CHAPTER V

A Comparative Analysis of the Different Narrators

Through a study of the selected novels of Conrad: *Youth, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim* and *Chance*, Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* and Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* an effort has been made to trace the role of the narrator(s) in the fiction of the three novelists and to follow the development of the narrators in order to see them as significant characters in the novels studied.

It is evident that Conrad projects a scenario in which an individual is alone and suffers because he is alone in an environment that is alien to him.

Only when we understand Conrad’s situation as a Pole and a seafarer can we begin to appreciate the immensity of his achievement as a fiction writer in English. His life in any case, resembles a novel in which the hero struggles for decades against great obstacles to achieve an eventual triumph (Watts 15).

It is evident that Conrad’s favourite medium of narration is that of the narrator who narrates a story to a group of men in a club or aboard an anchored yacht.

It becomes apparent that Marlow’s seemingly chronological narration of his journey…is anything but chronological and progresses not according to the sequence of the events but rather according to the sequence of Marlow’s thoughts (Peters 7).
Marlow is a true gentleman, discursive, basically serious but given to occasional pungent irony. Marlow is the alter-ego of Conrad himself: “Marlow appears to be…his alter ego” (Satpathy xx). The technique of using a narrator to narrate his tales came to Conrad while writing The Rescue. Thus he created Marlow; a character that was not only narrator, but one that commented on different situations and on different people. In the four texts “Conrad’s Marlow provides…insight into one of Conrad’s most intriguing fictional inventions” (Jones 187).

On the 6th of December 1897, Conrad wrote to a correspondent: “This necessity from my point of view is fascinating” and on 2nd November 1895 he repeated: “I write…from an inward point of view – I mean from the depth of our own inwardness” (qtd in The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad). The creation and subsequent use of Marlow enriched Conrad’s fiction. Conrad understood the advantage of multiple points of view but at the same time, he did not want his work to be too personal or incoherent. He wanted to blend different points of view and different situations to give his stories a realistic effect. Thus, in Satpathy’s words:

Conrad uses the third person narrator Marlow for the first time in “Youth”, a short story. Marlow eventually becomes a transtextual character in many of his novels. The need to use this mask may
have arisen because of Conrad’s anxiety to adopt an English point of view otherwise denied to him (xix, xx).

It has been observed that Conrad’s method has been to portray the isolating experiences of protagonists removed from the protection of a so-called civilized environment into one where he/she finds himself/herself alone and subsequently suffers. Marlow as narrator scene eases the novelist’s responsibility as he is also seen to be personally involved in the lives of the protagonists, allowing Conrad the novelist leeway to study their “personal histories” (Leavis 191).

Having traced the development of Marlow’s role in the selected novels of Conrad, it may be observed that he voices the eagerness and enthusiasm of a young man who is proud of his first command and his first visit to the East. As narrator he is first seen in Youth which is a recreation of his life at sea. Here, Marlow voices at the same time, Conrad’s first vision of the east. Marlow is then made to face the stark reality of man’s lack of self-restraint leading to destruction; a painful realization that dawned upon him in his relation with Kurtz in Heart of Darkness. Here Marlow voices Conrad’s concern at the exploitation of Africa by the Europeans in the name of civilizing the continent. He also uses his journey to Africa as a means to bringing to light the fact that man sometimes loses track of himself and his objectives, and not
only surrenders to the adversities that surround him but also becomes a part of that very same environment, he had gone to rectify, as in the case of Kurtz.

In *Lord Jim* Marlow develops into a character who understands that sometimes a man suffers from a guilt complex like that in the case of Jim. Jim, who is guilty of having jumped from the *Patna*, jeopardizes the lives of the pilgrims, only to save his own life. Marlow understands Jim’s wishes to conceal this fact from the world and so he avails of all opportunities in order to compensate for his failing. By the time the curtain falls on Marlow as narrator in *Chance*, he is seen to be playing a more definitive role in the narrative as he emerges a mature character while presenting his personal view on different characters and on different situations. In *Chance*, therefore, he is seen to be playing a more definite role as he develops into a character with an essential standing in the novel. In relation to the above discussion, an unsigned review by Edward Garnett may be referred to:

The publication in volume form of Mr. Conrad’s three stories, ‘Youth’, ‘Heart of Darkness’, ‘The End of the Tether’, is one of the events of the literary year. These stories are an achievement in art which will materially advance his growing reputation. Of the stories, ‘Youth’ may be styled a modern English epic of the Sea (147).
In *Youth* one sees that Marlow who sailed on the ‘Judea’ was ‘only twenty’ (102), four years younger than Conrad who sailed on the ‘Palestine’ in 1881-82. Marlow exhibits the keen eye for detail which the young possess. Through Marlow, Conrad recollects with nostalgia, the pride he feels as the Captain of a ship. Marlow also voices the optimism which drives every young man to explore and gather knowledge. Similarly, Marlow looks forward to the future and all the secrets that it holds:

And for me there was also my youth to make me patient. There was all the East before me, and all life and the thought that I had been tried in that ship and had come out pretty well. And I thought of men of old who, centuries ago, went that road in ships that sailed no better, to the land of palms, and spices, and yellow sands, and of brown nations ruled by kings more cruel than Nero the Roman, and more splendid than Solomon the Jew. The old bark lumbered on, heavy with her age and the burden of her cargo, while I lived the life of youth in ignorance and hope. She lumbered on through an interminable procession of days; and the fresh gilding flashed back at the setting sun, seemed to cry out over the darkening sea the words painted on her stern, ‘Judea, London. Do or Die’ (108).

