



NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

Wuthering Heights which has long been one of the most popular and highly novels in English Literature, seemed to hold little promise when it was published in 1847, selling very poorly and receiving only a few mixed reviews. Victorian readers found the book shocking and inappropriate in its depiction of passionate, ungoverned love and cruelty (despite the fact that the novel portrays no sex or bloodshed), and the work was virtually ignored. Today, Wuthering Heights has a secure position in the cannon of world literature, and Emily Bronte is reversed as one of the finest writers-male or female of the 19th century. Wuthering heights is based on partly on the Gothic tradition of the late 18th century, a style of literature that featured supernatural encounters, crumbling ruins, moonless nights and grotesque imagery, seeking to create the effects of misery and fear. But Wuthering Heights transcends its genre in its sophisticated observation and artistic subtlety. The novel has been studied, analyzed, dissected, and discussed from every imaginable critical perspective, yet it remains unexhausted. And while the novel's symbolism, themes, structure, and language may all spark fertile exploration, the bulk of its popularity may rest on its unforgettable characters. As a shattering presentation of the doomed love affair between the fiercely passionate Catherine and Heath cliff, it remains one of the most haunting love stories in all of literature.

INTRODUCTION

Emily Jane Bronte was born on 30 July 1818 in the North of England, was an English novelist and poet, best remembered for her solitary novel, Wuthering Heights, now considered a classic of English Literature. Wuthering Heights is notable for its narrative technique she employed and the level of craftsmanship involved in it. Although there are only two obvious narrators, Lockwood and Nelly Dean, a variety of other narratives are interspersed throughout the novel. The reason for this are that the whole action of Wuthering Heights is presented in the form of eyewitness narrations by people who have played some part in the narration they describe. Unlike the other novels where parallel narratives exist, i.e, same event, within the same time frame being narrated from different perspectives, Wuthering Heights has a multi layered

narration, each individual narrative opening out from its parent to reveal a new level of the story. This intricate technique helps to maintain a continuous narrative despite of the difficulties posed by the huge time shifts involved in the novel.

Lockwood's narrative is the outer framework of the story. He is then present as the recipient of Nelly's story and she in turn is the recipient of tertiary narratives.

- A) Heathcliff : Chapter 6, 29
- B) Isabella : Chapter 13, 17
- C) Cathy : Chapter 24
- D) Zilla : Chapter 30

Nelly's narrative is so dramatized that we could argue that much of it is in the form of a tertiary narration, example, the conversation involving

Heathcliff, Catherine, and Edgar on Heathcliff's return is recorded in the words of the participants. The effect of this is to present the story directly to the reader so that our perception is constantly changing as if we were witnessing a drama.

The difficulty facing the author at the beginning is the novel was to find a method by which the reader could be introduced into the household of the Heights, so that its characters and its ambience could be understood. The purpose of Bronte's narrative is to draw the reader into a position where he can only judge its events from within, Lockwood presents the normal outsider or the reader, by drawing him into the penetralium. The reader is clearly introduced to the realities of this hostile and bewildering environment. The narrative form poses severe limitation for the author in that she cannot use her own voice, the story must speak entirely for itself, its value must be self-generated, created for us by the language which must be emotive and strong, particularly in moments of self revelation and strong feeling. In *Wuthering Heights* each narrative takes place within the action occupying an important place in the dramatic structure so that the reader never stands completely outside a story. We, like Lockwood, find ourselves as the direct recipients of Nelly's narrative, we are immediately inside the world of *Wuthering Heights* and therefore the events look large and have a more dramatic impact, because they are not prefaced for us by editorial comment or introduction provided in the first person by the author.

While the larger frameworks of Lockwood and Nelly's narratives, provide the necessary objectivity, the smaller more condensed narratives like Catherine's diary give us direct glimpses into the imaginery lives of the main protagonists, these together from the core of the story and are joined in subtle ways with each other. They suddenly appear without warning and the memory of them remains vibrant in the background. To modify over veins of all the outward events that Nelly or Lockwood describe, allowing for an individual response or appreciation to the core development of the story. Bronte seeks to engage the reader directly through the reactions of her narrators, the technique is

abrupt and gramatic allowing little time for insight but confronting us with a sharply focused scene where the characters are realized first as physical presences, they are set in motion at once and the chain if events begin to occur, the reader is immediately caught up in the overall experience of the story without having time to consider its meaning. The background, the setting, the climate, the houses and the animals all take on a life of their own, images of past and present are flashed together "*a glare of white letters startled from the dark as vivid as spectres- the air swarming with Catherine's*".

