THE EVOLUTION OF EMILY BRONTË’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS THROUGH A STUDY OF ITS RECEPIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

by

Marianna Gleyzer

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

May 2014
THE EVOLUTION OF EMILY BRONTÉ’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS THROUGH A
STUDY OF ITS RECEPTIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

by

Marianna Gleyzer

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s thesis advisor, Dr. Oliver Buckton, Department of English, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Oliver Buckton, Ph.D.
Theory Advisor

Julieann Ulin, Ph.D.

John Golden, Ph.D.

Eric L. Berlatsky, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of English

Heather Coltman, DMA
Dean, Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters

Deborah L. Floyd, Ed. D.
Interim Dean, Graduate College

April 11, 2014

Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere gratitude to her chair, Dr. Buckton, for all his vigilant guidance and encouraging support through the entirety of this thesis process. Also a great special thanks to her committee members, Dr. Golden and Dr. Ulin, for their patience, persistence, and encouragement. The author is also grateful for FAU’s English department, for all their wonderful professors and counselors that help spark ideas and carry them through. Last but not least, the author wishes to thank FAU’s graduate college department, in their dedication to their work by helping graduate students in tackling the tricky thesis formatting process.
ABSTRACT

Author: Marianna Gleyzer
Title: The Evolution of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* through a Study of its Receptions and Adaptations
Institution: Florida Atlantic University
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Oliver Buckton
Degree: Master of Arts
Year: 2014

This thesis covers the entire range of British and American film adaptations of Emily Brontë’s novel, *Wuthering Heights*, as no cumulative study on this larger selection has been done thus far. However this will not be the only objective of this thesis, as I create a link between the author’s life to her novel, between the novel to the early criticism, and the criticism to later adaptations, forming a chain of transformation down the ages, to the original novel. By linking the adaptations to the earlier reception of the novel, a change of social interaction will be uncovered as one of its reasons for surviving. These examples of adaptation will be shown to be just as relevant to popular culture history as its original inspiration. This is the result of an unfolding movement of change and mutation, where each adaptation pushes to connect with the past and future.
DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my family, first and foremost. Particularly to my uncomplaining and always accommodating baby sister, who helped with every step of the way, from finding new research to solving formatting secrets. My very dedicated mother, my other darling sister, my father always ready to discuss any tribulation, and my grandparents ready to ease my mind at any second. Family is everything, especially when they define everything for you.
THE EVOLUTION OF EMILY BRONTË’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS THROUGH A STUDY OF ITS RECEPTIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 1
Chapter One: A Creator’s Touch, Biographical Connections that do not Wither .................. 13
Chapter Two: Darkness Looms When Critics Call .................................................................................. 28
Chapter Three: Twice did America ...................................................................................................... 38
Chapter Four: In the British Fashion, Six Times Over ......................................................................... 51
Conclusion: The Revolving Doors of Evolution .................................................................................... 91
Works Cited ........................................................................................................................................... 96
INTRODUCTION

“How a human being could have attempted such a book as the present without committing suicide before he had finished a dozen chapters, is a mystery. It is a compound of vulgar depravity and unnatural horrors”: this excerpt comes from one of the first reviews of what is now considered a monumental classic (P. Thompson, “Contemporary Reviews of Wuthering Heights”, The Reader’s Guide to Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights). This considerably harsh review appeared in the American publication Graham’s Lady’s Magazine in 1848, and happened to be one of the documents pulled out of the author's desk after her death (P. Thompson, “Contemporary Reviews of Wuthering Heights”). The author in question was Emily Brontë and the compound of “unnatural horrors” has since become one of British literature’s most treasured classics, Wuthering Heights. It was indeed a ground-breaking novel in its format and structure; so much so, that it is no surprise that it shocked its first readers and critics. The gothic features in Brontë’s novel essentially developed into their own literary devices, representing a focal theme of the novel that the initial waves of criticism had yet to fully comprehend. However over time, Emily Brontë’s novel, with the emotions it evokes and the haunting landscapes it describes, has been made into a work of art that has changed the course of literature and popular culture. Her novel has evoked something poignant and powerful in the world; for 166 years after its publication, it has foregrounded a darker and more gothic theme to revengeful love or also now considered
to be called “mad love” in literature. As critic Arnold Kettle discusses in much detail, his very concept of “mad love” entails an innovative interpretation of love as having a vindictive and destructive quality applied specifically to Brontë’s novel (41). The socially unacceptable idea that two lovers could be as cruel and spiteful to each other as Heathcliff and Catherine are has grown into its own popular and well accepted theme. One that has been shown in over a dozen film adaptations, as well as numerous television series, operas and theater interpretations. In fact, Brontë’s novel has become an unfolding movement of ever-changing adaptations, each one defined not only by its own time period, but also by its culture. From the British versions that were produced to keep the novel ablaze even as decades passed and social standards changed, all the way to America’s own interpretations of *Wuthering Heights*; each time this one tale is retold, a new world is created. Though the original novel has been modified and updated for every era, it still shows the traces of ideas and themes that Emily Brontë created; only every new version also shows that the means of adaptation are a sort of mutation, necessary to the evolution and survival of what was created so long ago.

By analyzing the British and American film adaptations of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, a pattern showing favorite themes and elements can be discerned in the cultures that are so taken by this work. Originating with the author herself, and the time period in which she lived and worked, my thesis explores the factors of Victorian society that drove Brontë to create such a dark and vengeful tale of miserable romance, one that even her peers assumed was written by a man. The menacing backgrounds that have made this novel stand out for its landscapes will be taken into consideration to show
how they connect to the actual locations and favorite spots that Brontë visited herself. They inspired something within the author, and thus are a factor in explaining the gothic appeal that Brontë so memorably created, and also help to analyze the mysterious inception of this enthralling narrative.

With its critical reception, the novel then crossed over into a world all too terribly ready to criticize this creation into the darkest of antagonism. It is all the more appealing to investigate how those early steps turned this unlikely novel into such a well acknowledged masterpiece, that even time itself could not wither away its darkest themes and landscapes. Therefore, by commencing with an exploration into the author’s enigmatic past, analyzing the particular inspirations for this novel, and examining the validity of its earlier reviews and criticism, this thesis examines the critical and cultural legacy of Brontë’s novel. This legacy now lies vastly outside of the original masterpiece, and therefore deserves its own scrutiny as well. For Wuthering Heights can now be considered a work divided into many diverse mediums such as these films, theater plays, operas, and so on. This makes the novel not just a work adapted over and over again, but instead, there are many different Wuthering Heights created into the outlets of various medias, cultures, and eras. Consequently the novel no longer belongs to the world of literature alone, as it has since evolved into evident ‘afterlives’ that have altered the original reception of the work and possibly even Brontë’s intentions, into dozens of new interpretations and adaptations.

By focusing specifically on British and American interpretations, this thesis classifies them through the decades, and formulates an outlook on how two of the major
speaking English nations take a classic and mold it to their predilections. This thesis also examines the ways in which each movie adaptation stays true to its origins, and the ways in which it creates its own new masterwork. By focusing on eight specific adaptations from the years of 1939, 1970, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2003, 2009 and the latest 2011 version, and classifying them by their cultural background, historical significance, accuracy or fidelity to Brontë’s novel, and the reasons for their financial successes or failures, this thesis begins to uncover the influence of changing social norms on Wuthering Heights. This study of adaptations shows how each film can be seen as its own work of art, but also what claims it can make to popular culture history. As a result, each adaptation also illustrates a battle to survive humankind’s fickle memory and stay ever close to the admirers’ hearts. There must some vital reasons for why this novel does not fade. Through these meticulous explorations, those very reasons will be exposed. Could it be because of the timeless appeal of the novel’s ideas and themes that these adaptations fare so well? Or are the adaptations the cause of this longevity, making each interpretation further from what the novel entailed, and therefore more enticing to the present times? Academic writer Linda Hutcheon suggests that an audience is captivated not just by the idea of a retold story, but by a new perspective applied to make the adaptation its own invention: “We find a story we like and then do variations on it through adaptation. But because each adaptation must also stand on its own, separate from the palimpsestic pleasures of doubled experience…It is repetition but without replication, bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty” (173). With Hutcheon’s point of view to consider, the very replication of a novel must
stand its own ground so as to not appear as a mere replication, but as an innovative experience in addition to its original masterpiece.

This allows the audience to enjoy the ritual of seeing something again, but also in reveling in the novelty of the adaptation’s new surprises. This way, the secret to an original novel’s success can be extended to each new audience that enjoys these replications. Yet the memory of the original will also survive as the adaptations continue on, because of the main characters, their themes, and even the background to their entire development. Therein lies the importance of adapting *Wuthering Heights*: “As adaptation, it involves both memory and change, persistence and variation” (Hutcheon 173). These particular elements that Hutcheon depicts as the formula to an adaptation’s success also point to how *Wuthering Heights*’ adaptations have survived and prospered over so many decades. The memory of the inspiration Brontë created in her novel is shown in each new film. Though the changes made to depict how each film stands out for its differences does take away from the overall persistence in remaining true to the original ideas of the novel. The differences can be seen in the variations applied between each adaptation, and what it could mean for an audience and how they received that particular version. For fidelity to the original novel is no longer a requirement to successful adaptations, it is the originality to a specific version that makes it flourish: “Perhaps one way to think about unsuccessful adaptations is not in terms of infidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of creativity and skill to make the text one’s own and thus autonomous” (Hutcheon 20). This allows the audience to interpret a new adaptation entirely as its own work, not just as a replication of the original, but as an innovative
interpretation to that original. And it is these interpretations of Brontë’s masterpiece that make each reincarnation just as appealing as the original.