The sea plays a vital role in the works of Conrad and it can be said that life at sea is like the process of writing which must go on. Conrad used his life at sea as a means of sharing his experiences with his readers which he successfully does through Marlow who has also gone through his travails only to emerge more human than ever.
Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad bear great resemblance to each other so much so, that “critics of Melville allude to Conrad for better elucidation of his texts, while analysing and interpreting Melville’s works and vice versa”. The presentation of similar themes and techniques and essentially the same view of the world as seen in *Moby Dick* have proved that similarity between the two writers exists. It must also be noted that the sea is present in the novels of both the writers as a powerful device: “[the] sea is present in both in the background as a powerful symbolic device” (Singh 7, 8).

Conrad’s first use of Marlow in *Youth* represents a break from the omniscience of third-person narration and he narrates the story from Conrad’s point of view. Marlow narrates his past experience in the narrative present and maintains a continuity between the narrative and the present with expressions like “Pass the bottle” (100) throughout his narration. Marlow tells his story to a group of friends and the readers are aware of the fact that he is narrating an anecdote from his past experience. Conrad was sceptical of the critics’ comments on Marlow and said ... “he was supposed to be all sorts of things: a clever screen, a mere device, a “personator”, a familiar spirit, a whispering daemon” (108). He is his own author, however, an integral part of the narrative. Marlow narrates the story in which he
actively takes part and we see Marlow, a hopeful and confident man, who figures prominently in the fiction of Conrad. He was comfortable with the use of Marlow as narrator and subsequently used the same technique in *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Chance*.

The action in Conrad’s fiction is never seen at first hand. It is usually seen as flashback and reflection, through the eyes of others. The plot lies at the centre, but it is seen only at second or third hand: narrated by Marlow or through some other character narrating it to Marlow. The usage of this technique added the kind of realism that proved effective, hence according to Sumanyu Satpathy:

Conrad used the narrative convention as well as the popularity of the genre He had earlier used the mode in ‘Youth’… In *Heart of Darkness* he introduces the voyage situation to raise expectations of an adventure. He uses an elaborate pattern of voyages, weaving the reader back and forth in time (xxiv, xxv)

Thus, rather than narrating the story himself, Conrad has the story told by a character in it – that is, Marlow. One is able to know, understand and empathise with Marlow to the same degree that one does with any other fictional character. Thus when Marlow offers opinions or speculates upon something the reader does not feel that he/she is being manipulated by the author. Marlow is not only a go-between as a voice but is the author as well without intruding into the
narrative. Similarly, Ishmael narrates his story to the reader and it is through his narration that the process of collecting blubber for fuel, the struggle between Ahab and the whale, his initial failure to kill Moby Dick, the frustration that followed, his determination to kill the whale, and the reaction of the crew to his orders, and the rest of the story is conveyed. This method of narration gives Melville the freedom to narrate his tale without making his presence felt in the course of the narrative. Emily Bronte too, uses a similar method of narration wherein the character of Nelly Dean emerges as she tells before Lockwood, during the process of which the reader is provided with a view of the entire story. The narration in *Moby Dick* and *Wuthering Heights* moves forward with the help of the narrators, without the respective novelists making their presence felt during the narrative.

In a letter to William Blackwood, dated 31st December 1898, Conrad wrote about *Heart of Darkness* thus:

> It is a narrative after the manner of *Youth* told by the same man dealing with his experience on a river in Central Africa. The idea in it is not obvious as in *Youth* – or at least not so obviously presented. I tell you all this, for tho’ I have no doubts as to the workmanship I do not know whether the subject will commend itself to you for that particular number (131).

Marlow narrates the tale that he has lived through, sitting on the deck of a “cruising yawl” (*HD* 135) *Nellie*, to “the farthest point of
navigation and the culminating point” (141) of his experience. In the course of his journey to the heart of the Congo basin he meets Kurtz, who is the epitome of Western European civilization. The manager, who is to be blamed for the wastage, disorder, cruelty and neglect in all the three stations, arouses anger and disgust in Marlow. He longs to see Kurtz – a successful ivory agent and the target of the company manager’s hatred. Marlow begins to dislike the Europeans for their ruthless behavior and cruelty and appreciates the Africans. He also identifies with Kurtz long before he has even seen the man. In the end, the affinity between the two men becomes a symbolic unity. Marlow is what Kurtz might have been, and Kurtz is what Marlow might have become. He goes to the African wilderness with the progressive idea of uplifting the savages. Instead he succumbs to the overwhelming influence of the wilderness and he becomes a part of the very system he wanted to rectify: “We see the contrast…the twinned figures of Marlow and Kurtz, one returning from, one sinking into the ‘Heart of Darkness’” (Holland 169). It is through this novel that Conrad voices his outrage against the turning of the natives of the Congo basin into beasts of burden. On the other hand, Ishmael of Moby Dick observes Ahab’s pursuit of his mission and feels that it is a futile one since man has never been able to impose his will on nature. He too takes the oath
to kill Moby Dick the whale along with the rest of the crew but unlike Kurtz, he is able to maintain his hold on his sanity and does not fall victim to the situation. Marlow lies to Kurtz’s Intended telling her that before his death, Kurtz had uttered her name. Ishmael, a firm believer in Christianity and the Christian church tells the reader nothing but the truth, however ugly.

