

# Comparative study of wuthering heights, translations, and i'm no scared

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



The texts that I have studied and prepared for my comparative course are: Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte, Translations by Brian Friel, and I'm not scared directed by Gabriel Salvatores. When I address the cultural context of a text I refer to the worlds of the texts, the circumstances which face the plots and the characters of the texts. Some elements of the cultural context of each and every text are the world's attitudes, social rituals, and structures. Coming to grips with the general norm of the society with in each texts and how the characters behave enables me to enjoy each text all the more.

Understanding the world in which each text is set in and thus being able to compare the aspects of their society and what is involved in their material and spiritual lives ostentatiously influences the resolution of the narratives which gave a better impact and added to my enjoyment. I greatly enjoyed seeing the connections between the texts and how their worlds were intertwined in their similarities and differences. Particularly these connections were more vivid to me in the areas of Role of Women in Society, Setting, and Class Structure, within the Cultural context of each text.

All three texts revolve around a patriarchal system where the men were the primary authority figure and were central to society. They hold the central roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. The entailment of female subordination is most apparent in Wuthering Heights where only through marriage is a woman able to gain recognition, position, and a place in society. Being compelled by this, Catherine Earnshaw betrays Heathcliff and really herself as well due to her love for him.

Unable to cope with marrying a slave and an outcast in her patriarchal world she accepts Edgar Linton's proposal for marriage. Edgar's family were the most elite family in the novel thus giving Catherine a better future than what circumstance she might be in if she marries Heathcliff. Catherine: " It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now. " In the same way, Maire doesn't marry Manus in Translations due to his lack of position, property and his inability to provide for a family. Maire sees that the man that she marries will dictate her position in society and so decides that marriage with Manus was not the foremost option.

Maire: " You talk to me about getting married - with neither a roof over your head nor a sod of ground under your foot. " In both circumstances, a society where men hold prestige constrains women to be only able to aspire to be a wife. Marriage, in their patriarchal world, seems to be the only possible way to be able to make a living. The subservient role of women is further illustrated by Wuthering Heights' patrilineal system which inhibits the property and title of a family to be inherited by the female lineage.

Heathcliff effectively utilises this system for his benefit. Knowing that the wealth of a family can only be inherited by the male lineage, he arranges the marriage of young Cathy and his son Linton. Since Edgar died with no son to carry on his family name, his family's inheritance would therefore be handed to whoever young Cathy marries. The male is dominant and is clearly seen as the head of the family. Similarly to I'm not scared, we see a macho world where power and strength are valued and power rest with the males.

Pino tells his son to do his press-ups and they arm-wrestle. Anna, Michele's mother, is physically assaulted by Felice, one of the gang. In his household, Pino is very much in charge and his wife is obedient to him. Even though in each text, women were inferior to men we also see in some cases where the text subverts the traditional or stereotypical idea of women and their place in society. In translations Bridget shows control when she directs Doalty to hide the animals when the army threatens to kill them.

Maire is described as: "...a strong minded, strong bodied woman..." She works as hard as any man in the community at the hay harvesting and plans to go to America in order to provide for her household in which she the head. Maire: " The best harvest in living memory,... (Showing Jimmy her hands. ) Look at these blisters. " Maire: " There are ten below me to be raised and no man in the house.... " During the Victorian era in Wuthering Heights, women were expected to be obedient, disciplined and faithful. Catherine does not conform to these expectations.

There is also a subtle reversal of roles in young Cathy's marriages where, contrary to traditional norms, she appears to be the dominant partner. She tended to Linton who was a spoilt, sickly weakling. Later Hareton also needs help and encouragement to develop after years of degradation at the hands of Heathcliff. Comparing the cultural context of the narratives heightened my enjoyment and helped me have a better experience and insight into the role of women and how they lived their lives subservient under men in a patriarchal society.

One of the aspects of cultural context I enjoyed covering on my comparative course is how the class structure in each narrative is divided up. Social class is not solely dependent on the amount of money one has. Rather, the source of income, birth, and family connections plays a major role in determining one's position in society. England in the nineteenth century was an extremely class-conscious society and social class is an important element in *Wuthering Heights*. We see the distinction between the two families in Emily Bronte's novel and their rank on the social ladder.

At the top of the locality's social class, one finds the rich and refined Linton family who live in the sumptuous surroundings of Thruscross Grange. The Lintons were superior to the Earnshaw family and live in *Wuthering heights*. Within these ranks we also see how the cultured from the rustics and those higher up the social scale from those lower down are separated. Speech patterns and accents distinguish the servants such as Zillah, Joseph and Nelly Dean from their masters. An example of this would be Joseph's Yorkshire dialect and young Heathcliff's outsider accent which he spoke when he was brought from Liverpool.

