

## THESIS: IRONY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONCEPT NARCISSISM IN RAMANI DURVASULA'S IT'S NOT YOU

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**Abstract:** *This thesis studies the strategic use of irony, a stylistic device in Ramani Durvasula's self-help book, It's Not You: Identifying and Healing from Narcissistic People. It claims that this device functions as one of major means of shaping the concept narcissism in the reader's perception. Durvasula does not just uses this tool for creating a humoristic atmosphere, she makes the concept of narcissism a relatable, psychological phenomenon by using certain strategies. The analysis focuses on how irony, specifically through the use of rhetorical statements and the exposure of the narcissist's nature, constructs a simple to grasp and clearly identifiable real understanding of narcissistic disorder for the reader. This process, therapeutically concentrating on helping the victims, at the same time can essentialize the psychological concept, changing it from a clinical term into a fixed, narrative archetype or a cliché. This thesis concludes that irony is not some entertainment device or a criticizing tool but also an important instrument for identifying, explaining the reality, the mood of the book and defining the concept "narcissist in the writer's mind."*

**Key Words:** *Irony, concept narcissism, rhetoric questions, self-help book, Ramani Durvasula, psychological discourse*

### INTRODUCTION

Ramani Durvasula's *It's Not You* (2020) has become as a prominent and popular self-help book for narcissistic abuse survivors giving a vivid illustration on interpersonal relationships and traumatic experience. While specialized in her clinical expertise, the book's relatability to the lived experiences of the victims makes the phenomenon more comprehensible to a bigger audience. This thesis studies the philological importance of this stylistic device, used as a major means of shaping the concept narcissism in the book's discourse. The concept is not simply depicted in medical or psychological terms; it is shaped through a linguistic strategy that makes it understandable, memorable, and definitely personal.

Narcissism, in Durvasula's book, changes from the complex complicated diagnostic criteria of the DSM-5 to a simply comprehensible "concept narcissism", a narrative-driven archetype modeled to help the reader recognize and emotionally process the trauma. The main claim is that the used sarcastic tone functions as a crucial mechanism persuading the victim, serving to expose the absurd of the narcissist's nature, behavior and tactics, as well as to strengthen the reader's

defensive mechanism. This rhetorical strategy of the text gives a textual analysis to understand how a complex psychological term is made simple and clarified for therapeutic purposes.

The rhetoric of irony

#### 1. Rhetorical statement

Durvasula establishes a rhetorical statement by creating a clear opposition: the naïve and confused reader versus the two faced, manipulative narcissistic personality. Irony is the main stylistic device used to manage this juxtaposition. The title itself, *It's Not You*, is an example of situational and verbal irony, as the victims have often been told by their abusers and those who surround them that it is their fault. As the analysis shows, the book's major function is an ironic reversal of the abuser's side of the story.

A consistent technique includes the ironic description of the narcissist's self-absorbed self-centered and self-satisfied nature versus their real negative effect on others. For example, a narcissist's need for total control may be ironically described as their "heroic quest for order" when the outcome is domestic violence and emotional trauma. This rhetorical statement is aimed to elicit "Aha!" moment in the reader, using humor and recognition to soften the trauma:

"The narcissist's sense of entitlement means they genuinely believe they are exempt from the rules—an ironic twist, as their insistence on freedom often results in them being the most rigidly bound to their own ego."

The irony of hypocrisy becomes the defining feature of the concept narcissism presented: the narcissist is at the same time grandiose and fragile, charming or nice and cruel, independent or self-sufficient and weak. The repetition of this ironic paradox shapes the concept in the reader's mind as a basically flawed and damaged.

Sarcastic tone and semantic reinforcement

The book's sarcastic tone help to define the conceptual boundaries of narcissism. Durvasula quite frequently uses sarcasm when she is quoting or paraphrasing the manipulative discourse used by narcissists by putting the abusive rhetoric in quotation marks and right after that providing ironic, correcting comments. The author presents the narcissistic manifestations and manipulation techniques, such as gaslighting or future faking, as veiled actions of cruelty, selfishness and aggression.

For instance, the description of a narcissist's apology may be presented ironically, as shown in this part:

"When the narcissist finally utters an 'apology,' it is the most magnificent performance of verbal misdirection you will ever see. It will be the Olympic gold medal winner of non-apologies: 'I'm sorry you feel that way.' "

This rhetorical statement uses irony to expose the narcissist's language or choice of words for influencing and manipulating their victims revealing their semantic intentions in attempt of emotional abuse. This way the concept of narcissism is transformed by making it less about a psychological disorder and more about a purposeful villain with a specific pattern of behavior.

#### Irony as a Pedagogical Tool for Concept Formation

Finally, irony in *It's Not You* functions as a powerful teaching enlightening tool. It teaches the readers to re-envision and re-interpret their traumatic experiences by giving them a powerful explanatory tool. By using ironic language to depict the reader's inner state and the web that they find themselves in. Durvasula provides validation to the reader's feelings, trauma, as well as showing the way to recovery after such relationship. The irony creates a clear understanding, connection, bond between the author and the readers, who share common lasting traumatic experience. The conceptual frame of the "narcissist" is achieved by means of ironic exposure of dramatic difference between the abuser's outward image and their terrible reality.

### CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that irony is not just incidental stylistic choice in Ramani Durvasula's *It's Not You*, but sooner the primary rhetorical tool shaping the concept of narcissism. By using ironic juxtaposition, a consistently sarcastic tone, and a rhetorical frame, Durvasula clearly transforms the clinical definition of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) into a simple to comprehend and interpret concept narcissism for her the audience that shares the similar experience with her.

This strategic use of irony has a dual aim: therapeutic instrument and conceptual frame. The irony validates the reader's traumatic experience by recognizing the obviously absurd of narcissistic abuse, redefining and renaming the guilty in this destructional relationship. The necessity of showing the real world and real nature of the narcissistic disorder led to the variety of means to achieve it.

Therefore, the thesis concludes that the book's success is in its masterful use of different devices helping to get the topic clearly and in different colors and shades. Future linguistic research should explore the frame and the effect of this ironized discourse, studying by means of using different devices affects the textual simplification of psychological concepts and as a result leading to revelations, realization, validation and finally to a recovery

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