Marlow’s mission is to rescue Kurtz who is an important man in his company. When he reaches Africa, he is saddened to encounter the dismal occurrences in the name of civilizing the inhabitants of Africa. Up to the time that Marlow actually meets Kurtz, he is only a voice. Marlow moves forward from the description of Kurtz’s eloquence as reported by the different people he had met on his way to meeting Kurtz in person and reads with interest, Kurtz’s account in his report for the “International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs” which, after seventeen pages of eloquence, undermines itself with its important postscript: “Exterminate all the brutes!” (*HD* 118)

It has been observed that Conrad highlights the adventure he has during the course of each journey he describes. Marlow, who is one among the group of sailors on board the ship, recounts his adventure story. The incident that he narrates may have occurred
several years before. Marlow stops, then comments and gives a subtle warning to his listeners of what is to follow next. However, Marlow, at times, is seen to be on the verge of action. But sometimes, the nature of the problems which he faces is such that no action on his part can change his situation. Thus, this explains his inaction and his occasional evasion. Action is possible under normal circumstance, but not in the kind of circumstance he finds himself in. He admits in *Heart of Darkness*: “I fretted and fumed and took to arguing with myself whether or no I would talk openly with Kurtz.” (190). To emphasize upon this Raymond Williams’ article ‘*Joseph Conrad*’ may be referred to:

Isolation and struggle. Man against fate. These have been the common descriptions of Conrad. And of course they are relevant. The novels raise those issues…There is isolation in Conrad of course. There is man and there is Fate: the abstractions and others like them are a critical part of his style. And there is struggle of an intense kind: more intense, more practical, for many reasons, than in most other novelists in the language (200).

Similarly, Melville’s novel which can also be called an epic, projects the narrator, Ishmael as being forced to face similar circumstances when he sees that Ahab rubbishes Starbuck’s advice and is influenced by Fedallah’s prophesies. Though physically present among his crew, Captain Ahab feels isolated and like Kurtz who is
obsessed with ivory, Ahab is obsessed with his desire for revenge. This is the reason why he fails to identify with his crew though he shows concern for Pip and wants Starbuck to rejoin his family, once Moby Dick is killed.

It appears that in the novels of both Conrad and Melville, the journey motif, in these cases, the journey by ship allows for meditation either in the open sea or on land in order to regain spiritual health. The narrator of *Moby Dick* keeps his identity a secret and introduces himself as Ishmael. He is a whaler, to whom the sea presents a route of escape from suicidal feelings. He is of the opinion that the sea provides every soul with a moral principle and feels that the sea offers everybody a chance to meditate and get an answer to his problems.

Both Conrad and Melville responded with exceptional acuity to all experience and their fiction became an imaginative transcription of the reality envisioned by them… In the case of these two artists it is the nature of their materials that has dictated form and content to their novels as for example the metaphor of voyage is of supreme importance in both the writers. It is representative of life and literature (Singh 27, 29).

Marlow and Ishmael have been on voyages before and both have served on merchant ships, but it appears that both have opted for a change. Marlow decides to go freshwater sailing, travelling on a steamer to the heart of Africa, because of his extreme fondness for the
place as revealed in *Heart of Darkness*. Ishmael in *Moby Dick* takes to whaling in order to explore the mysteries of nature, aboard the *Pequod* with Queequeg as a trusted friend.

As a character Kurtz dominates the turn of events in *Heart of Darkness* as Captain Ahab does in *Moby Dick*. Both make a strong impact on the rest of the characters. Kurtz becomes an automaton, a man whose sole existence depends on ivory so much so that his god seems to be ivory. Ahab loses sight of actual whaling. His entire being seems to be concentrated on killing the white whale which has maimed him. Kurtz surrenders completely to the overpowering ambience: “The wilderness…echoed loudly within him” (*HD* 221) while Ahab dips the harpoons in human blood and swears by the devil. The complete degeneration of the two central characters is brought to the readers by the narrators Marlow and Ishmael. Both the narrators are at different times, hypnotized by them but they are able to bring to the readers the ironically tragic lives of both the characters.

Marlow keeps himself busy in constructive work. Similarly, Ishmael is involved in the activities of whaling. They offer feasible alternatives through their efforts and are seen to uphold love, companionship and work. Ishmael is saved by the coffin buoy of the
Pequod and later rescued by the Rachel and Marlow falls ill but does not die.

The novels written during the Victorian period were also concerned with problems related to women and their lives.

Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights (1847) is one of the classics of English fiction but the reasons for its popularity have been explained differently through the age. The love story of Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw has been seen to represent class concerns and individual passion, and the novel itself is subjected to a variety of interpretations. It has been seen as a story of revenge, and also as that unique love story that goes against the paradigm of love and marriage characteristic of most Victorian novels. Another interesting aspect of Wuthering Heights, however, has more to do with how the story is told; Emily Bronte devised the frame narrative to engage her fictional needs in a way that combined aspects of both first person and third person narratorial modes (Choudhury 230, 231).

