

Nelly Dean as Coryphaeus: A Narrative Comparison between Role of Greek Chorus and Nelly Dean from Wuthering Heights

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Abstract - Wuthering Heights is an important contemporary novel because of its honest and accurate portrayal of life. It's not just a Sentimental Romance novel but it is also a Social novel which talks about class structure in society as well as is a treatise on the role of women. Wuthering Heights from the point of view of its narration is considered as a significant medium, rather than simple structural and narrative tools: it takes into consideration the mental framework, backgrounds, experiences of the world and subsequent points of view and it also reveals each character as an individual force that helps to shape and influence Bronte's novel. It is generally noted that the minor characters of a piece of literature are not given the due emphasis. Their importance is hidden in the light of the major characters. This is very unjust for them. They should be given importance equal to the major characters. This research paper aims to bring about Nelly Dean's character to light and equalize the role performed by her, to the Greek chorus (Coryphaeus) throughout the novel, and thus, highlight the importance of the minor characters.

Index Terms - Coryphaeus, Chorus, Moors

I. INTRODUCTION

Wuthering Heights is a strange sort of book — baffling all regular criticism; yet, it is impossible to begin and not finish it; and quite as impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it." This review, from Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper, was one of the first receptions to Emily Bronte's novel, and concluded with the line, "We must leave it to our readers to decide what sort of a book it is.

The conclusion in this review, which is the extent of praise the novel received on its publication, pertains not only to the novel Wuthering Heights but to Emily Bronte herself; it is up to the readers to determine what type of writer Bronte was.

Wuthering Heights is one of the popular classic novels, a pioneer work in the literary genre of Gothic Fiction. It's a work of late 19th century Victorian period. This Novel when looked at from surface is a passionate love story of Heathcliff and Catherine. But at the same time, when it is analyzed from a different point of view, we realize that it is more than a revenge or love story. In addition, it's not only about the orphan gypsy boy Heathcliff and his revenge on Linton's and Earnshaw's as it is concluded by maximum readers after reading it.

There are so many characters in the novel which are given importance through various point of views in the novel. But the character of Nelly Dean, who is counted as one of the minor characters of the novel, if deeply analyzed falls into the category of one of the major characters when compared to the Greek Chorus. This work being a Novel fulfills the characteristics of being a Drama.

What is Greek Chorus?

In Classical Greek Drama, Chorus was a group of actors who commented and described the main action taking place in the play. Chorus played many functions which are fulfilled by Nelly Dean in Wuthering Heights thus becoming an important character. As the Greek Chorus is led by Coryphaeus (Main leader of the Greek chorus), the characters of Wuthering Heights are also led by Nelly. Throughout the narration, the characters and action is described through Nelly's point view. This feature provides the novel with characteristics of a Drama, which is the aim of this research paper.

The novel begins with the narration from an outsider (Lockwood) and after that Nelly takes it over by TELLING ABOUT THE PAST EVENTS IN PRESENT AND RELATING IT TO FUTURE by

providing appropriate turns and twists to the story and action to the readers. It begins with these lines by Nelly-

This is how Lockwood gives a start to the story by convincing Nelly to tell the story about the mysterious setting, atmosphere, characters at Wuthering Heights and Nelly begins INTRODUCING THE READERS WITH THE CHARACTERS, just like the Chorus. As the story progresses, Nelly also leads the plot further as the leader of Greek chorus Coryphaeus does. Nelly in these lines corrects Lockwood by saying that she is associated with the mistress and master from 18 years, and she has experienced each and every event taking place between two families of the novel.

Eighteen, sir: I came, when the mistress was married, to wait on her; after she died, the master retained me for his housekeeper.

Moving forward Nelly PROPHECIZES ABOUT THE FUTURE catastrophe as the chorus handles the coming action on stage by evoking emotions among the audience and by making them aware of the future events which are heading towards something fearful. Nelly is as active as the chorus, thus warning the characters and even giving the audience, a hint of what is going to happen in the future.

I was superstitious about dreams then and am still: and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect, that made me dread something from which I might shape a prophecy and foresee a fearful catastrophe. She was vexed, but she did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject she recommended in a short time.

Meanwhile, just to relieve the audience from the growing pressure in a drama as plot develops further, the Chorus provides with the description of the setting, creating picture of the scene which is about to come. Nelly also functions in the novel in the same direction in the above lines by PROVIDING THEM DETAILS OF SCENE AND SETTING just to create picture in the minds of readers to make them relate to the scene. It also helps to release pressure growing in the minds of the readers.

Wuthering Heights rose above this silvery vapour: but our house was invisible: it rather dips down on the other side.

When Heathcliff gets Cathy and Hareton married forcefully, he deliberately locks up Nelly Dean so as to prevent her from interfering in the marriage, and Nelly Dean is unable to do anything except cursing Heathcliff in anger which is similar to the function of

the Greek Chorus to set the mood of the listener and heighten the dramatic effect in the plot.

At this diabolical violence I rushed on him furiously. 'You villain!' I began to cry, 'you villain!' A touch on the chest silenced me: I am stout and soon put out of breath: and what with that and the rage, I staggered dizzily back, and felt ready to suffocate, or burst a blood vessel.

When Mr. Linton was not in good health and is worried about his daughter, he shares it with Nelly and Nelly in return assures and told Mr. Linton that not to worry about her, she will not do anything wrong, and he makes this point more relevant by connecting it to universal truth of duty and rewards. Here Nelly acts as an agent similar to that of chorus who ADVISE when it is required with affirmation.

Resign her to God, as it is, sir,' I answered,' and if we should lose you-which may He forbid and counselor to the last. Miss Catherine is a good girl: I don't fear that she will go willfully wrong: and people who do their duty are always finally rewarded.

At the end, Nelly makes her listeners aware of her wishes regarding a satisfactory end of the plot and love story of the younger characters in the novel. She acts a bit humorous by saying that she will not envy anyone on the wedding day of Hareton and Cathy, in whose happiness she finds herself contented and assures that she is the happiest woman in England similar to the chorus which also feels what is felt by the characters of the drama.

You see, Mr. Lockwood, it was easy enough to win Mrs. Heathcliff's heart. But now, I am glad you did not try. The crown of my wishes will be the union of these two. I shall envy no one on their wedding-day: there will not be a happier woman than myself in England!

II. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the illustrations from the novel and simultaneously comparing the role of Nelly in the novel with Coryphaeus from the Greek Chorus in drama, it is clear that both are a part of the action and yet remain apart from it. Though, they are actively involved but then also they are given less importance when compared to the major characters of the novel and drama. They act as narrators, advisors, commentators, historians, prophets, and mentors and play a major role in moving the plot forward. If the major characters become MAJOR, then it is because

of these minor characters who bridge the gap between them and the audience. It is wrong to only emphasize on the major characters. We as readers must also focus on the minor characters.

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