Lockwood as Narrator: Lockwood is the outsider, coming into a world in which he finds bewildering and hostile, he was a city gentleman who has stumbled on a primitive uncivilized world which he doesn't understand, but which fascinates him. In the novel Lockwood presents the situation as he sees it, the reader is thus brought closer to the action, seeing it through the eyes of the narrator himself. The presence of Lockwood in the book allows the author to begin the story near the end and worth backwards and forwards in time with little difficulty. The opening chapters of the book are narrated by Lockwood and provide the reader with their introduction to this early 19th century world. The format of Lockwood's narrative is that of a personal diary, which allows the development for the reader of an essay intimacy with an impartial character whose style, self-conscious, a little affected and facetious is nicely calculated to engage sympathy, while allowing ground for the reader to be amused at the narrator's expense. With all his limitations, Lockwood is intelligent and prespective and his precise detailed descriptions are used by his creators to create subtle changes in situations and characters, an example of this is that when Lockwood first visited *Wuthering Heights*, he commented on the chained gate, while at the end of the novel when he returns to find Heathcliff dead, he noticed "*both doors and lattices were open*". Lockwood, by fulfilling the role as the detached outsider and the observer, brings a dimension to the novel which is quite different from the perception provided by Nelly.

Lockwood's Style as Narrator

Lockwood uses an educated literacy language marked by detailed factual observation and comment both on situation and character an example of this is his description of Hareton *"Meanwhile the youngman had slug onto his person a decidedly shabby upper garments, and, erecting himself before the blaze, looked down on me from the corner of his eyes, for all the world as if there was some mortal feud unavenged still between us"*. Lockwood sentences are often complex consisting of a number of clauses or long phrases, frequently separated by dashes or semi-colons, examples, *"he probably swayed by the presidential considerations of the folly of offending a good tenant- released a little in the laconic style of chipping of his pronouns and auxiliary and introducing what he supposed would be subject of interest to me"*. A noticeable aspect of Lockwood's style is his use of words of Latin origin, example prudential, laconic, auxiliary. By the end of the chapter three, Lockwood's style has become more complex in that his sentence structure is complicated, large numbers of adjectival and adverbial clause, a liberal use of the semi-colon and comma, to give the impression of a narrator whose command of language is sophisticated. *"My human fixture and her satellites, rushed to welcome me; explaining tumultuously, they had completely given me up; everybody conjectured that I perished last night; and they were wondering how they set about the search for my remains"*.

Nelly Dean as Narrator

Nelly Dean's narrative, though copious and detailed, has an extraordinary, sometimes breathless energy as if she were describing events that she had witnessed an hour ago, every moment of which vividly present to her. Nelly's narrative is an art of stark immediacy- of making the past live for us in the present. As much of Nelly's narrative is unfolded in the words of the actual characters, we the readers, feel that the narrative is moulded by the pressure of events, not that the shape and interpretation of events is being fashioned by the narrator. The sense of actuality is conveyed by a

series of concrete details that fall artlessly into place.

So, Nelly is an eyewitness first person participant-main narrator of Wuthering Heights. Her narrative style is a very different from Lockwood's; plain and colloquial language, shorter phrases; less sophisticated, but not at all worse. It is very detailed, magnetic and soon engage the reader's attention. As she dramatizes most of her narrative, it has an incredible energy and immediacy. She seems to be relating something that happened two hours ago. Through dialogue the action seems to develop freely, not recreated by the narrator; and the characters seems more vivid, more real. We feel closer to the characters and you easily forget the complicated narrative frames to concentrate in the fascinating plot.

Why did Emily Bronte imagine such as intricate structure?

The narrative technique is not easy to analyze. But, while reading the novel, I could hardly think of better way to involve the readers into the story. If the action has been explained by the comments of the author, or of an omniscient narrator, It would not have been so fascinating. The shifts in the time reference, events, narrators, and the great role of dialogue catch- and keep- our attention immediately. Dialogue allows the characters to express themselves, appear as real and dynamic personalities, with a deep inner life, and we, the readers, just fall under their spell.

This may signify a little limitation because the story has to speak for itself and give the requires information to the reader without help; there is no narrator to explain the feelings of the characters, so we have to imagine them from their words. The language must be very emotive and powerful. But once overcome this difficulty, it reveals to be the best way to impact the readers. The complicated frame of narrative voice is almost forgotten during the reading of the novel- absorbed in the plot, but it gives an essential background, because it makes the story believable in spite of the undoubtedly supernatural happenings.

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