Emily Bronte describes powerful human emotions which sometimes lead to man’s erratic and strange behaviour as displayed by Heathcliff and Catherine. Thus we may refer to Derek Traversi’s essay, “The Bronte Sisters and Wuthering Heights”:

Wuthering Heights is an exploration of human passion at different levels and tending to different ends. Creative or destructive in their consequences, making for life or death, basic human emotions are presented in a state of purity and concentration; no other novel of the Victorian period has penetrated so undisguisedly into the depths of unalloyed passion, or followed with such unrelenting logic the
intensity of its operations. The result is a unique imaginative creation which, largely ignoring the moral and social assumptions of contemporary fiction, aspires rather to the severe simplicity of ancient tragedy (253).

Nelly Dean is witness to the happenings in the novel by virtue of being the housekeeper to both the families at different points of time. She too advocates self-restraint. It is this lack of self-restraint that leads to the upheaval in the lives of the major characters in the novel. Had Hindley restrained himself and not treated Heathcliff as he did, perhaps the situation would have different; had Heathcliff waited to hear Cathy’s confession to Nelly, he would not have left Wuthering Heights and he would have also known the truth behind her rejection of him. As the story proceeds, the reader witnesses Isabella’s infatuation with Heathcliff and her subsequent elopement. Had she given cognizance to Cathy’s warning, she would not have suffered so much. Again, had Cathy restrained herself and give her marriage and her husband due importance and not continued to see Heathcliff, the happenings in the novel would have, perhaps, taken a different turn. Marlow, the narrator in Conrad’s novels, Ishmael in *Moby Dick* and Lockwood the other narrator in *Wuthering Heights*, after their respective experiences, return to the mainstream of life more mature and wiser and Nelly Dean remains on in Wuthering Heights, this time perhaps, to witness happier
times with the marriage of Hareton and the younger Catherine. Similar to Marlow and Ishmael, Nelly Dean and Lockwood contribute to the success of telling of the stories and bring to the reader a clear view of the authors’ state of mind or their opinion.

*Lord Jim* exhibits Conrad’s analysis of man’s motives. As an essential counterpart to Jim, Conrad uses Marlow. Marlow’s role now, as Conrad’s mouthpiece and a character is to probe, analyze, and comment on another’s state of mind. He is now the observer-narrator as opposed to the role of protagonist-narrator in *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow stands between the novelist and the reader and is seen as a guide and mentor, commenting, explaining and illuminating. He is talkative, and through his digressions, he introduces a number of characters and incidents that help us to reach out to Jim. It is through Marlow that we have a multiple point of view which throws light on the character and psychology of Jim. He is used as the chief means to develop the theme. Conrad now gives a new dimension to Marlow’s role: that of a critical commentator. Marlow’s proximity to Jim enables him to give a vivid description of the circumstance faced by him, as well as his state of mind, at each turn of his life. One is given a general account of Jim in the days when he was a water-clerk in the eastern port, his childhood home and training and then his voyage as the chief
mate of the ‘Patna’ in the Indian Ocean up to the time of the collision of the ‘Patna’. It is only in the fourth chapter of the novel that Marlow is introduced as one of those who later attend the trial of Jim and his fellow officers for deserting their ship. It is from this point that Marlow takes over the narrative. Similarly, Nelly Dean takes up the narration in *Wuthering Heights* only from Chapter Four which actually marks the proper beginning of the story. It is from this point that the action described is seen through the narration of both Nelly Dean and Lockwood. The form of narration in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* effectively conveys the novelist’s ideas to the readers. It is similar to that of Conrad’s *Lord Jim*. The story in the latter part of the novel is presented through the eyes of a character who is not involved in its central drama. In this context Q.D. Leavis’s essay may be quoted here:

> From being a self-indulgent storytelling, *Wuthering Heights* thus became a responsible piece of work, and the writer thought herself into positions, outlooks, sufferings and tragedies of the actors in these typical events as an artist (32, 33).

Marlow tells his friends that his stay at Patusan for more than a month showed him that Jim was at last, a successful man, though he desired for something more. This was their last meeting since Marlow is due to return to England. Marlow later narrated the story of Jim to
his friends who had assembled after dinner in his hotel verandah. After a gap of two years the story is continued through a letter written by Marlow to one of his listeners who seemed to be more interested in Jim than in the others. The letter contains an account of the last days and the subsequent death of Jim about which Marlow gathered from a number of sources, piecing them together to form a coherent narrative. 

It is through Marlow’s narration that readers come to know the mystery which shrouded Jim’s death and what led him to take such a step. Jim goes to meet Doramin unarmed. He tells him “I am come in sorrow”…“I am come ready and unarmed” (312). Doramin stands staring at him unfeelingly and shoots Jim through his chest. Jim looks around with “a proud, unflinching glance” (312) and falls dead.

Marlow concludes:

And that’s the end. He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic. Not in the wildest days of his boyish visions could he have seen the alluring shape of such an extraordinary success! For it may well be that in the short moment of his last proud and unflinching glance, he had beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side (313).

Like Marlow, Nelly Dean and Lockwood provide the connecting link whenever there is a gap in the narration: Nelly Dean receives information from Dr. Kenneth Isabella was walking alone for two
hours in the plantation behind the Grange. Soon after this, she comes to know that Isabella has eloped with Heathcliff. Two months later she receives a letter from Isabella herself in which she regrets her marriage also confessing to Nelly about the miserable conditions she is forced to live in, in the company of Heathcliff, her newly wedded husband.

