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Narrative Techniques in Wuthering Heights

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

(مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ بَاقٍ ۗ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِیْنَ صَبَرُوْا اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا
كَانُوْا یَعْمَلُوْنَ) (النحل، ۹۶)

Dedication

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to our beloved parents who have been our source of inspiration and gave us strength when we thought of giving up , who continually provide their moral, spiritual , emotional , and financial support .

We dedicated this work to the Almighty God , thank you for the guidance , strength , power of mind , protection and skills and for giving us a healthy life . All of these , we offer to you

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Abstract

In any literary work, it is confusing to tell the narrator from the author. Barthes points out that (commentators have studied the "author" of a novel without being too concerned incidentally whether he is really the "narrator") (1966, 260). Narrators are so distinct from authors. Needless to say, in the case of a first person narrator an author can create different narrators in different works , hence we cannot claim that they all represent the author. Similarly, in an autobiographical work, we cannot claim that the narrator and the author are the same person. A work of literature are above all a work of fiction and to mistake the author for the narrator is misleading.

This research paper deals with the narration or narrative techniques in Bronte's novel "Wuthering Heights". The first chapter deals with the author's life and works as well as the narration in literature. While the second chapter deals with the two narrator in this novel, Mr. Lockwood and Nelly.

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Chapter One

1.1 Emily Bronte Life and Works

Emily Jane Bronte was born in 1818, Thornton, Yorkshire, England, an English novelist and poet who produced but one novel, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a highly imaginative work of passion and hate set on the Yorkshire moors. Emily was perhaps the greatest of the three Bronte sisters, but the record of her life is extremely meagre, for she was silent and reserved and left no correspondence of interest, and her single novel darkens rather than solves the mystery of her spiritual existence (Tompkins, 2021:1). Now considered a classic of English literature. She also published a book of poetry with her sisters Charlotte and Anne titled *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* with her own poems finding regard as poetic genius. Emily was the second-youngest of the four surviving Brontë siblings, between the youngest Anne and her brother Branwell. She published under the pen name Ellis Bell .

Her father, Patrick Bronte (1777–1861), an Irishman, held a number of curacies: Hartshead-cum-Clifton, Yorkshire, was the birthplace of his elder daughters, Maria and Elizabeth (who died young), and nearby Thornton that of Emily and her siblings Charlotte, Patrick Branwell, and Anne. In 1820 their father became rector of Haworth, remaining there for the rest of his life .(Tompkins, 2021: 2)

After the death of their mother in 1821, the children were left very much to themselves in the bleak moorland rectory. The children were educated, during their early life, at home, except for a single year that Charlotte and Emily spent at the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge in Lancashire. In 1835, when Charlotte secured a teaching position

at Miss Woolee's school at Roe Head, Emily accompanied her as a pupil but suffered from homesickness and remained only three months. In 1838 Emily spent six exhausting months as a teacher in Miss Patchett's school at Law Hill, near Halifax, and then resigned.

According to Juliet Gardiner, "the vivid sexual passion and power of its language and imagery impressed, bewildered and appalled reviewers." (Gardiner, 2000: 109) Literary critic Thomas Joudrey further contextualizes this reaction: "Expecting in the wake of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* to be swept up in an earnest Bildungsroman, they were instead shocked and confounded by a tale of unchecked primal passions, replete with savage cruelty and outright barbarism." (Joudrey, 2015: 165)

Even though the novel received mixed reviews when it first came out, and was often condemned for its portrayal of amoral passion, the book subsequently became an English literary classic. (*Wuthering Heights*, 1996: 79). Emily Brontë never knew the extent of fame she achieved with her only novel, as she died a year after its publication, aged 30.