The argument is separated into three stages (or three tiers). Firstly, I draw out the factors that relate to Brontë’s inspiration for her masterpiece drawing upon several esteemed biographies. I also consider the literary and biographical elements that fueled Brontë in the midst of an austere Victorian society. Then, it is necessary to make the connections between her lifestyle and the dark themes that make *Wuthering Heights* so intoxicating. Also vital to consider, the breathtaking backgrounds that have separated themselves out from so many previous Victorian novels, making them singular in their ominous details and lonely personifications. These are the very details that help establish a gothic tone unlike any other previous literary work. After covering the inception part, it is also essential to examine the early criticism that helped shape the novel’s coming out into the world, making up my second step. And it is the early criticism that is so negative; therefore more fascinating to study, so as to know when and why Brontë’s narrative became less radical and more approachable. Thirdly, by working with major studio adaptations, I discern the factors of *Wuthering Heights* that stay true and therefore are the possible links in a continuous attraction to the novel. I also separate out the changes being made with each adaptation, and the reasons behind this. This part, I believe is the unique perspective my thesis offers, as there has yet to be a cumulative study done on a major selection of *Wuthering Heights* interpretations. In the previous research done on *Wuthering Heights*, critics usually take apart one movie and compare it to the novel; none have gone past a few comparisons amongst the adaptations themselves. I endeavor to
cover the entire range of British and American film adaptations of the novel. What is more, I create a link between the author’s life and her novel, between the novel and the early criticism, and between the criticism and later adaptations, forming a chain of transformations down the ages. By linking the adaptations to the earlier reception of the novel, a stronger reason might be uncovered for its longevity.

The methodology behind this process is straightforward once considering it under this three tier system. By bearing in mind the amount of research already done on Emily Brontë and her novel, my aim is not to replicate previously published information. Rather, my goal is to be able to efficiently draw out those curious factors that help to establish the resemblance in between the novel and its adaptations, by bringing out the links in between Brontë’s life, inspirations, and early criticism. The early criticism is significant because it sheds some light on why public perception of the novel changed from negative to positive, and became one of the first reasons for *Wuthering Heights’* endurance, making a foundation for the later interpretations to advance on. After which, in analyzing each movie adaptation, the already published research will be much sparser. At this point, I use reviews and director/cast interviews to establish the familiarity between their project and the novel. The films themselves are very important sources, as I analyze several significant scenes from each adaptation to connect back to the text. Establishing common ground between the original work of art and its innovative interpretations after all is the central objective of this thesis, showing how wide Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* spreads its influence over time and space.
My first chapter focuses on Emily Brontë herself, and the factors of her lifestyle and Victorian society that helped her fuel such a vivid and shocking imagination. Including an investigation into the main landscapes of *Wuthering Heights*, and what each one could signify both in Brontë’s own life and also on a metaphorical basis. I believe studying the backgrounds to be indispensable, as they are also very vital in not only setting the gothic mood in the novel, but in each adaptation as well.

The focus of my second chapter is on the earliest and mostly negative criticism and reviews that the novel received after being published. In addressing that negative perception, my chapter explores how *Wuthering Heights* was still able to flourish in spite of them. For example, well known critics posted such dismal comments as: “*Wuthering Heights* is a strange, inartistic story…The general effect is inexpressibly painful. We know nothing in the whole range of our fictitious literature which presents such shocking pictures of the worst forms of humanity” (P. Thompson, “Contemporary Reviews of *Wuthering Heights*”). In describing these aspects, the critics are establishing the themes of the novel and making them sound grotesque and unsubstantial at the same time. Yet Brontë used these worst forms of humanity as a means to not only shock her readers, but to open up a new, albeit gothic, perspective that allows them to analyze humanity under. The public perception of these ideals was not first taken into consideration; merely the reaction was recorded as something greatly unpleasant, “*Wuthering Heights* casts a gloom over the mind not easily to be dispelled. It does not soften; it harasses, it exenterates” (P. Thompson, “Contemporary Reviews of *Wuthering Heights*”). With time though, that outlook changed and began to be interpreted in a more positive light than just
of a harassing gloom upon the readers. So, at what point did this public perception change and take to interpreting this novel in a more positive light? What were the factors involved in this transformation and which of those factors helped influence future interpretations in the same vein? By studying these initial reactions, my investigation shows that the first wave of criticism was not simply negative, but more of a shocked reaction to a new type of work. Then I also show the turnabout with the reviews that depict a nuanced view of the novel’s gothic appeal and darker themes as not completely grotesque and utterly unsubstantial. Instead, their aim to understand the reasons behind the worst forms of humanity as something worthy of analyzing through the characters’ roles, and then outside of the text as a unique perception to humanity, even if at its worst. Those early reviews that take this side and show Brontë’s text as a self-analysis of humanity’s darker side actually help to commence the transformation in interpreting this novel as something more interesting and worthwhile, as a major work of literature.

In the third chapter, the focus is exclusively on the American interpretations. I start with the 1939 version, where I investigate why American cinema culture decided to be the first to undertake adapting Brontë’s novel. What were the reasons behind this action, and how did society react at this first interpretation? Then with the 2003 MTV remaking of the novel, it is of particular interest why a younger generation focused television channel would deem it worthwhile to remake a British classic into an American interpretation, with music additions as well. What were the successes and failures behind this production? In analyzing the differences between these two American versions, and setting those apart from their British counterparts, the stylistic
changes made by American society shows their unique take on interpreting the novel. The differences in audience reception could directly apply to the differences in audiences, as one nation attempts to separate its representation of *Wuthering Heights* from another. A factor that needs to be kept in mind from this outlook is how those audiences are essential in making a new version flourish: “For an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both the knowing and unknowing audiences…known adaptations obviously function similarly to genres: they set up audience expectations through a set of norms that guide our encounter with the adapting work we are experiencing” (Hutcheon 121). The social norms of a society may indirectly dictate the variations that one specific adaptation will include or focus on, a channel I investigate further. When it comes to gender roles, cultural expectations, and acceptable behaviors: these are all aspects to the social norms that are analyzed in close relation to each adaptation. However, the known audience reception of such particular works as these two American adaptations can also show the cultural understanding of the original work, and allow room to explore the changes they felt necessary to make. It is as Hutcheon declares a tricky business in knowing one’s audience well enough to estimate how far an original masterpiece can be manipulated and changed before it is scorned: “Knowing audiences have expectations and demands. It may be less…that ‘a masterpiece is a work whose subject ideally suits its medium’ and therefore cannot be adapted than a case of a ‘masterpiece being a work a particular audience cherishes and resists seeing changed. Different adaptations solicit different audiences or fan communities’” (122). This idea of different audiences and fan communities is a key concept for not only these two American adaptations of *Wuthering Heights*...
Heights, but for the previous British ones as well, because they offer a different perspective to why each film might be considered a success or failure. Also relevant here is the fact that the idea of fidelity to the original novel is no longer a criterion of a successful adaptation, only a possible demand made by audiences.

Moving on to the fourth chapter, this is where I examine six British adaptations and what made each one stand apart. The British culture has been able to produce one to two adaptations almost every decade. My analysis starts with the 1970 and 1978 versions, leading into the 1992 and 1998 additions, and ending off on the newest versions made in 2009 and 2011. Also, a factor I further explore is how each newer approach takes on a more radical and less faithful interpretation of the novel. In fact, critic Anthony Fragola focuses on how these less faithful interpretations fail to represent the true nature of Brontë’s novel, saying that: “The Hollywood version has settled for a pale imitation of Brontë’s universe and has subverted the destructive force of ‘mad love’ that can be reconciled only through death” (51). From this outlook, Brontë’s darker themes can be associated with a sort of “mad love” and a conclusion fitting only through death, but those are not the only ideals that are shown throughout the narrative. Therefore while Hollywood’s versions may lack specific qualities, there are still other essences of the novel that remain true in the movies, even if represented through different scenes and styles than that of “mad love” fitting to a deathly conclusion, as originally established in the novel. These new variations may seem radical in their changes, but I argue that Brontë’s universe is not forsaken in those changes. As Hutcheon suggests, “An adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it
dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep the prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise” (176). That afterlife is what I intend to bring to light as a very essential quality that only deepens the influence of the original work. The essence of the novel’s darker themes prevail in each adaptation, and that will be illustrated by specific scenes that are not included in the novel, yet still hold true to the ideas Brontë created.

