feels pity for him and offers to be his nurse. This
16 possibility leads to the conclusion that Jane accepts herself as a victim and thus
17 returns to the man who contributed to her traumatic past, only to experience
18 some closure. Another possible answer is that Jane finds that her way of
19 healing is to forgive Rochester. In Herman's opinion:

20
21 ‘Once the survivor has mourned the traumatic event, she may be surprised
22 to discover how uninteresting the perpetrator has become to her [...]. She
23 may even feel sorrow and compassion for him’ (1992, p. 190).

24
25 Whether it is forgiveness or pity, Jane certainly feels that she is connected
26 to him, that between him and her there is a relation that needs to continue.
27 Even Rochester cannot immediately believe that she is willing to marry him,
28 for he wishes to receive reassurance:

29
30 Will you marry me? [...] A poor blind man, whom you will have to lead
31 about by hand? [...] A crippled man, twenty years older than you, whom
32 you will have to wait on? [...] you delight in sacrifice (B. p. 422).

33
34 He questions her again and again to establish her role as a saviour and
35 heroine, so that Jane can now be obliged to care for him because of his
36 gratitude. The blunt announcement ‘Reader, I married him’ (B. p. 427) marks
37 the decisiveness with which Jane fights her past and struggles to find closure in
38 the warm arms of familiarity.

39 Van der Kolk (2014) writes that there are four goals that the victim of
40 trauma can achieve in terms of recovery, and these are: (a) finding a way to
41 focus and be calm, usually by revisiting the trauma and dealing with the
42 memory of it until it becomes something that you can accept; (b) learning to
43 maintain that state of calm as a reaction to images and sensations that bring
44 back the traumatic event; (c) finding a way to engage with the people around
45 you; (c) not having to keep secrets from yourself, and that includes what you
46 did to survive the trauma. Could we say that Jane recovers definitively from

1 her traumas? On the one hand, instead of revisiting it until she finds
 2 acceptance, she chooses to marry “it”, and perhaps this is the only sensible
 3 solution that she is capable of accepting. On the other hand, this could also be a
 4 proof of stoic resignation. She might have accepted that there is no way she can
 5 heal, so she chooses, as Rochester says, to ‘delight in sacrifice’.

6 Any way we might choose to interpret her return and their marriage at the
 7 end of the novel, we cannot deny the manipulation and the trauma inflicted by
 8 Rochester upon her. All throughout the novel we meet with grooming, pity
 9 plays, belittling, insults, passive-aggressiveness, and even violence,
 10 manipulation techniques that (in time) seem to have the desired effect. For the
 11 manipulator, it is not important *why* the victim returns in the end, but the fact
 12 that she *does*. Even though the context of Jane’s return is not the same (from
 13 the perspective of youth and the manipulator’s physical capabilities) neither for
 14 her, nor for Rochester, and even though the dynamic of their relationship
 15 shifted, she *did* come back, this time as the real saviour, the real heroine of his
 16 pitiful life.

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