

Discuss the relationship between literary and film versions of a particular 'roma...

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



When a reader reads a novel and then watches a movie based on the book, they take in two very different perspectives. The use of camera techniques within the movie creates the story from the director's or script writers perspective, leaving the viewer only with one interpretation of the novel whereas when a reader reads the novel, he or she takes in a personal insight to the book and creates their own version to the narrative process.

Wuthering Heights, written by Emily Bronte in the mid 19th century is a gothic novel which presents the love of Cathy Earnshaw and Heathcliff as a very innocent relationship whereby many people will see it as been a 'teenage crush'. The novel is structured around two key points (purposes): the strong male 'hero', and the romance between the hero and heroine (Cranney-Francis). Wuthering Heights is in many ways a romance novel (even though many critics choose not to agree). The term 'romance' according to the Oxford English Dictionary the term is defined as:

A prevailing sense of wonder or mystery surrounding the mutual attraction in a love affair. Cathy and Heathcliff's romance for one another is outside social due to economic circumstances therefore they do not marry even though their love for one another remains strong until the end of the novel (Cranney-Francis). The many movie versions made of Wuthering Heights have gotten a grasp on the main shared themes in the story yet however the differences between the two mediums is vital to the narrative structure.

Heathcliff's character been vital to the storyline (as he is the novels key point of focus) is very important when making the movie versions of Wuthering Heights as he brings out the audiences response (Haire-Sargeant).

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Previously, film versions of Wuthering Heights have in fact attempted to explain the character of Heathcliff in a way the audience can connect with this character and achieve their expectations.

Directors have been doing this change by altering parts of the story so that Heathcliff's character is not as evil as Bronte's character in the novel is; or by leading the audience or the reader as Bronte does to take in Heathcliff's good and wicked personality within his perspective. When Bronte wrote the novel, of course it had to have been linguistic. Movies however, cannot give the viewer every last detail that is in the novel and therefore have to adapt the book into a screenplay in order all the audience can understand its concept. Therefore changes and problems are created.

The question which arises from every book turned into a movie becomes 'does the movie mirror or replicate the context of the novel' which in so many words is not possible. To get every last detail of a four hundred page novel down in the short space of two/ or three hours will confuse the viewer as movies unlike novels do not ask for an audience's creativity to form the story it is already done and brought to life on screen. The question at hand therefore should be 'how does the movie engage audiences/ viewers attention? Does it succeed in its own way? (Haire-Sargeant)

This analysis of Wuthering Heights will be explored in William Wyler's 1939 version and also in Peter Kosminsky's 1992 version of the book. From the beginning of the novel Heathcliff is brought into the story as a classless. He is brought home by Mr Earnshaw and is just explained to be 'from the streets

- a gipsy'. His background remains anonymous to the reader throughout the book as well as the movies (Cranny-Francis). In the novel, Nelly Dean tells Lockwood the narrative from her personal insight to the family having been with them for three generations.

However, in Wyler's movie the story is presented by first generation of Earnshaw and Linton. In the book, Bronte makes Heathcliff's character appear to be tall, dark, passionate, violent and uncivilised. Yet however, in Wyler's version of *Wuthering Heights* he has cast Lawrence Olivier to play the character of Heathcliff. He is characterised differently in this movie in comparison to the novel. Wyler and Olivier present Heathcliff's emotions and the cruelty he has had to bear from Hindley a great deal. This 1939 version of *Wuthering Heights* is what Haire-Sargeant describes as been 'holographic'.

The movie's framing brings the movie together to form together a masterpiece work. Wyler controls a black and white of delicately shaded tonality; the powerfully expressed emotional and spiritual touch. The story through the use of extreme emphasis on visuals presents open space in comparison to the settings described by Bronte in the novel. (Haire-Sargeant p. p. 170-173). Wyler's movie has brought forth to the audience attention the connection between Heathcliff and Cathy and the emptiness of the world for both of them when not together (Hair-Sargeant).

Peter Kosminsky's 1992 version titled *Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights* did not achieve the audience response that the 1939 one received merely due to the fact of poor casting. French actress Juliette Binoche played both the

characters of first generation and second generation Catherine. The controversy surrounding this poor casting was simply the fact that Catherine in Bronte's novel was from an English background. To cast a French to play the role of an English girl was part of the reason of why the movie did not seem to do well.