The conclusion of my thesis clearly spells out the pattern I discerned and the main examples that helped me get to that point. The transformation only starts with how Emily Brontë’s novel was published in a time where it was considered too violent and scandalous to be written by a female author. The changes made to show how that scandalous novel has transformed into a popular culture of its own is of utmost importance in relating each work to the next. This is a culture now complete with fan communities supporting specific versions, different nations taking their opportunity to interpret *Wuthering Heights*, and an in-depth history of this social interaction that helped mutate the novel into an evolution of adaptations. In the end, this process also shows that each new adaptation also created new interest for the original novel, instilling a part of its survival as a result.
CHAPTER ONE: A CREATOR’S TOUCH, BIOGRAPHICAL CONNECTIONS THAT
DO NOT WITHER

_I’ve dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after,
And changed my ideas: they’ve gone through and through me,
Like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind._

- Emily Brontë, _Wuthering Heights_, 79

The true and known facts of Brontë’s life are very few, besides knowing
that of the historical timeline into which she was born and her family situation. Making
the biographical standpoint dependent on others’ words, however as it has been pointed
out so clearly, even those words are speculation: “Emily Brontë, notwithstanding the
many attempts that have been made to elucidate her character, remains one of the most
enigmatic figures of English literature. The judgments which have been passed owe their
variety largely to the fact supplemented by a larger body of conjecture which varies from
author to author” (Dingle 9). And while each new depth discovered in the life of Brontë
may therefore appear all the more enticing, the truth lies in the simple things that remain
constant. The few unchangeable facts that remain constant may not be astonishing in their
details, but remain important enough to make an impact on the readers as they begin to
make connections between the work and the author.

Brontë’s unique upbringing afforded her something very exceptional: a potent
imagination. For her father allowed all his daughters full reign of his library, and though
they did not receive in-depth educations as their brother, these girls were afforded the opportunity to learn at their own pace, a unique detail that writer John Hewish picks up on (27). Emily Brontë was therefore able to use her basic school knowledge and push it even further with every book she could get her hands on. However the fact that made her stand apart, even within her own family, was the early mindset Brontë acquired that even others began to take notice of. For example on the opportunities when Brontë was able to go to school, even her teachers noticed this: “M. Héger, of Brussels, her schoolmaster there, discovered that she had a male mind” (Wilson 55). This could indeed be considered a flattering remark; especially for that time, due to these small indications that show Brontë was not the typical diffident girl but one with a strong mind and obvious opinions. That and her sisters’ views on her, which are better documented than anything else, stands to show that from an early age, Emily Brontë was quite independent in thought and mind. This for the Victorian society into which Brontë was born, was not necessarily an advantage. Women had very few accepted roles in this society, as biography writers Christine Alexander and Margaret Smith express in their thorough catalog of the Brontës, “Women were the guardians of emotional and spiritual values properly confined in a domestic space [and] idealized as the ‘Angel in the House’, a ‘relative creature’ who derived her value and purpose from relationships, as daughter, wife, mother” (545). To be confined to the solitary role of daughter in a domestic space could indeed be the only category Emily Brontë fit into as she would never go on to become a wife or a mother, thus failing to meet the standards by which Victorian society measured the value of a woman. More clearly Brontë defined herself as a recluse who rarely went into society,
and had minimum interactions outside of her family. But because of this solitary lifestyle, Brontë was able to continue to develop her aspirations further away from the accepted gender roles of her society: “Victorians embraced the ‘separate spheres’ ideology, the view that men and women were physically and spiritually predetermined to inhabit different realms. Active and assertive, men were naturally equipped for the public arena ruled by competition and materialism” (Alexander and Smith 545). And yet the aspirations that showed themselves very early in her life, showed strong indicators of both an active and assertive mind. Though the public arena was something to be avoided, competition and economic problems within the family never did subside too far from mind either. With a large family and constant worries for health and means, the Brontë children learned early to keep to themselves.

In those times, their father’s library was just the beginning in terms of piquing their interests in books, because it ignited in them a ravenous imagination that took flight in different directions for each sibling. Together they started by creating and recording entire new worlds that they called Angria and later Gondal (Hewish 29). They wrote plays for these worlds, and poems still exist of characters Emily Brontë created for these realms. In those remaining pieces of Emily Brontë’s early imagination recorded, it also shows how she drifted from the common fantasy she shared with her siblings. The common ground was in a sense their desire to ‘strike out’ as author Frederick R. Karl puts it, “All great Victorian novelists live for us in varying ways, but the Brontës survive and impinge upon us for their insistence on the intensity of their inner lives and their almost mythical reconstruction of a self. To strike out, however fearfully, was for them
virtually an existential act” (138). To make their impoverished life less agonizing, the Brontë siblings focused so intently on the self and how much further they could push that self into new circumstances, new situations, and entire new worlds so to speak. Creating innovative lives to bring out intense feeling of survival in these different existences may have certainly been the common theme amongst these siblings when they worked together on their plays, but that was not all for personal development when it came to imagination and writing. It was merely their childhood, and the beginning to each Brontë going their own direction. Emily Brontë’s path involves a deeper and darker journey, the start of her own version of Gothic.

The childhood worlds of Angria and Gondal may have reflected the traditions of romantic literature; but her siblings started to notice early on that Emily Brontë’s additions were often darker and gloomier. Her characters would focus not on the courtly love that was better accepted, but on something else entirely: “Emily’s peculiar concept of love, which is invariably, at its most intense, involved with hatred and regret (especially for the lost paradise of childhood), as well as mysticism” (Hewish 30). Though this brought a unique flavor to their shared tales, it also separated Emily Brontë from her siblings and showed her mind to be singular not just in its ability to create as they all did, but to create through a different perspective. Because while mysticism may have been born in their schooling of romanticism, the hatred and regret was something that pushed Emily Brontë even further apart because she certainly did not stop there: “Almost from the first, Emily Brontë’s preoccupation with death is absolutely fundamental to her artistic character” (Hewish 62). Focusing on these darker passions and
edging closer to the ideals of death was unusual for a child of such a pious Evangelical-raised family. But in such a manner, it also shows where her talents for the Gothic began. As the Gothic novels tend to feed on these very themes of hatred, revenge and death, Emily Brontë’s imagination drew closer to these even still as result of the many deaths in her family and lost opportunities in her schooling (Hewish 63). Author Romer Wilson paints this possibility and the reason the infamous antihero character of Heathcliff could signify so much for the author herself: “Very early in her day, in secret, in imagination, she began to foster and love a dark soul in herself… It is not accident that Heathcliff was her first favorite…There is every indication that she began to lead the double life of herself and Heathcliff very, very early” (Wilson 55). The binary of Emily Brontë and Heathcliff may indeed be incredible; but that such a dark character could have been given life without an author who already felt these similar emotions is unthinkable without such a foundation. The childhood fantasies the Brontës created were but a whisper for what was to come, because while the theme of missing one’s childhood is prevalent as well in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, the darkness beneath comes out even stronger to connect to this theme of missed youth and innocence.

*Wuthering Heights* may have been written into Emily Brontë’s later life and published shortly before her death; however, it is the sense of what her childhood fantasy was like that gave the seedling of its future possibilities. The connections between her fantasies and growing imagination may indeed start in the literary background of her point in history. Gothic literature, as it was known during Emily Brontë’s timeline, had already established itself with several strong factors, besides the darker themes of hatred,
revenge and death. When Brontë’s novel was published in 1847, it joined an already crowded group of Gothic works such as Edgar Allen Poe’s popular poems and short stories that made the genre what it is today, well circulated works such as Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), as editor Jerrold E. Hogle’s chronology dictates on what led up to Brontë’s work (xix). In fact in that very same year that *Wuthering Heights* came out, another novel was published that brought vampirism into the world of literary fascination: Thomas Preskett’s *Varney the Vampire, or The Feast of Blood* became a signature marker for what inspired future writers to include aspects of vampirism not only into their gothic works, but to make it its own category of fiction (Milbank 163). Interesting enough comparisons have been made to Brontë’s work and the ideas of vampirism that were becoming so quickly popular. For one, the inspirations of Preskett may be also seen in *Wuthering Heights*: “Byron’s various poetics versions and Polidori’s 1819 *The Vampyre* may be responsible for references to Heathcliff as a ghoul or vampire” (Milbank 163). Writer Alison Milbank picks up on these references, showing the links to not only gloomy gothic characters but radical and negative supernatural twists that were shaping into the Victorian popular culture, just as the vampires may have initiated ideas into darker antiheroes. Creating a roadmap of inspirations and ideas from one gothic work to another, and where new categories came forth to show theses innovative twists. However, it is not just similar character foundations, but the very idea of a negative supernatural element that drives the Gothic narrative, as it does in *Wuthering Heights*. Brontë is able to twist the idea of the haunted house into something further, a venue for the larger supernatural theme: “For it is the
Gothic house, and not the Romantic expanse of the moor, that is necessary to embody the intensity of feeling of both of the main protagonists. Its simultaneous articulation of a range of binary oppositions—inside and outside, prison and liberation, body and soul, life and death—makes it a springboard for the supernatural ‘real’” (Milbank 162). These double-edged binaries that both Heathcliff and Catherine are able to depict through their connections to their home over large expanses of time do indeed paint a bigger picture than just a mere haunting; they show the psychological identity of the location and its meanings for the characters. In this unique manner, their home takes on a position of its own: “Wuthering Heights is the vampiric focus for all the social and psychic energies of the narrative” (Milbank 162). As a vampiric form it suggests something about the overall supernatural theme that the home requires these energies to survive. By establishing a link between how this exists and impacts the characters, a statement is made on the supernatural and how it can be molded not just with the vampiric, but with the overall gothic ideal. Brontë is merely making it her own, using the trademark qualities of Gothic literature in her own time and allowing it to seep into her own novel. However that is only the beginning to connecting with the Gothic genre, for this narrative runs deeper and recreates other Gothic elements as well.