Marlow provides Conrad with the artistic means of being able to portray his views on society, as he saw it from the deck of a ship, and commenting on the prevailing evils, without intruding into the narrative. He voices Conrad’s distaste for the sense of wastage and destruction experienced in the Congo and reflects upon his discovery of the individual who has some tragedy to hide; who subsequently suffers from a sense of guilt and does anything, however illogical to make up for his tragic failure. Marlow becomes a character in the novel Chance, and even has his individual point of view. Chance marks the end of his journey in Conrad’s fiction. At this point, similarity among the narrators Marlow, Nelly Dean, Lockwood and Ishmael may also be seen. Marlow observes the characters he describes and also helps us to reach out to the characters that he describes. His proximity to the characters aids his analysis of the motives and state of mind of each character. Nelly Dean is the housekeeper to both the Earnshaw and Linton families. Lockwood’s experience at the house of Heathcliff
arouses his curiosity and so he asks Nelly if she knew anything about the strange people he had just met. This leads to her narrative and the novelist places her in an advantageous position when each significant event takes place or some other character reports the incident to her. Ishmael is an important member of the Pequod and his presence facilitates a narration that brings the reader in close contact with each of the characters.

Conrad was chiefly pre-occupied with the struggle of man against the evil that manifests itself in the form of unreasonable desires and instincts. This is symbolized by certain objects and the annihilating forces of nature; and by men like Brown and Cornelius. Though Brown makes his appearance quite late in the novel, the reader cannot forget that he is the one responsible for the ruin of Jim as opposed to the efforts of Marlow and Stein to rehabilitate him. Through Marlow, Conrad focuses on one aspect of the human character: the guilt complex that an individual suffers from in having to conceal his guilt from the world. Captain Brierly is one of the judges at the enquiry into the sinking of the ‘Patna’. He commits suicide a few days after the enquiry even though there seemed to be no apparent reason for his suicide. Marlow presumes that this may have happened because Brierly is reminded of something in his past which may be revealed to
the world. As long as he wears a mask to protect himself, he is happy. He had wanted to carry his secret with him. Again, it is through Marlow that we look into the character of Cornelius, a rogue, a dishonest and unscrupulous man. He misguides Brown and is responsible for the death of Jim. Marlow had told him that Jim would live in the country permanently. This angers Cornelius so much that he asks Brown to kill him at the first opportunity. So he leads Brown by a secret path down the river, so that he could fire into the camp of Dain Waris from behind. As a result Dain Waris was killed and Jim had to pay for it with his life.

On the other hand, in Wuthering Heights, Nelly Dean brings to the reader the evil design of Heathcliff and his systematic way of avenging himself on those whom he considered to be his enemies. He encouraged Hindley to drink even more, and he claims ownership of Wuthering Heights after his death since the property is mortgaged to him. Then he turns Hindley’s son, Hareton into an uneducated and uncouth youth, and subjects him to exactly the same conditions that he was subjected to by Hindley; the only difference being the fact that he loves Hareton. Heathcliff inflicts untold misery on Isabella his wife, his own son Linton as well as Catherine who is forcibly married to his son. He systematically takes revenge on those whom he considered his
enemies. His anger and frustration result from his unfulfilled love for Catherine and this is the cause of his abominable behavior.

Captain Ahab cannot come to terms with the loss of his leg. So he is determined to kill the whale by any means. To Ahab the goal is important and not the means. Thus he adopts all possible means to ensure the co-operation of the sailors and also makes them promise that they would kill the whale even though he contradictorily tells them that he should be the first man to strike at the whale. In all the novels the narrators provide the necessary medium through which the action is played out or even replayed again in a very dramatic way. Each narrator has so identified with the characters in their respective drama, that they form an inextricable part of the characters’ world, even sharing in their hopes desires and anxiety. It is only at the dramatic moment of loss or pain that the narrators seem suddenly to disengage themselves from the events, thus providing a shift in the narrative focus. This shift is essential and trains the readers’ attention to other important events in the novel. The narrators are necessary yardsticks to measure the extremities of behavior that they depicted in their protagonists.

Conrad creates a singular world on board a ship or a village and his characters play the roles allotted to them by destiny, in isolated or
confined circumstances. Marlow is sympathetic and clear sighted with his likes and dislikes, opinions and prejudices. A man with experience, impressive, because of the humane intelligence which touches man to the core, Brown, Stein, Jewel and even Jim feel secure in confiding in him. Marlow is Jim’s confidante, as Nelly is the confidante of the major characters in *Wuthering Heights*. It is during the course of Jim’s trial that Marlow meets him. At the end of his trial, when Jim is condemned and deprived of his license, Marlow befriends him and helps him to begin afresh. He takes him to his room in Malabar Hotel so that he can introspect and analyse his problems. Marlow’s pity for him takes the form of warm affection and he helps him as best as he can. Since then Marlow assumes the role of Jim’s guardian and he seems to develop an increasing understanding of Jim. He takes Jim to Stein and helps him to begin a new career in Patusan. Later he makes a trip to Patusan and gives an account of Jim’s life there as being happy, loved and honoured. It is through Marlow that we see Jim as a hero and the last episode leading to the death of Jim is also reported to us by Marlow who talks to Brown, Jewel and Tamb Itam when they come and live under the protection of Stein. Conrad himself has infused in Marlow qualities of understanding and involvement. He plays the role
allotted by his creator to probe, analyze, and comment on Jim’s state of mind.