Another interesting casting in this movie was the actor who took on the role of Heathcliff: Ralph Fiennes. Although he did not look in the part with his refined features, he quite differently to Olivier's performance of Heathcliff in the 1939 version presented a quiet, smiling torturer at play. This is a major personality characteristic of Bronte's Heathcliff in the novel. The cruel personality of Heathcliff in this movie version cannot be understood to be an act of anger or personality as the Heathcliff played by Olivier presents.

Different to the 1939 *Wuthering Heights* and the book by Bronte, in this version it is not Heathcliff who holds the narrative process together but rather it is Catherine. The story in this version gave the character of Catherine more maturity and power as opposed to in the book where Bronte seemed to present an immature 'school-girl' type of girl in the first generation Cathy's personality. Yet the most important factor to consider is the fact that Binoche took on the role of both mother and daughter each been delivered differently and fitting in together with the story.

Unlike the book where Bronte focuses a great deal of volume one on the first generations childhood, the book just touches on it and skims past them really quickly leaving the audience to fill in the gaps. For example Nelly Dean's

character in this movie only has a small role and does not state exactly who she is to the audience whereas in the book more than half of it is her narrative of the events circulating between the Earnshaws, Lintons and Heathcliff. Another example is the character of Hindley who is important to the novel.

He fades off the screen as well as his wife, Frances, before the viewers' notice what happened to them. Kosminsky's main interest in this movie was to show the viewer the great love story between Cathy and Heathcliff. Yet he gave the audience little time to grasp the storyline as he wanted us to focus primarily on the main 'stars' without drifting the audience's mind towards other matters. Unlike Wyler's version however, like the book the 1992 version presented both the second generation as well as Lockwood. The end of the movie showed second generation Cathy and Hareton riding together a happy couple getting married soon.

This romance developed gradually over a period of time in the novel whereas in the movie it is one of the final shots. This refers back to the point made earlier about Kosminsky's skimming over the lives of the characters in the story not letting the audience take in what is happening. Hareton's character in this movie version did not have an important role nor did he make much appearance whilst he was a central character in the novel. The key strength of the movie however, is the use of only key subject matters in relation to the story to make it fit perfectly into the duration time of two hours (Haire-Sargeant).

The use of settings, tone and music all contribute to the construction of the film. When a reader reads the novel they create their own interpretation and felt emotions in regards to what is happening in the texts, but however with movies comes the fact that we are witnessing all one set perspective of the story. Music and scenery are a major aspect of witnessing something before us especially on screen. It reminds the viewer of how they see what is real and what is not real, therefore forming and revealing the storyline.

The use of screenplay and Hollywood touches adds more drama to the actual story, making the love story appear to be more realistic for viewers and more 'romantic' in relation to the novel where it is interpreted according to the readers' imagination. The book allows readers to go beyond the linguistic and explore deeply into the plot, whereas the movie is set images on screen and it is up to the viewers to accept or reject the shared ideas or themes introduced by the screen play writer and the actors acting out the novels characters.

Wuthering Heights the novel is a well structured novel, which explores everyone and every event in sufficient detail for the reader to comprehend the story. It gives the reader the impression that they are part of the dramas of the characters lives and the reader has a connection with each storyline. The movie because it is so fast paced and shorter than the novel, the viewer can not make that special connection which keeps them enticed as they are not using their imagination but rather their sight sense.

In conclusion, going back to the question brought up earlier in regards to whether the two movie versions made of Wuthering Heights have brought to life the novels' key strengths, the novel and the movie both are unique and interesting in their own set ways. Whilst the novel has been interpreted to be a Gothic novel with a metaphorical aspect of romance in it by many critics over the past centuries, the movie versions of this is novel is far from been described and categorised as been Gothic.

It is a highly dramatic piece of work with a totally different presentation of the characters which Bronte firstly introduced in her 1800s novel. The novels plot thickens mainly around Cathy and Heathcliff and for a director to put this into action a lot of things need to be toned down as of the fact the story was written two centuries ago and the audience who view it in today's society will vary in ages therefore it needed to be played down so the viewer can take in more of the story and the characters and walk away with the basic concept of what the book is about.

The use of sadism in Heathcliff's character is played down on in the movie versions of the novel, and although both the Heathcliff's played out by Fiennes and Olivier are differently presented they both sum up the main plot of the un-dying love between Catherine and Heathcliff that Bronte sought to present in her book but however, each director displays this theme accordingly to his own personal interpretations of the story.