Brontë’s novel deals with the unknown, nightmarish dreams, ghosts and victimized women: strong factors that show a reader they are dealing with the Gothic. When it comes to *Wuthering Heights*, all these factors and more are present: from Catherine suffering horrid nightmares about the afterlife, to Heathcliff dealing with the unknown and even being haunted by the ghost of his beloved after her death. These are
all well-known facts of the novel that Emily Brontë made sure to portray in order to add to the overall sense of Gothic. Yet, what is more interesting to consider is that she did not let the set standards of the Gothic novel define her own masterpiece. As Joseph M. Viera observes, she pushed her own boundaries and added new depths to an already established genre:

With departures from conventional Gothic strategies, Brontë developed and modernized an antiquated genre. She proved that traditional Gothic trappings did not have to be completely abandoned to bring this genre into a new phase in development. Furthermore, Brontë made great progress in the genre by creating new types of Gothic characters, by departing from the didactic allegorical tales, and by reshaping the structure of Gothic literature. (30)

As Viera is so evidently establishing, Emily Brontë carved out her own perspective in this genre, as she did earlier in her childhood creations with her siblings. While the tradition of the Gothic prevails in her novel, Brontë also establishes new frontiers by not solely focusing on haunted landscapes or by allowing the victimized female characters to remain the victims throughout. Though the novel begins with the conventional treatment of women, the unique twist does show itself as well to transform victimized women into strong manipulative characters themselves.

This demonstrates the distinguished factor that the Gothic genre goes one way with its portrayal of female characters, “Victimization of women found in this text is typical of earlier Gothic writings…Women in Gothic literature tend to be submissive and powerless, merely serving the male’s purpose” (Viera 28). Similar to the Victorian
society roles set out for women, Emily Brontë paints this scenario through Catherine and even through her daughter Cathy in certain respects as well. For Catherine Earnshaw as she it later known after her marriage is indeed tortured and in certain respects victimized by Heathcliff until her death because of their love; which is by no means the trouble-free love; but a new version of “mad love”. Brontë shows her preferences to be revenge and grief, unrifled by the senses and emotions, left to run wild unto death itself. This idea of “mad love” is itself new to the Gothic literature and is characterized as animalistic at times, as author Diane Long Hoeveler describes it to be (191). But in this respect that is how Brontë changes her first female character from the typical female victims of Gothic literature; their “mad love” creates victims of both participants: both she and Heathcliff are not left untouched. From the beginning, these characters are made unique by their personalities: “Even as a very young child, Catherine does not fit the Victorian standards of the docile, submissive child. She is described as a ‘wild, wicked slip’…As a child [Heathcliff] too is depicted as socially rebellious and unacceptable” (Hoeveler 190-1). Making their initial personalities strong and wild allows for their natural connection to take shape just as quickly. Hoeveler is able to point this out, and show that Brontë creates Catherine and Heathcliff to be true forces of nature. With such a portrayal, their “mad love” is made possible because of their wild personalities and untamable characteristics. To make it worse, their love must have deeper consequences. This is shown in the second generation, when Brontë is able to make her stance even more unique. As she allows the daughter of Catherine, to once again become the victim of the same man she twisted her own fate with: “Heathcliff victimizes young Catherine by abducting her and mistreating
her until his death” (Viera 28). In this manner, the method of victimization is once again clearly shown; but changes to show Heathcliff in being the final sufferer, as young Cathy survives the process and proves her torturer in the wrong. She outlives and shows herself to be a survivor, not a final victim. Thus Brontë makes her female characters different in their approaches to life, death and survival. Showing that the initial roles society place on them can be changed and mutated, that these female characters are not defined by them but can instead define these very roles.

This initial treatment of the Gothic theme through victimization is merely the first layer of course, because Brontë uses this cultural perception of women and the already established marginalized roles in fiction to twist them around and show something new. Just as she does the same with the settings of her novel, which become singular in their positioning of what the new Gothic could really represent. Beforehand though, it must be established that the haunted aspect is different in Wuthering Heights than in other Gothic literature, where haunted castles are the usual beginning: “Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights is set in the nineteenth century English countryside, quite unlike the earlier Gothic novels. Readers of the novel, however, are not intimidated by Brontë’s innovative setting: the English manor house” (Viera 10). That in fact, is the fresh face of the Gothic haunted theme as Brontë changes its meaning from the expected into the unexpected. Wuthering Heights is not just the main setting of the novel, but it becomes its own innovative trademark. Not a haunted castle but an English manor with a full history: “That Brontë’s narrative takes place in a typical nineteenth century English manor is innovative in that it brings the setting of the plot from the desolate castles and
monasteries into a familiar locale” (Viera 11). Brontë is able to make the unexpected more eerie in the novel because of her use of familiar locales. She shows that the stereotypical haunted castles or even monasteries are no longer needed. The English manor becomes haunted not by its past, but by its present and future and all the struggles that are overcome within it. And while this setting may make a new break for the Gothic theme, it is nothing new to the author. In reality, it is one of the few certainties of what connects the novel to Emily Brontë’s actual life.

What cannot be erased, are the certain backgrounds that stay with Emily Brontë throughout her life, and do not change even in her fictional works. Brontë goes as far as to name the mansion of the novel Wuthering, which holds its own detailed story that foreshadows the importance of it as well: “‘Wuthering,’ we are told, is ‘a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather’… The application of this landscape to the characters is made explicit” (Schorer 44). Stormy weather and an atmosphere in turmoil is indeed the depth with which the landscapes and characters connect. And those are the backdrops that serve to inspire not only the characters of her work, but also the readers who aspire to imagine these scenes as Brontë describes them so vividly. For it is these few but unforgettable locations that are found within Wuthering Heights that are focused on in all film adaptations one way or another, forming a strong link in the chain of what remains similar as each adaptation strays further into the time and space that separates itself from the original work. Locations such as Top Withens, a remote and abandoned farm that Brontë would have seen not far from where she grew up, to High Sunderland Hall,
another building Brontë was accustomed to seeing in her hometown, and even the more well-known Ponden Hall from that same home town, all show their similarities in architecture, location, and design to be the very inspiration for the farmhouse Brontë came to call Wuthering Heights in her novel (P. Thompson, “Wuthering Heights: The Farmhouse”, The Reader’s Guide to Wuthering Heights). Thus an inspiration for a new Gothic comes from several inspirations that Emily Brontë looked upon herself, in or near her hometown. What is more than just the location and inspiration of Wuthering Heights itself are the other backgrounds that become characterized with this novel. For as Viera previously stated, Brontë has started the process of reshaping Gothic literature by transforming older elements, and also by twisting in new ones. In this case, the aspect of the haunted backdrop is moved from the usual inside dwellings such as castles and monasteries, to the outside. This move is very important to Brontë herself, as one of the few great loves of her life is the outdoors. Therefore it become more than just another setting in the novel, it transcends into a new meaning of Gothic by first establishing the importance of nature as something other than itself: “Nature is the silent witness. Changing emotions, all intense, characterize the protagonists in the human drama. Sometimes there is harmony between setting and action” (Duthie 202). The importance of this is that the main characters of the novel are typically going through intense and wild emotions; therefore the setting to their emotional changes develops into its own haunted landscape, that of the moors. As is depicted in every single adaptation of Wuthering Heights, when Heathcliff and Catherine are at their wildest and most passionate moments, they are outside, usually in the moors and with dark weather in the
background. These are key examples of how that adaptations are leaning towards a representation of Brontë’s Gothic.