*Lord Jim* is the expression of Marlow’s individual quest which begins with a deep sense of romance. Though the novel concludes with a note of sadness, a sense of achievement prevails because of Jim’s final act. The novel projects man’s longing for appreciation, understanding and recognition.

In a similar way, Nelly Dean brings to the reader the powerful character of Heathcliff and the torture he inflicts upon all the people whom he regards as his enemies. When he could have carried on with his destruction of Hareton and the younger Catherine, he gives up. It is his ultimate disinterestedness in the happenings around him that provides opportunities to the heirs of the two wronged families to nurture their growing intimacy. He seems to be obsessed with the thought of Cathy whom he had once loved and lost. His obsession for revenge is replaced by an idea he nurtures: Cathy existed and he is deprived of her. Her memories have tormented him for the last eighteen years and he does not want revenge. He feels that he sees her image in every object and his only desire is to be united with her. Despite her initial dislike for Heathcliff it is Nelly who focuses on Heathcliff’s intense love for Catherine. She had seen them growing up
and she also understands that they dislike to be separated from each other. During the early years of their lives, separating them used to be the punishment resorted to whenever they were naughty. She tells the reader about the intensity of his love for her and perhaps it can be said that he returns to Wuthering Heights a rich man because he wants to prove to Catherine and the rest of the world that he was actually worthy of her. She is like the ubiquitous narrator whose presence is felt throughout the narrative, much like Ishmael who understands Ahab and his state of mind. Ishmael understands Ahab’s state of mind and the depths of his feelings.

“A novel is a fictitious narrative imaginatively told. Hence, much of the interest of a novel depends on the art of narration employed in it by the novelist” (Bhattacharyya104). Emily Bronte’s story exhibits a unique narrative technique in which the reader is led into a sequence of events dominated by different characters where each character opens a new vista to the story. At the same time, however the story does not lose its connectivity and the flow is maintained. The narrative starts with the coming of Lockwood. Curious to know more about his strange landlord Heathcliff, he asks the housekeeper Nelly Dean to tell him more about the strange man. This narrative technique employed by the novelist makes the story more comprehensible. It is
interesting to note that the story begins with a conversation between the two important players in the story: the two narrators. There is a sense of the story passing back and forth between the teller and the listener, Nelly Dean and Lockwood, the narrators and the reader, thus creating the kind of suspense that marks out Wuthering Heights for the kind of novel that it is. The suspense lies at the level of the plot and at the super psychological level of character.

Nelly Dean recounts thirty years of history in detail, replete with even the smallest detail and the dialogue of the people involved in the story she narrates. The housekeeper of both the houses is the best source of information, since she is closely involved with both the families and the characters and is witness to the events she describes. She is involved in some of the events as they occurred in her presence or else, reported to her by someone else. Through this mode of narration, the novelist makes her narrative appear authentic. She succeeds in maintaining an objective viewpoint and also manages to shift the readers’ sympathy along with the turn of events described. At the same time it should be noted that though both the narrators, especially Nelly Dean is actively involved in the events she describes, the novelist does not hand over the reins of the narrative completely to
them. In this regard, John T. Matthews, in his essay “Framing in Wuthering Heights” writes:

The two principal narrators of Wuthering Heights are actively interested in their story, and thus they are intimated by it. Although their position as frame narrators implies that they simply transmit events that have already taken place. Bronte never wholly gives those narrators over to the dictates of the story. They re-emerge regularly to remind us of their agency and the requirements of the telling scenes (55, 56).

Thus was the necessity for Nelly Dean and Lockwood as narrators. Lockwood listens to Nelly’s narrative about a world he is not involved in. Thus, by the end of the narrative he is reconciled to the turn of events and as an observer, who has not long been acquainted with the characters, reserves his judgment till the end of the novel. Lockwood rents Thrushcross Grange in order to get over a failed love affair. He is an outsider who has no involvement with the sequence of events and as such remains outside the plot. However, his role in the novel as a narrator cannot be undermined though his contact with some of the characters is very casual and is of a very short period. It appears that he confirms the truth of what Nelly says because he dreams of Cathy and it is through his dream as well as his experience that the readers are introduced to some of the major characters and actions
described in the course of the novel. Thus he bridges the gap between
the past and the present.

The function of Nelly Dean differs from that of Lockwood for
she acts as a choric figure that measures the appropriateness of action
and relationships within the novel. Her opinion may not be completely
detached because of her total involvement with the events and the fact
that she is the confidant of the major characters in the novel.

The novel begins at the end of the story, with Lockwood as
narrator who has in turn heard it from Nelly Dean. Having set the stage
and primed the narrators, the novelist goes back twenty years, and in
the person of Nelly Dean tells the story from the beginning. She
continues with her narration till we meet her later in the first chapter.
As narrator Nelly Dean’s style varies from that of Lockwood and much
of her narrative captures the spoken dialect of the characters
themselves. She is lively and speaks in the language of the residents,
making her narration come alive with the idiosyncrasies of the social
world that she comes from. Her understanding of the characters is
often undercut by her conventional and religious attitudes. In contrast
to Lockwood her narrative presents the history of Wuthering Heights
from a woman’s point of view.
The narration in the novel is alternately taken up by Lockwood as well as by Nelly Dean. They differ from the characters in the novel in their ability to provide the story with a perspective of a kind: Nelly Dean as she has seen the events occur and Lockwood as he experiences and sees them for himself. This leads to certain blurring of judgment for they get influenced by their feelings for a particular character in question. Perhaps this is why Nelly Dean does not understand the intensity of Heathcliff’s feelings for Cathy or Cathy’s feelings for Heathcliff. In *Moby Dick*, though Ishmael is one of the crew and having taken the oath along with them, he feels alienated because he cannot relate to his environment as it is dominated by someone like Ahab. He has a friend only in Queequeg and though he understands Ahab, he realises the futility of his mission because he knows that man cannot exert his will on nature.