Equally noticeable in Brian Friel's *Translations* is the subtle class diversity between the more educated who were able to speak English as well as Irish and the less educated who only speak Irish. Also noticeable is the feeling of social superiority felt by the English to the Gaelic community of Baile Beag as reflected in Captain Lancey's condescending attitude. This parallels with Hindley's deprivation of Heathcliff to a servant. Hindley is a well-educated

man who has an outstanding stand in society while Heathcliff was seen as an illiterate vagabond brought in from Liverpool by Mr Earnshaw.

Turning to *I'm not scared* we see how the village of Acqua Traverse is in keeping with the film's premise that Southern Italy was a deprived place where the people, out of desperation, could understandably turn to crime. The buildings are shabby and clustered around a dusty courtyard. It is reminiscent of *Baile Beag* with its hedge school in a dusty barn and Hugh's description of the place with its Hugh: "Mud cabins and a diet of potatoes." The people's aspirations in *I'm not scared* are simple. Annadreamsof visiting the seaside and eating in a restaurant. The people in Southern Italy were poor and run-down.

The difference between the social standing of Southern Italy and Northern Italy lead to the country experiencing spate of kidnappings hence the kidnapping of Filippo. Filippo is from a family among the ranks of the higher hierarchy of Italy at that time. This caused him to be held against his will to be held for ransom by the people of Acqua Traverse in hopes that their lives might change for the better and for them to be able to climb higher in their social ladder. Similar to the situation in *Translations*, Maire desires to go to America in order to acquire a better subsistence.

In each text, class structure plays an important role and affects the behaviour of the characters in how they respond to society and the norm and in what choices they make in connection with their rank the class system. Studying the significance of class structure in the cultural context of each narrative benefitted me in my understanding of each text which made my

study all the more pleasurable. The setting in the cultural context of a text is definitely important when looking at character development, conflict, and the overall plot.

It's the setting for all that is to come; it can convey so much about whom the people are and the way they live. The setting of a narrative can be a character of its own. In all three narratives, the setting is conveyed in a remote, rural location far from any centre of population. *I'm not scared* shows scenes depicting children romping through the endless fields of golden corn under a blue sky or cycling along dirt-track roads baked solid by the sweltering sun. The entire plot of *I'm not scared* unfolds over a few days of scorching sunshine near harvest time.

This parallels with *Translations* where Baile Beag is experiencing an unusual heat wave, and similarly just after the hay harvest. We see Owen tell Yolland that it is... Owen: " The first hot summer in fifty years and you think it's Eden. " This reminds us in *Wuthering Heights* where Catherine stays at the Lintons for a few weeks after being bitten by a dog. Cathy receives a taste of luxury and she is drawn to it and is deceived to think that she desires to marry Edgar due to the luxury which she relishes.

In the end, both Yolland and Cathy have to face the consequences of the pursuit of their vain desires. *Wuthering Heights*, however, is in opposition to *Translations* and *I'm not scared*. Bronte has placed her novel in a variety of ambience. Ranging from the opening scenes of snowfalls and lashing gales, to blooming springs, radiant summers, and drowsy autumns. In Salvatore's film, as we see the camera pan across the rolling hill and valleys and sweep

over the fields of waving grain, one is struck by the beauty and the emptiness of the landscape.

The only sounds are of animals, birds, and insects. Our eyes take in the vivid colours of the red and orange poppies. Then we trace the horizon dividing the golden corn and the purple petals of other flowers from the blue sky to create a wonderfully rich effect. This countryside reminds us of Bronte's descriptions of the moors. Young Cathy: "...with the bees humming dreamily about among the bloom, and the larks singing high up overhead, and the blue sky and bright sun shining steadily and cloudlessly. "

Whether in I'm not scared, Wuthering heights, or Translations, one should not be fooled by mere appearances. The cawing of a crow and the hissing of insects create an ominous effect suggesting all is not well. For underneath the beauty of the landscape lies a terrible secret. In the country side near the tiny village of Acqua Traverse, a young boy named Filippo is being kept hostage in a hole in the ground. In the same way the potatoes in Baile Beag gives a deceiving sweet smell. As Maire says: Maire: " Sweet smell! Sweet smell!

Every year at this time somebody comes back with stories of the sweet smell. Sweet God, did the potatoes ever fail in Baile Beag?... " The sweet smell became the blight of the potatoes in the Great Famine of Ireland. Likewise in Wuthering Heights, Mr Lockwood perceived Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange to be quite a lovely place to be from seeing the beauty of its landscape. Only until later in the novel does he come to realize



that the landscape had a different story to tell with its storms and prevailing winds which reflect the turmoil the families of the landscape endures.

Gathering together all that I have learned from my study of the cultural context of *Wuthering Heights*, *Translations*, and *I'm Not Scared* in reference to Role of Women in Society, Class Structure, and Setting, I was able to compare and differentiate the cultural context of these texts for my comparative course. In doing so it further enhanced my understanding and enjoyment of the narratives and made my experience more real and gave a greater impact.