In youth and growing up, such were the settings to Emily Brontë’s own life and happy childhood memories, and as a result the basis for her imaginative prowess. The moors become familiar to the novel as something haunting and terrible, when originally they were just an inspiration from her daily life: “Emily’s novel of moorland life is the most forceful representation of the contrast between primitive and the sophisticated in the Brontë works” (Duthie 25). The primitive is what makes the moors so singular and symbolic to the new Gothic theme, and not just become of its strong connection to her life. The moors originally meant something different altogether, for Brontë went to them in her life not just to be outdoors in solitude, but to feel something else entirely. Critic Charles Simpson introduces this deeper meaning:

Emily cared little whether the moors greeted her with storm or sunshine…They alone saw her meditations of solitude. She stood so often before them, with all her hope in life centered on the freedom they gave her, that something of her character can be gauged more truly from the moors themselves than from any repercussions it has left among those with whom she lived. Some people find the reflection of their very selves in such scenes as now described rather than in any relationships with those among whom their lives are cast. Emily’s was such a nature. (114)

Simpson’s meticulous analysis of the deeper significances of the moors depicts just how vital they were to Brontë, and therefore the reason why she made them so essential in her
novel. The moors were a break from home and its troubles; they gave her the ability to peacefully meditate in their solitude where she could do nowhere else, even if outdoors. Above all else, it meant freedom. A break from duties and responsibilities, from rules and standards, the moors signify a sort of liberation. In such a way do they become legendary; they are a force of nature to be reckoned with because they allow an inner reflection that can be both freeing and untamed. These are the very experiences that molded Brontë even in her reclusive lifestyle, and therefore she molded them into her novel and made them the haunting backdrop that now is so autonomous with the Gothic narrative. Her characters can lose themselves in the moors, and the future film adaptations can no longer go without a representation of the moors because of it. To be lost is to be free, and for Emily Brontë, that means to be in the moors. So whether it is Catherine running into the storm after seeing Heathcliff disappear into the moors, or an insert of the author herself roaming the moors while dwelling on her characters who could also use the location to their advantage, the film adaptations take keen notice and insert these examples to connect back to the original text.

In such a manner, the lifestyle of Emily Brontë shows a woman that was not deterred by the constricted rules Victorian society laid down. From her early age, it was her imagination that set her free when nothing else could be allowed. Creating fantasy worlds with her siblings; that is not only what made up her happy childhood memories, but what instilled in her a different perspective for the darker ideals of hatred, revenge, and most of all death. Then with the grasp of Gothic in her reach, she made and molded it in her own fashion by not just including same old themes, but by making them different.
Brontë makes the victimized women stronger and changes the haunted castles to something else entirely: a typical English manor with something more potent in its backyard. That something stronger was the moors, which inspired a new aspect to the Gothic, and a stronger connection her own life. These are unique firsts that Emily Brontë was able to establish, and most of all they are strong signifiers of the parallels between her life, her inspirations, and her novel. The film adaptations are thus likely to include scenes that reflect on the background connections, thereby creating the beginning of this solidifying chain.
CHAPTER TWO: DARKNESS LOOMS WHEN CRITICS CALL

*What vain weather-cocks we are! I, who had determined to hold myself Independent of all social intercourse...was finally compelled to strike my colours.*

-- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 33

When *Wuthering Heights* was first published in 1847, it was far from a success, critically or commercially. Emily Brontë lived for another year after the initial publication, but it was enough to psychologically wound her, as her sister Charlotte, would later state (Crandall 127). Wounded not only by lack of acceptance but by the immediate onslaught of negative reviews, of which five were found in Emily Brontë’s desk after her death, striking the final blow of how close to heart she took the criticism (Crandall 136). Yet the step to bring her manuscript into the public’s notice was a grand one that required extreme amounts of persuasion by her sisters. And in the first rounds of refusal and fear, Emily Brontë showed her position to be that of apprehension not just for the success of her novel, but of the reactions that were sure to come. Even still, as sister by sister began to put their work out into the world, Emily Brontë was not slow to follow. Especially in the light of Charlotte Brontë’s triumph with her first novel *Jane Eyre*, which became a sensation as soon as it came out. And in all future comparisons, it would
become the first book *Wuthering Heights* would be compared with as well. Even still, the time came when the family’s literary endeavors could be denied no more, and so Emily Brontë joined her sisters’ ranks. It is most essential to grasp the consequence of this decision and what led up to it, as it also shows the apprehension into which the novel was born and which surrounded it for quite the while. Afterward, when their novels transcended into film adaptations, the works of these sisters would be put together as their overall legacy. Their antiheroes and unique female characters put under the same category, and sometimes visually interpreted in the same way as well. Nevertheless, it all started with the sense of dread and trepidation that Emily Brontë and her sisters had to overcome, for these future comparisons to then take place.

The problems facing its publication were many, as Emily Brontë’s chosen publisher failed her in more respects than one: “Emily’s (and Anne’s) publisher, Mr. T.C. Newby, Mortimer Street, London, was not only financially dishonest but morally irresponsible. *Wuthering Heights* was published under a cloud of crooked financial maneuverings; publication delays; intentional falsification of Emily’s identity and typographical errors” (Crandall 126). So not only was it a struggle for Emily Brontë to work up the courage to agree to publish her manuscript, putting it out into the world was even more of a tribulation. The constant delays in publication were one thing, but then he even required the Brontës to pay a sum up front; and on top of all that, Mr. Newby never kept his end of the bargain with the number of copies to be put in print with the first edition, nor with the correct name which became a big issue all by itself (Crandall 126). For Mr. Newby waited until it was certain how successful *Jane Eyre* was, to push the
identity of Charlotte Brontë’s pen name over Emily Brontë’s own pen name. This was intended to suggest that Charlotte Brontë was also the writer of this second novel now, so to allow the acclaim of one novel help sell the other. As it was, the sisters were already setting up barriers between themselves and their creations, what with Charlotte Brontë taking on the pseudonym of Currer Bell, and Emily Brontë taking on Ellis Bell (N. Thompson 43). That was the common practice for female writers at the time, to not just shield their identity but their gender, so as to not cast a shadow on their works before ever being read. But when the publisher started hinting towards Currer, it felt as if Emily Brontë had been displaced twice over. It took a long time to undo Mr. Newby’s damage, as it was not just his unprofessional neglect of the manuscript but also the mismatched identity, which after Emily Brontë’s death, her sisters had to work hard to salvage. Charlotte Brontë had to write a preface to the new editions with an emphasis that she did not help with her sister’s novel in any way (N. Thompson 43). The integrity of the novel’s origins unfortunately though was already cast in doubt. Into this cloud of publishing chaos and confusion, the first reviews of the novel began to surface. Even worse, the general opinion of these reviewers was not any better than the inauspicious circumstances in which the novel came out.

Sexual prejudice was not the only issue at stake, however, because regardless of which pseudonym the public believed the book was published under, both names were still those of men. The double standard though evident could not be more than a denied fact of this era, where many agreed to the statement made by a popular editorial of the 1860s called The Saturday Review: “And as a rule, the mass of women writers do write
badly...At the first blush, they seem to have many things in their favor. In the first place, they are refined and tender-hearted...No woman would think of letting a character in her novel be a genuine hero who was cruel to flies, or who did not like babies, or who did not hate treading on a snail” (N. Thompson 42). This exaggerated statement that ridicules women for being too sensitive in the creation of their protagonists was one of the common reviews published in constant periodicals up to the time *Wuthering Heights* was coming into play, and quite the while after. Yet to imagine this lack of chutzpah on behalf of female writers not only pointedly highlights the exact outlook Victorian society had towards gender roles at the time, but goes even further to ridicule the possibility of those who strove to break the barrier. As Emily Brontë not only pushed this barrier by being one such female author, she also instilled these qualities into the structure of her novel. After all, the narrator of most of the novel is one Nelly Dean, a lowly female house servant who gets to have a voice and show her attitude and opinions throughout the storyline. Thus showing that not only can women write creatively but they can also let their novels open up new opportunities. If only the world had known the true identities of these authors publishing works everyone accepted as that of creations by men. Especially when it came to Emily Brontë’s own work; which when finally published, simply shocked the public by its disturbing antiheroes and unequivocal violence. Critics and the public alike had no doubt whatsoever not only that a man had written the novel, but that it was impossible for a woman to even have fathomed the ferocious depths to which the plotline captured and held the readers: “*Wuthering Heights* was thought of as overwhelmingly masculine...explod[ing] the safe and idealized domestic world
represented by Victorian women and portrayed in conventional domestic novels, with its story of frustrated love, violence, and death; its strength of language (its intensity and its profanity) reflects the unconventionality of the plot” (N. Thompson 44-5). The very themes of this novel tear apart the convention of the fictional genre with such raw ideals and quite frankly, as many reviewers focused on, the intensity. These negative qualities are surprisingly what future filmmakers look into expressing the most vividly in their adaptations, as director Andrea Arnold did in her 2011 version of *Wuthering Heights*. Some of the earliest reviews went as far to suggest this novel was even shocking for a male mind to have created, and thus the stage of bafflement began for a public not ready to understand or be able to grasp this intensity.

From its first edition, *Wuthering Heights* could not be easily labeled with one genre, or specifically defined under one theme. The first onslaught of reviews took to comparing Emily Brontë’s work to her sister’s, with many reviews going along the lines of this one written by *Paterson’s Magazine* in March 1848: “We rise from the perusal of *Wuthering Heights* as if we had come fresh from a pest-house. Read *Jane Eyre* is our advice, but burn *Wuthering Heights*” (P. Thompson, The Reader’s Guide…). This spiteful comparison to *Jane Eyre* was followed by the reviewers tearing apart the storyline, by expressing how the reviewers felt after reading such a novel. Similar to how the *New Monthly Magazine* stated their opinion in their January 1848 review: “*Wuthering Heights*, by Ellis Bell, is a terrific story, associated with an equally fearful and repulsive spot. It should have been called *Withering Heights*, for anything from which the mind and body would more instinctively shrink, than the mansion and its tenants, cannot be
imagined” (P. Thompson, *The Reader’s Guide…*). Once more showing that the shock of reading such a different storyline was not so easily received with a positive attitude, instead it created a desire to be turned away even further. The shrinking away as if by instinct due to the reaction of this novel is a strong assault on not just the storyline, but also the style that makes *Wuthering Heights* unique. As an alternative to recommending the novel, many reviewers strongly suggested that their readers avoid this very experience. Shocking, horrific, repulsive, and above all else, always strange: such are the common adjectives highlighting all the early reviews.