The role played by Lockwood as narrator cannot be ignored despite the fact that he does not enjoy the pivotal role given to Nelly Dean. But it is he who raises the curtain on the events described by asking Nelly to tell him about his strange landlord, Heathcliff:

I desired Mrs. Dean, when she brought in supper, to sit down while I ate it; hoping sincerely she would prove a regular gossip…She was not a gossip… I’ll turn the talk on my landlord’s family…With this intention I asked Mrs. Dean why Heathcliff let Thrushcross
Grange, and preferred living in a situation and residence so much inferior (\textit{WH} 62, 63).

In comparison to Nelly Dean, it may be said that he is made to play the role of a partial narrator who serves to complement Nelly. The use of this method of narration by Bronte ensures the readers’ involvement in the entire course of the narrative. The novel does not seek to establish a single viewpoint. Readers are permitted to form their own points of view. Lockwood being a mere tenant is an outsider to the sequence of events described in the novel. He is a flat and detached character who does not grow with the denouement of the plot. However, it appears that he confirms the truth of what Nelly says.

He is used in the novel mainly as a listener to Nelly Dean’s narration...Emily Bronte has made an attempt to involve Mr. Lockwood in the story of the novel...But finally, he has been left as a dispassionate observer...while he is leaving Wuthering Heights (Bhattacharyya 106).

The reader is able to identify himself/herself with Lockwood, to see things from his point of view which is that of a city-dweller and again from the point of view of Nelly Dean, who is both rustic and well-read.

In \textit{Moby Dick} Ishmael’s analytical insight, puts the reader in a confrontational mode with the characters so that he may work out
his/her understanding of the character. Ishmael is not only a character in the book that narrates the story, but like Nelly Dean, is closely involved in the sequence of events that he describes. His observation and analysis of the different characters that form the crew of the Pequod, constitutes an important part of the narrative as well as the philosophy of the novel. It is his contemplative wonder that takes us to the wonders of the seas, the grandeur of the whale and the terrors of the deep sea. In appreciation of the novel, an anonymous writer wrote in an article “Fascination No Criticism Will Thwart”:

The Whale - Melville’s last book – is a strange, wild weird book, full of poetry and full of interest. To use a hackneyed phrase, it is indeed “refreshing” to quit the old, wornout pathways of romance, and feel the sea breezes playing through our hair, the salt spray dashing on our brows…One never tires of Nature. And there is Nature here (603).

He is an effective narrator who justifies his role, while presenting a realistic description of what he what he sees and feels. It is his gift for speculation that explains the terror that the reader experiences when the whale in all its ferocity is described. It is Ishmael who embodies for us man as a thinker whose dreams transcend space and time as he watches the seas: he is both observer and narrator, a school master and an intellectual with foresight enough to understand the future course of events. He is also a wanderer who has taken to sea-
faring. But that does not make him any less, thoughtful or tolerant, as he has the ability to enjoy himself in the world around him.

Ishmael possesses the ability to move beyond the book. This may be seen in the Epilogue when he is the sole survivor, floating on a coffin. The scene forces certain recognition upon the reader; recognition of the fact that the drama is now ended and life, as it is must take its course. Ishmael is left alone as he was at the beginning of the book and he has to pick up his life all over again. The end thus, lies in the beginning itself. He provides the philosophic framework to the novel. It may be said that he not only sums up the entire story but is also at the centre of the story.

In the light of the revenge that spurs Ahab, readers may recall Heathcliff’s revenge on all those whom he thought were responsible for separating him from his beloved Cathy. He too, was obsessed with the desire for revenge on Hindley for having ill-treated him and the Linton family for coming between him and Cathy. Captain Ahab lived his life only to take revenge on the whale which he regarded as his enemy.

Ishmael holds an important position in the novel though he does not hold a very important place in the hierarchy of the whalers on board the Pequod. Thus he not only acts but he is acted upon by other
characters and situations and he comes into focus as it were through his
own narrative voice. Like Marlow he enjoys proximity to the crew on
board the *Pequod* and so enjoys the advantage of being one of them,
moving through it in relative freedom. Melville’s method of narration
is different from many other novelists in that his novels are not those of
character or plot but personal adventure chronicles in which the voice
of the narrator tends to become the chief centre of interest. Paul
Brodkorb, Jr. writes in his article “Ishmael”:

> As character, Ishmael is a sailor; as narrator, a storyteller. The sort
of book this uncommon sailor writes follows from the self-world
relation which is his reality (96).

At times, Ishmael’s narrative role indicates authorial presence in
the form of long discourses on cetology and whaling. The narrator is
also the fictional persona that acts as a prism through which is filtered
many of the author’s own concerns and observations.