Although a letter from her publisher indicates that Emily had begun to write a second novel, the manuscript has never been found. Perhaps Emily or a member of her family eventually destroyed the manuscript, if it existed, when she was prevented by illness from completing it. It has also been suggested that, though less likely, the letter could have been intended for Anne Brontë, who was already writing *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, her second novel. (Smith, 1995: 27)

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* was first published in London in 1847 by Thomas Cautley Newby, appearing as the first two volumes of a three-volume set that included Anne Bronte's *Agnes Grey*. The authors were printed as being Ellis and Acton Bell; Emily's real name did not appear until 1850, when it was printed on the title page of an edited commercial edition. (Mezo, 2002: 2)

The novel's innovative structure somewhat puzzled critics. *Wuthering Heights*'s violence and passion led the Victorian public and many early reviewers to think that it had been written by a man. (Carter, 2001: 240)

1.2 Narrator Status

In any literary work, it is confusing to tell the narrator from the author. Barthes points out that (commentators have studied the "author" of a novel without being too concerned incidentally whether he is really the "narrator") (1966, 260). Narrators are so distinct from authors. Needless to say, in the case of a first person narrator an author can create different narrators in different works, hence we cannot claim that they all represent the author. Similarly, in an autobiographical work, we cannot claim that the narrator and the author are the same person. A work of literature are above all a work of fiction and to mistake the author for the narrator is misleading.

The narrator is the voice through which the story is told. This voice could be first person, meaning the one telling the story using the first pronouns "I" or "we" and the reader sees things from the eyes of this "I" narrator. The voice or narrator could be a second person and uses the word

"you" in telling the story. This is not very commonly used as it gets tiresome.

The one speaking sounds like he/she is commanding the reader to do this, to hear that, to see this and that. The voice or narrator could be a third person, somebody who sees things from a distance. This third person could be limited or omniscient. Limited means he/she knows only the thoughts of one character or no character but only sees actions and hears sounds.

Bronte imagine such an intricate structure. The narrative technique is not easy to analyze. But, while reading the novel. 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, andwe, the readers, just fall under their spell.(Gardiner, 2000: 109)

This may signify a little limitation, because the story has to speak for itself and give the required 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 difficulties, it reveals to be the best way to impact the readers (Carter, 2001: 242)

Chapter Two

Wuthering Heights Novel

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is one of the most famous books in English literature. Many literary critics have been fascinated by it. Linda H. Peterson argues that what made Emily Bronte win lasting fame is that *Wuthering Heights* is not only one of the most widely read books in English, it is a book characterized by its originality and power. Furthermore, the novel has always presented material for different critical approaches. As Alstair Everitt states: “*Wuthering Heights* has collected the most valid and contradictory criticism” (Bataille, 1993:19)

The full summery of *Wuthering Heights* is being cited from Wasowski’s 2020 study :

Wuthering Heights opens with Lockwood, a tenant of Heathcliff’s, visiting the home of his landlord. A subsequent visit to *Wuthering Heights* yields an accident and a curious supernatural encounter, which pique Lockwood’s curiosity. Back at Thrush Cross Grange and recuperating from his illness, Lockwood begs Nelly Dean, a servant who grew up in *Wuthering Heights* and now cares for Thrush Cross Grange, to tell him of

the history of Heathcliff. Nelly narrates the main plot line of Wuthering Heights (Wasowski, 2020:4)

Mr. Earnshaw, a Yorkshire Farmer and owner of Wuthering Heights, brings home an orphan from Liverpool. The boy is named Heathcliff and is raised with the Earnshaw children, Hindley and Catherine. Catherine loves Heathcliff but Hindley hates him because Heathcliff has replaced Hindley in Mr. Earnshaw's affection. After Mr. Earnshaw's death, Hindley does what he can to destroy Heathcliff, but Catherine and Heathcliff grow up playing wildly on the moors, oblivious of anything or anyone else — until they encounter the Lintons. Edgar and Isabella Linton live at Thrush Cross Grange and are the complete opposites of Heathcliff and Catherine (Heathcliff), he leaves Wuthering Heights and is gone for three years. Catherine continues to court and ends up marrying Edgar. Their happiness is short-lived because they are from two different worlds, and their relationship is strained further when Heathcliff return. (Wasowski, 2020:4) Heathcliff vows revenge and does not care who he hurts while executing it. He desires to gain control of Wuthering Heights and Thrush Cross Grange and to destroy everything Edgar Linton holds dear. At the end of the novel, Heathcliff and Catherine are united in death, and Hareton and Cathy are going to be united in marriage..(Wasowski, 2020: 4)

Chapter Three

3.1 The Narrative Techniques in Wuthering Heights

Although *Wuthering Heights* was Emily Brontë's only novel, it is notable for the 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 reasons 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 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 stratum (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. Nelly's narrative is so dramatized that we could argue that much of it is in the form of a tertiary narration, e.g. 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. (Mezo, 2002: 2)