The explanation for this reaction could be that there was no proper introduction or preface to the novel, a lacking factor that Charlotte Brontë quickly fixed by the second edition (Crandall 128). It was indeed the common practice for authors to introduce their works, even if just to shed light on a character or more difficult subplot. However Charlotte used this as an opportunity to introduce the real author of the novel and everything the novel meant to her sister before she passed away. Yet that alone could not stand to be the whole explanation or even close to the full truth; when in actuality, the reasons could be many. Foremost of them was the novel’s challenge to Victorian society’s ideals that heavily preached towards morals and proper behaviors. *Wuthering Heights*’s characters were not civil and representing the highest qualities of social hierarchy, but instead extremely volatile and prone to low-class mannerisms even when born into well-to-do families such as Catherine Earnshaw (later Linton). Religious beliefs were fashioned into mystical and supernatural themes instead, where the powers of death and afterlife overruled any sense of the acceptable. What was even more shocking to the
general public was that Brontë made Heathcliff closer to the villain than the hero, as he was so obvious the center of the novel’s plot and therefore should have shown a clearer consciousness and higher standard of morals, than he ever did in the novel. No one could quite get past that idea of this new antihero brand, or by pushing Heathcliff’s unacceptable mannerisms onto the female characters, showing his malevolent influence spreading, “The Britannia’s reviewer is alarmed to note that the female characters in the novel actually engage in physical fights” (N. Thompson 47). The very traits that made Wuthering Heights so unique had the society unable to grapple with a better understanding of how this could be so, how evil could not be met with good in the end and how brutality could spread so quickly.

Charlotte Brontë took steps to rectify this situation with the second edition, by not only including a preface that clearly stated the mindset of the novel but also the real author’s identity. In this way, the hope was to show to the public that this overly masculine and violent novel was indeed written by a woman, which regrettably only made it worse: “If Wuthering Heights by Ellis Bell was too coarse, too suggestive, and too pagan, Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë would clearly be open to charges of monstrous sex-role transgressions” (N. Thompson 52). Shock placed upon shock, the literary world could not even begin to grasp how a female mind could come up with such horrors, going from descriptions of the strange to the unnatural. That is when Charlotte Brontë goes even further to try and salvage her sister’s reputation, by describing her as the perfect stereotypical ideal of a Victorian woman and then placing the blame elsewhere: “In an attempt to exculpate Emily from any accusations of coarseness and
immoral lack of femininity, she depicts her sister as the helpless victim of artistic inspiration” (N. Thompson 53). Inspiration is the cause of this novel, not Emily Brontë’s own creative and strong willed imagination. What one must accept that while Charlotte Brontë was trying to help her sister, she herself was constricted by the conventions of her time, and this is shown again and again by how Charlotte compares her sister to a victim of circumstance and inspiration. One case in particular can be seen in the 1850 introduction in which Charlotte clearly compares Emily to an unknowing reclusive nun “I am bound to avow that she had scarcely more practical knowledge of the peasantry amongst whom she lived, than a nun has of the country people who sometimes pass her convent gates…Having formed these beings [Heathcliff and Cathy] she did not know what she had done” (N. Thompson 54). Both sisters were products of their era, and in their own ways they fought to go against it and prove their connection at the same time. In such a way, no matter how detailed and poignant Charlotte Brontë’s introduction to Wuthering Heights was, society was either ready to pounce on its uniqueness or be further horrified by it.

Surprisingly this did not take all that long either, for the most negative criticism had come to pass in that first wave alone. Furthermore, the world outside of those early British reviews was not quite ready to put this novel aside just for its strange and wild qualities. In America, the novel happened to sell much more quickly and with a different handle on its radical subjects: “Wuthering Heights evidently enjoyed a certain notoriety from the first. Its impact was considerable, particularly, it seems, in certain circles in America where it appeared within a few months” (Hewish 162). Not only did those
American circles begin to discuss and spread the word on this unique new British novel, but they started to dive into diverse issues of analysis, besides that of simple shock: “Our object has been simply to warn the young, whom these ideal personages of *Wuthering Heights* are so strongly impressing” (Hewish 162). This particular excerpt biography writer John Hewish was able to find in an early editorial from the popular *American Review*, which raved about the ingenuity of the plot and characters, and only worried how strongly it might influence the younger generations to act in the character’s mad ways. To think that someone could not only accept Brontë’s novel, but to believe in its powerful influences, well that is a wondrous turnabout indeed. Not to mention that American reviews found other critical issues to highlight as well, “Emily Brontë’s narrative was admired in pictorial terms, such as ‘keeping’ and ‘chiaroscuro’. Nor was the quality of her writing in detail entirely neglected” (Hewish 162). This public was able to grasp at the deeper ideas and concepts of the novel, and to push innovative interpretations much more quickly than could have been expected. The difference between the American reception of the novel and the British might lie in the very differences of the two societies. Where the British fought the intensity of the main characters and how Emily Brontë’s plotline went against strict Victorian social expectations, the American society may have been more open to the idea of a antihero who could not be categorized so easily into a rigid class system. Or even a female character such as Cathy, born into a well-to-do family, fight for her love with this classless Heathcliff, even as she could already establish herself with the upper-class gentleman Linton. These circumstances that Emily Brontë opened up with her narrative show how a society might interpret these class
divides and battles against norms one society recognizes as proper, while another as outdated. In fact, the two American adaptations tend to downplay these very class issues that other British film versions will focus in on very carefully.

Regardless, social expectations were lowered so as to better enjoy the strong narrative with all its intense details and radical comparisons. The existence of the work therefore began to drift out its initial cloud of confusion and finally into its stage of critical interpretation. It began to be called the rediscovery of *Wuthering Heights*, for with the second edition published three years later in 1850, it now seemed a world apart from its initial dismal circumstances. Under Charlotte Brontë’s guidance and with a new publisher, more range of readers worldwide, and an already established notoriety, another chance was given for this work to be discovered anew: “In a sense Emily Brontë’s public existence had commenced, her personality had made itself felt in its own distinctive way” (Hewish 163). That distinctive way that has come to be autonomous with antiheroes remade in the vision of Heathcliff, with haunting visions of nature such as the moors, and above all else a show of power in the most intense expression of emotions rather than a dedication to social decorum. What changed for the public to switch modes and see the strength of the narrative and not the shock of its themes? Similar to the production and reception of movies in the modern age, it starts with proper advertising and goes as far as to bring nations together on interpretation and not scandal. Through this analysis of early reviews, it can now be understood how the public changed their mindset. From the conversion of their first reaction of shock to a growing fascination with the strength of the narration and distinctiveness of each character, *Wuthering Heights* created change.
CHAPTER THREE: TWICE DID AMERICA

“No, God won’t have the satisfaction that I shall,”

He returned. “I only wish I knew the best way!”

-- Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights, 61

To put the situation into perspective, British adaptations of Wuthering Heights have come out in much greater numbers than from any other nation; each having a solid place in the popular culture history connected to the novel. By contrast, there are only two American films that interpret Brontë’s tale, and each one is drastically different from the other. With regard to the concerns that guide the British adaptations—such as fidelity, restraint, social roles placed upon women, and a stamp of the time into which each movie was made—the only element that informed the American films completely was the last. For if nothing else, American cinema or more specifically, Hollywood cinema shows its interpretations to be much more ostentatious and always attempts to bring in aspects of charm and magic into the spotlight, even into such a dark tale as Wuthering Heights. This is where one of the starkest contrasts comes into play between British and American adaptations: “In part, British adaptations were different because, at the time, British film did not share many of the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema. Intentionally resistant to Hollywood’s ideals of glamour, British film represented women less in terms of their desires and desirability than in terms of their social roles” (Brosh 66). Simply put,
this first standard of pushing forward glamour, focusing on women as desirable creatures appealing to a general public with over the top representations rather than ideological perspectives, separates American adaptations from the ideals of British adaptations in which, in place of the dramatic, a focus would have been pushed on fidelity and social structure.