*Moby Dick* reflects upon a conflict that rages on unabated in the
mind of Captain Ahab and which seems to have affected the universe
at large. It is a tale of romance, a fable, a moral allegory, besides being
a portrayal of the struggle between man and nature, in which man tries
to challenge all powerful nature despite knowing its futility. Thus
Charles Olson in “*Call Me Ishmael*” says:
To Melville it was not the will to be free but the will to overwhelm nature that lies at the bottom of us as individuals and a people. Ahab is no democrat. Moby Dick the antagonist, is only king of natural force... Ishmael’s account of the man’s wanderings into “the heart of unknown regions” inevitably reminds one of Heart of Darkness. Interestingly, for Melville the hazards involved in such an undertaking are “common perils” compared to an encounter with the whale: the journeyings of man and whale are to “no purpose” unless they meet. Meeting with the whale is man’s ultimate concern – it would seem (656).

Both Marlow and Ishmael use the backdrop of the tales they narrate, be it the jungle or the sea, as the macrocosm against which they examine and analyse human nature. Through the characters of Kurtz and Jim, Marlow brings to the reader man’s craving to make a name for himself and to create an impact on all those around him whereas, through the character of Flora, he brings another aspect of human nature, that is, an individual who suffers at the hands of circumstances for no apparent fault. The world of Nelly Dean revolves around Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Being the confidante of the major characters and having to take care of the motherless children in the novel, she knows them well and so, is able to present them to the reader in a realistic manner. As narrators Nelly Dean and Lockwood allow the novelist a great deal of flexibility and narrative space.
In *Wuthering Heights* Nelly Dean emerges as an engaging story-teller. Her narration is so dramatic that the story unfolds directly before the reader whose perception changes constantly as if he/she were watching a play. The frame-work of the narratives of Nelly Dean and Lockwood provide the objectivity that is essential to the telling of the story. The power lies in Nelly Dean’s commitment to the lives of the characters that are part and parcel of her own. She is intimately connected with them and, cannot in any way estrange herself from what is going on. Bonamy Dobree writes in this connection:

Emily Bronte . . . had recourse to the confidential servant, brought up with the children of the family, necessarily involved in all their affairs (12).

The past and the present are interwoven through the narration of Lockwood and Nelly Dean, forming, at the same time, a continuous whole without any division in the course of the narrative:

Nelly is brilliantly thought out and executed; nothing more clearly reveals the power of a novelist than making the vehicle of communication really convey the intuition, and not merely relate incidents (Dobree 13).

It has been observed that each narrator has been eye-witness to the action he or she describes and each narrator facilitates the author’s narration. Conrad uses Marlow to bring to the reader the truth of what
he sees in the course of his journey along with the impression that each journey leaves on him. Melville, through Ishmael, impresses upon the readers the fact that though Captain Ahab tries to defy the powers of nature, his efforts prove futile and he has to embrace death. Emily Bronte too, through her narrators enables the reader to enter the world of Wuthering Heights.

The narrators differ from each other in the sense that Marlow, as seen in the novels studied, is involved, to a great extent in the course of events; he wants to help Kurtz, but unfortunately Kurtz dies and Marlow, without knowing the reason why, says: “Mr. Kurtz’s reputation is safe with me” (*HD* 229). He is involved with Jim, helps him but sadly hears about his death and comments:

Now he is no more, there are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force; and yet upon my honour there are moments, too, when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth, ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades (*LJ* 313).

He is involved with Flora’s life as well, having concealed the fact that she had wanted to commit suicide:

And I wanted to ask you...I was really glad when I saw you actually here. Who would have expected you here, at this spot, before this hotel! I certainly never...You see it means a lot to me. You are the only person who knows...who knows for certain (*Chance* 198)
but, is happy on learning that she attains happiness at last, when all her life she has had to suffer through no apparent fault of her own.

Nelly Dean sometimes does take an active part in the turn of events when she allows her personal feelings and understanding of a person and situation to influence her action and her judgment as in the case of Catherine’s delirium when she is ill. She is under the impression that Catherine is only pretending and so, does not consider it necessary to inform Edgar about it. Lockwood has a brief interaction with some of the characters and it is because of his curiosity about the strange household of his landlord that he asks Nelly Dean to tell him all about the strange people. This is where the story actually begins. In this case, it may be said that he facilitates the narrative of Nelly. Similarly, Ishmael narrates his story as one of the crew and so like the narrators discussed so far, his experience also matters since he interacts with each character and is able to comment on them.

Melville christens his narrator ‘Ishmael’ in keeping with the Biblical character Ishmael who is also a wanderer. It may be said that Conrad’s choice of Marlow as the narrator of his tales happened as it became a necessity “of distancing his personality from an otherwise compelling personal infusion in his work (Biswas & Sarkar105). At the
same time Marlow helps Conrad to reach out to the reader by showing his understanding of each protagonist in relation to the situation faced by him/her. Melville’s Ishmael brings the novelist nearer to the reader by focusing on all the issues that are important to Melville: be it the capture of whales for blubber or the truth that man cannot impose his will on nature. “Melville’s narrator highlights the disjunction between divine wisdom and partial human knowledge” (Robin Grey 180). Nelly Dean and Lockwood, the narrators of *Wuthering Heights* serve to bring the readers face to face with the situation prevailing at that time, the materialistic inclination of the people, the class consciousness, and the drama described in the novel: “we do not miss any of the dramatic possibilities when the great senses occur” (Dobree 14).
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