Thus the novel itself begins at a point where the action is almost completed. The questions which Lockwood asks of Nelly Dean, promote

answers which give him little insight but it is Lockwood's fascination with the character of Mr. Heathcliff which causes his mind to become "tiresomely active", thus requiring a full circumstantial narrative. The kind of curiosity aroused by Bronte in Lockwood and therefore in the reader, demands a complete imaginative reliving of the past. It is only through experiencing the events as Lockwood did from Heathcliff's arrival to that point in time that he can be in a position to understand the complex set of relationships he witnessed in the household of Wuthering Heights, that is why the apparently artificial narrative structure is both necessary and convincing and we accept its conventions without questions. Past and present interact on one another forming a single close knit drama without division into parts.

The year 1801 is the story's starting and finishing point up to the time of Lockwood's arrival at Wuthering Heights, as is September 1802 the start and finish of the events dealt with in the final chapters. Nelly's story is studded with dates which allows us to work out the precise dates of major events, the ages of the characters and often even the day of the week when an event occurs.(Booth, 1961: 43)

As the novel contains a history of 2 families whose fates are worked out over three generations, it is important that a reasonable exact timescale is adhered to. Without cluttering the narrative with dates, Bronte achieves this by the precise plotting of the lives of Catherine and Heathcliff. Their life stories provide the time framework for the novel and other events and the births, lives and deaths of other characters are related to us in conjunction with developments in the lives of the two main characters.(Ibid,1961:47)

3.2 Lockwood as Narrator

Lockwood is the outsider, coming into a world in which he finds bewildering and hostile, he's a city gentleman who has stumbled on a primitive uncivilized world which he doesn't understand, but which fascinates him. He arrives at the end of November 1801 as a tenant of Thrush Cross Grange. After his initial meetings with his landlord, Mr. Heathcliff, he is laid up for two months during which time his fascination with Wuthering Heights leads to the beginning of Nelly's narrative. By January 1802, he is sufficiently recovered to return to the Heights where he informs Heathcliff of his intention to return to London for 6 months. He returns briefly in September 1802, when he hears the conclusion of Nelly's narrative and the final events of the novel take place.

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 the author to begin the story near the end and work 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 easy 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 narrators expense.

With all his limitations, Lockwood is intelligent and perceptive and his precise detailed descriptions are used by his creator to create subtle

changes in situation and character, 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". Changes in character are also hinted at by Lockwood's eye for detail, he has noticed changes in both Cathy and Hareton - Cathy once described by Lockwood as "the little witch", now has "a voice as sweet as a silver bell". Hareton described in the opening chapters as a boor and a clown and has by the end of the novel become "a young man respectably dressed" with "handsome features", therefore Lockwood, by fulfilling the role as the detached outsider and observer, brings a dimension to the novel which is quite different from the perception provided by Nelly.(Edmiston, 1989: 78)

3.2.1 Lockwood's Style as Narrator

Lockwood uses an educated literacy language marked by detailed factual description and perceptive observation and comment, both on situation and character. An example of this is his description of Hareton "Meanwhile, the young man had slung onto his person a decidedly shabby upper garment, 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. I began to doubt whether he was a servant or not... his bearing was free, almost haughty and he showed none of a domestic's assiduity in attending to the lady of the house".(Genette, 1980: 106)

Lockwood's 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 a subject of interest to me."(ibid, 1980: 104). A noticeable aspect of Lockwood's style is his use of words of Latin origin, e.g. prudential, laconic, auxiliary. By the end of Chapter 3, 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 (guessed) that I perished last night; and they were wondering how they must set about the search for my remains." (Genette, 1980: 105)

3.3 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 is 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. Nelly's sureness in relating her narrative seems to arise out of an astonishing clear memory, the impression of rapid excitement is achieved by

concentrating our attention on movement and gesture, action and reaction, intermixed with vehement dialogue which convinces by its emphatic speech rhythms and plain language. The dialogue has no trace of a conscious stylist, it is noticeable for the brief rapidity of the sentence, an example of this is Nelly's recollection of the time leading up to Catherine's death, when Catherine employed her to open the window of her room (Genette, 1980: 106)