Not only do different criteria apply to different cultural interpretations of *Wuthering Heights*, but also there are differences in terms of remaining true to the spirit of the work rather than the entirety of the storyline. That will be quietly suggested or addressed over in a few parts of upcoming British adaptations; but for the following two American adaptations, it is a necessity all its own. To express the larger ideas and overall spirit of Emily Brontë’s novel is one of the driving goals that are clearly expressed by the filmmakers of these two versions. When it comes to culture, it is indeed an evolution all its own and it adapts to its surroundings in such a manner: “That is why this particular story has changed over time and with new contexts…Like evolutionary natural selection, cultural selection is a way to account for the adaptive organization, in this case, of narratives. Like living beings, stories that adapt better than others (through mutation) to an environment survive” (Hutcheon 167). Hutcheon’s unique way of looking at this process of adaptation, takes into consideration the key element of mutation. This evolutionary theory applies another aspect not just to the adaptation process, but to the novel itself. Emily Brontë’s narrative illustrates the deep-rooted battles of class and structure, which are depicted in the older and more well-to-do families of the Hinshaws and Lintons. Only they are being rebelled against and in a sense, they mutate from the
changes of the first generation to the second, as Heathcliff brings about questionable backgrounds and wealth schemes, but also radical changes to these families’ social structures. Nothing is safe, but instead survival of the characters comes with change, and thus the survival of the film adaptations also comes about in this very manner.

A successful *Wuthering Heights* adaptation has been proven to not be solely a work of reiteration from novel to film, but instead a journey of revisions and changes to make it better fit the time period, film’s budget, director’s preferences, and expected audience reception of each version. Some adaptations, though as loyal as possible to the novel, remain marginal in the popular culture history because not enough attention was garnered and kept. And that attention is now the focus of these two American adaptations. One of the similarities is in the fact that the filmmakers and their entire production team aim to grasp specific fans through advertising tactics and stereotypical genre classifications to cater to their specific audience receptions firstly. The larger issue is the importance of keeping the spirit of the original novel alive and defending that perspective. Through these two scopes, a more focused scrutiny can be made on how and why American filmmakers interpreted *Wuthering Heights* in these two very different ways.

1939 Version:

The very first feature-length film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* was not even British. Director William Wyler produced this first version at the beginning of 1939, in black and white and running just under 100 minutes, making it the only extant monochrome version and the shortest one as well. In fact to this time, the idea of a
surviving black and white film is not seen as a negative fact but an overwhelmingly positive one: “The film is holographic; every frame, in narrative content and composition, contains the whole story. Wyler controls a black-and-white palette of exquisitely shaded tonality; even on a TV screen the luminously glowing whites, the engulfing blacks, and the shimmering grays eloquently express emotional and spiritual nuance” (Haire-Sargeant 170). This adaptation may be from long ago, but it represents the Hollywood glamour as it could not otherwise be shown out of its time period: lacking colors it is treated as an artwork with shades and shimmers to appeal to the emotions and spirit as any other aspect of the film. This artwork deals with its lack of color in a very direct and physical method, by making everything appear more dramatic and over the top, and literary author Hila Shachar touches up on these very details that depict this flamboyant element to Wyler’s adaptation: “The entire film seems to be consumed by an almost overt consciousness of visual display. Characters are constantly in melodramatic poses, their bodies in conscious exhibition. Landscapes and households are constructed as visual extremes, drawing on an aesthetic of excess that highlights the visual pleasure of such spaces as spectacles” (39). The filmmakers’ aim for visual pleasure thus deals out with ostentatious details to bring out this Hollywood glamour. For example, the scene where young Catherine and Heathcliff spy on the Linton family, in the novel they are simply spying on Edgar Linton playing and then arguing with his sister (Brontë 48). However in this adaptation, young Catherine and Heathcliff glimpse upon a magnificent ball taking place at the Linton household, full of beautifully-clad women in full length gowns, and men in dressy suits. There is an orchestra playing, chandeliers are everywhere, not to
mention the lavish decorations surrounding the entire dance floor. When the hounds sense the interlopers and attack, the party immediately stops and Catherine is brought into the midst of this glamorous event to be treated. Everyone stops dancing to look and express their sympathy for the young injured girl, and yet in her shock and pain, Catherine looks to her surrounding with open eyes of awe (Wyler, *Wuthering Heights*). With such grandiose details even in the midst of this terrible accident, the essence of film is portrayed in the visuals that serve their purpose to please the eyes where colors lack. This scene exhibits some of the Hollywood glamour that would otherwise fade away with time.

Furthermore, this *Wuthering Heights* starred actors from the Golden era of classic Hollywood, to solidify a more positive reaction from an audience already aware of their favorite actors taking place in the film. Laurence Olivier became the first and most iconic representation of Heathcliff, and Merle Oberon was featured as the more resigned and yet influential representation of Catherine. Also famously put into character role, David Niven showed the patience and refined qualities of the gentleman husband Edgar, and as the willful housekeeper and narrator, Flora Robson made the role truly her own. With such a shining group of central cast members, Wyler was on the good side of audience expectations, before the film even opened up to the public. The production team of the film was able to sell the movie before it ever came, because they could use society’s fascination and obsession with these actors: “The 1939 film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*…established the novel’s ‘meaning’ in cultural terms” (Shachar 39). This ‘meaning’ Shachar is referring to connects to how a novel or in this case, the film
adaptation, represents itself to the audience. When the film has not yet come out, there are few elements to play with, which is why the cultural aspect comes with well-known actors and their fame that can start to promote the film.

When they began advertising the film further, the message that Wyler wanted to get across with his production, was one of splendor even in the gloom of despair to which he pushed his characters. They printed posters with taglines such as: “SINISTER SHADOWS & BURNING LOVE”, using all caps so as to emphasis the grandeur of these two binary themes (“Wuthering Heights 1939”, IMDb). But it was more than just the themes of danger and love, it was the ideal audience they were trying to reach with this message. For in that period, that was what audiences desired most: fast action, well-known heroes, and catchy phrases to sell the movie: “William Wyler seems to have been hampered by Samuel Goldwyn, the producer who not only wanted to sell films but who also had preconceived ideas as to how conventional heroes and heroines were to behave” (Mills 415). Though Wyler pushed to make this production his project, he still fell under the pressures to advertise just as Goldwyn saw necessary: serving up to preconceived ideas of how the heroes were supposed to look and act. And yet when the movie was released, Heathcliff was just as dark and gloomy as Brontë intended him to be, only with a good deal more visual interaction and charming façade at that. Thus the conventional attitudes were addressed and appeased, and yet some artistic creativity was still left to Wyler’s liking. Considering this aspect, the audience reception was beyond expected: “Bibliographic records suggest that after the 1939 film, Wuthering Heights suddenly passed into general circulation. Brontë Society Transactions for 1939 noted that ‘more
copies of *Wuthering Heights* were sold in the three weeks after the first showing of the film than in any five year period since the book was published” (Stoneman 155). With this kind of cause and effect, it made the first adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* a most advantageous one for many reasons. Firstly, it created new interest for the original novel showing the power of adaptation in its most influential stage. Secondly, the financial endeavor was rewarded multiple times over, for it was not just the book sales that rose thanks to the successful adaptation, but also the actors, directors, and entire crew who were credited and awarded: “Wyler’s success, both popular and critical, is found in the fact that *Wuthering Heights* won the Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Screenplay, Director Wyler, Actor Laurence Olivier…[and won] The New York Film Critics Award in 1939” (Mills 415). So many nominations and awards made this film adaptation the most credited and recognized out of the entire history of adaptations done for *Wuthering Heights*. This amount of praise for one film adaptation goes to show that staying true to the entire plot of the novel was not as necessary as interpreting it in a more generalized to fit all audiences kind of manner. Furthermore, it made a time stamp all for itself because of its direction, its cast, its advertising appeals, and representation of characters. A time stamp that cannot be interpreted for any other era but that of the late 1930s.

The only acknowledged difference that even director Wyler wanted to weigh in on, was how much creative allowance he took to take this 19th century novel into their present day. He admitted that there were many sub-plots missing, the second generation (of young Cathy Linton, Linton Heathcliff, and Hareton Earnshaw) completely gone, no children were included in this storyline at all, and on top of that all he added in his own
scenes to spotlight specific themes more clearly or dedicate more glamour to the moment. For example, the end of the film does not close with Heathcliff’s death as would have been more probable, since there is no second generation arc. Instead, the Wuthering Heights housekeeper Ellen is told by the family doctor that he has just seen Heathcliff’s dead body outdoors in the snow. Only he fears he saw someone near the body as well, some form of a ghost, and that is when the doctor starts to second-guess exactly what he saw. At that point, Ellen interjects his second-guessing and exclaims: “It was Cathy”, and then she sees the vision of Heathcliff and Catherine walking away together into the snow (Wyler, *Wuthering Heights*). This could have been creative enough of a twist, but the filmmakers pushed even further to try and add the happy ending. When the doctor tries to calm Ellen down and insist that Heathcliff is merely dead with no afterlife vision, Ellen insists otherwise by saying: “No, not dead, Dr Kenneth. And not alone. He’s with her. They’ve only just begun to live” (Wyler, *Wuthering Heights*). To develop that idea, the film goes back to that vision of Heathcliff and Catherine together in the snow, and ends on them happily holding hands This finalization of their spiritual afterlife ends with the explicit vision of these characters who were so driven by passion and rage, now enjoying the peace of their happily ever after in death. Such a gothic element to add in on the importance of their spiritual life, even if diverting from the actual ending of the novel. However, literary academic writer Haire-Sargeant goes to explain there is a great reason behind this change from the novel: “In Wyler’s rationale for fabricating this scene we see his genius as a filmmaker…Wyler has shown both the spiritual connection of Cathy and Heathcliff and the terrifying emptiness of the universe for the one without the other”
(172-3). That is the allowance that Wyler takes to recreate the essence by adding in his own perspective here or there, to show that the tumultuous love of Heathcliff and Catherine deserves a happy ending, even if just in the afterlife. This break from tradition may have seemed shocking but was backed up financially and rewarded with audience approval. And to the very end, the message of the novel remains in the ideas so glamourously expressed in the film: that life is short and the range of human emotions can be shocking, but in afterlife everything connects.