"Oh, if I were but in my own bed in the old house!" she went on bitterly, wringing her hands, "And that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice. "Do let me feel it! - it comes straight down the moor - do let me have one breath!" (Bronte: 98)

Nelly's value as a narrator is clear from this example, she brings us very close to the action and is in one way deeply engaged in it. The intimate affairs of the Grange and the Heights have taken up her whole life, however, her position as a professional housekeeper means that her interests in events is largely practical. She provides the inner frame of the narrative and we see this world of the successive generations of Earnshaw's and Linton's through her eye's, although much of the dialogue, in the interests of objectivity, is that of the characters themselves. As a narrator reporting the past from the present, she has the benefit of hindsight and can therefore depart from the straight chronological narrative to hint at the future.(Genette, 1980: 106)

3.4 Narration in Wuthering heights

Wuthering Heights comprises different characters manifesting different and mostly conflicting motives and ambitions. They come from different backgrounds each with his or her own history. The characterization, the settings, the themes as well as other constituents of the book establish a threshold for the readers to immerse into the novel (Grove, 1993: 32).

The characterization, the settings, the themes as well as other constituents of the book establish a threshold for the readers to immerse into the novel. Emily Bronte consciously or unconsciously deployed some narrative techniques making of the story a collection of fragmented memories. However, since a structuralist approach towards narration stipulates "The Death of The Author" or a clear cut with the author's identity, the analysis of narration in Wuthering Heights will be based on this fact. (Booth, 1961: 43)

This position is based on the premise that many writers have produced many books, yet each of their contributions differ partially or completely. Hence, to state that the writer of a series of books approaches his works similarly does not make sense. Ernest Hemingway in *The Old Man and the Sea* is not the Hemingway in *Farewell to Arms* and so on and so forth. Equally important, Emily Bronte the poet is not the same as Emily Bronte the novelist. Here comes the concept of the "implied author" (ibid : 43)

An implied author operates as opposed to the real author or the actual writer. Equally important, an implied reader is the one who is able to decipher the code of a written text. On the other hand, the actual reader

sees only what is on the surface level of a text. This distinction is of paramount importance in pinpointing the relationship between the narrator and the narrate. To this end, *Wuthering Heights* should be dealt with an isolated case of its own (Grove, 1993: 33).

Drawing heavily on the oral tradition, the dual narrative utilized by Bronte engages her readers in a dramatic see-saw to create the effect of real-time action despite major shifts in time. McCarthy suggests that the author incorporates the “two distorted view points” of her unreliable narrators, each suffering from the effects of their socioeconomic positions and subsequent emotional states, to lessen the impact of the otherwise cruel and morally defunct actions of the primary characters (Bell, 1963: 208).

By removing her voice as an author and replacing it with the strong, emotive language of Lockwood and Nelly Dean, Bronte allows the story to speak entirely for itself. This tactic, in turn allows the reader to recognize their errors and focus more on understanding the tale rather than judging it by suggesting the personal failings of her narrators. Coming to the realization that the narrators are simple tools rather than personas who should be taken literally, then, the reader is able formulate their own opinions by the end of the novel. Bronte's alteration of traditional techniques of oral narrative, delivered by the misguided narration of Lockwood and Nelly Dean, serves to immortalize the key players, elevating them above moral and ethical judgment so that their story transcends time (ibid, 1963: 208).

Conclusion

Wuthering Heights has a very complicated narrative structure. There are two clear narrators, but the novel is almost a drama, that is to say, dialogue plays a great part. Different levels of narration construct the story, not by the usual way of telling the same events from different perspectives, but the participation of characters helps in understanding what happens. It could be said that, instead of a multi-perspective story, this is a multi-layered story. We need to connect every part to obtain a global comprehension. But, at the end, some points remained unexplained (for example, where Heathcliff was born, how he got his money, if Catherine was really a ghost or not...) and even the narrators are not so reliable as they may seem to be –because they are also characters involved in the plot, not omniscient narrators .

We can say that Lockwood represents a “narrative external frame”. He put the story in context, and like the readers, listens to Nelly’s storytelling -although he gets in touch with the main characters in his “real time”. In fact, the whole novel is supposed to be extracted from his personal diary, where he took down Nelly’s words.

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