2003 Version:

Now this is considered the modern-day adaptation, spun specifically for the younger generations to better grasp at its darker themes. Released in 2003 under MTV production and directed by Suri Krishnamma, it is a shockingly neglected adaptation for the reason that it was rewritten only to appeal to the MTV projected young viewers. Therefore the intended audience was the only target reception every recorded, branching out to a more open and general audience base never quite spanned out. However, by incorporating young actors whose careers were defined after this role, such as Mike Vogel as a blond version of Heathcliff, and Erika Christensen as a kinder-hearted Catherine, the approach to reach out to younger generations worked on this level. Only the intended audiences were reached however, because there was no connection outside of representing this as classic story retold for the young. Big changes were made that implicated not only the fidelity but also the essence of the adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, but director Krishnamma felt they were justified, again only for the reason that the younger generation would better understand if it was closer to home (*MTV’s*)
Wuthering Heights). Closer to home in this project’s perspective, meant bringing the
Yorkshire moors to the cliffs of a forlorn Californian beach, changing the outdated names
to shorter versions of themselves: such as Heathcliff becoming Heath and Catherine
becoming Cate. However in these changes of location, the aspect of the gothic is not
hindered, as the filmmakers now portray the wild and uncontrollable passions of Heath
and Cliff by the turbulent waves of the beach that they often find themselves playing on.
The uninhibited freedom that the moors offered its characters is recreated into the
Californian cliffs, and the sense of enjoying the unclaimed nature of this location is not
lost in the transition either. For example when Brontë first described the moors, it was a
secret getaway for the children: “But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to
the moors in the morning and remain there all day” (46). That first expression of joy that
the young Heathcliff and Catherine find in the supposed gloom of the moors that makes
them want to spend their entire days there, that is the same feeling of wonder that the
young Heath and Cate feel when they first venture out onto the cliffs. As they grow a
little older, the teenaged Heath and Cate escape to the cliffs more often to enjoy its
freedoms. One scene in particular that shows the importance of nature and its closeness
that Brontë initiated in her novel comes about when Heath and Cate stare out past the
cliffs, trying to glimpse where the ocean ends and the sun begins. Cate then expresses her
desire to leave and travel, see new places. But Heath turns to her and exclaims: “It is
better here... You have this place here where you belong, don’t take it for granted”
(Krishnamma, MTV’s Wuthering Heights). Heath expresses how grounded he feels to
their home on the edge of the cliffs, to the ocean from this side and no other, the hidden
caves they found along the shoreline that will remain their secret forever (Krishnamma, *MTV’s Wuthering Heights*). All these details that nature offers are his reason for staying closer to it, an important essence that may have started with the moors but have just as powerfully shown themselves in these Californian cliffs.

The biggest change of all was letting the themes correspond with music, each essential theme be it a message of hatred, passion, fear or loneliness, was portrayed in song by the main characters. One of the most successful songs of the film was the love ballad “I Will Crumble” that Mike Vogel’s Heath began to develop at the beginning of the film as he started growing feelings for Cate. Throughout the film, he adds lyrics and depth to this particular song, so as to show how his emotions for his beloved Cate are growing and changing. They also express the “mad love” ideal only through this unique perspective of lyrics, depicting how his need and attachment to Cate are forming into an untamed passion with possible deadly consequences: “If you want to sleep, I’ll pull the shade/ If you should vanish/ I’m sure to fade/ If you should smolder/ I’ll breathe in your smoke/ If you should giggle/ I’ll smile and pretend that I made the joke/ And if you should ever leave me/ I will crumble” (Krishnamma, *MTV’s Wuthering Heights*). These lyrics show a romance that is focused on depending on one another and in the cause of death; it implies the other will die as well. They are very moving words but they just as accurately portray the volatile and wild nature of Heath, his uncontrollable and unpredictable love for Cate that seems to end in death even when sung. Nevertheless, this addition of music aligned the movie adaptation with MTV’s preferences, and also allowed a unique new channel to advertise before it came out: by posting song samples to
promote the film. In this way, the time stamp was shown very clearly and did help bring in the projected audiences.

However the essence of the film had to be deeply argued for, as the narrative was cut down only to show the first generation, essential characters such as narrators Nelly and Lockwood were completely taken out of the arc, and most of all nothing British of the original novel remained. No accents, no Gothic landscapes besides the cliffs, no haunting farmhouses, for in this version Wuthering Heights is now a lighthouse. These aspects Krishnamma defended saying they were the new interpretation of an outdated piece. He meant for them to breach the distance between foreign shores and to romanticize new locations, for them to be just as Gothic in their sense, as the original locations, farms, and mansions (*MTV’s Wuthering Heights*). The idea of the fan community upheld any worries for traditional connections or previously upheld expectations, because the idea of knowing one’s audience ousted any other anxieties for a small TV production as this: “Different adaptations solicit different audiences or fan communities…There are also other dimensions to this ‘knowingness’ of the audience of adaptation, in addition to the awareness of the specific adapted text” (Hutcheon 122-3). That is the exact approach that was taken with this version, knowing the fan community and being aware of how far they pushed the adapted text towards their desired direction. In doing so, *MTV’s Wuthering Heights* enjoyed a smaller audience but has lasted longer in popular culture history because they knew their target: “*MTV’s Wuthering Heights* undoubtedly reached a wide audience during its air-time and subsequent release on DVD. MTV films are made with the precise intention for release on the cable network’s movie
channel and are thus created and distributed with a specific ‘young-adult’ audience in mind” (Shachar 113). Thus the target was acquired with Krishnamma’s adaptation, and well exceeded with yearly demands to be re-shown on television and constant sell outs of their DVDS through online distributors (Shachar 114). For this reason, *MTV’s Wuthering Heights* had created an influential effect. Through its hit songs and closer locations idealized by the American society, the ideals upheld by the director have resonated within the fan community more than the British adaptations that were marginalized soon after their release as a result of no strong hold on their audience or targeted fan bases. And what Brontë started so long ago with her themes of “mad love” and gothic revenge found an afterlife all its own, mutated and changed to appease a modern audience.
CHAPTER FOUR: IN THE BRITISH FASHION, SIX TIMES OVER

*I tell you I have nearly attained my heaven; and that

Of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me.

-- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 322

It is not often that one novel can inspire its own culture or ignite a fascination in the world that does not wither with time, as *Wuthering Heights* has. Though its origins are clouded in negative reviews, it is that sense of notoriety which those reviews created that sparked a public interest and eventually brought this novel its own unique reputation. This strengthens its grasp on the ever-changing world by giving rise to six British adaptations within some forty years, and showing each decade’s interpretation of the masterpiece as its own unique grasp on Emily Brontë’s timeless story. Critical theorist Hans Robert Jauss touches on this very idea of adaptations changing by way of interaction and thus creating a history of literary acknowledgement: “Put another way: literature and art only obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the producing subject but also through the consuming subject – through the interaction of author and public” (15). The indirect interaction of Emily Brontë with all her future readers has thus been solidified not only through her written word, but through each new adaptation that has aimed to reproduce her story with its unique characters and themes. The relationship between the original
literature and the culture of inspired art afterwards is exactly as Jauss says, a mediated process between what is produced and then consumed. Though more than half a century passed between the publishing of the book and its first adaptation, subsequent adaptations have been many and each one continuously prominent.

To reach the level of intensity that Brontë’s novel portrayed could indeed show that this story was far ahead of its time. As such, where Brontë came from and where her novel was first published might have taken the longest time to ground itself, as academic author Patsy Stoneman explains: “No one, it seems, tried to reproduce the novel in other media. I have traced no stage plays based on Wuthering Heights during the nineteenth century; Helen Hughes cites an American stage play published in 1914 but otherwise a silent film of 1920 seems to have been its first dramatic representation” (57). That preference though was not far from change, for with the New Women ideals and fights for suffrage and equality, social views on stereotypical gender roles were fast changing. Academic author Ann L. Ardis explains that this movement for change began when the New Women started to challenge the Victorian ideology of traditional roles for women: “They defied the domestication of middle-class ‘Womanhood’” (17). Ardis illustrates many different paths that these New Women took to display their freedom and endurance in a male-dominated world, one of which was writing in stronger female characters and having female authors stand by them (21). In other words, popular culture was changing with these demands, and where shunned female writers were once hidden in the margins, their true identities were now coming into full notice. And this was not only happening to the female writers, but also to their works that were considered too scandalous because
of savage and overly intense portrayals for their times. Now though, they were being read
with complete fascination and enjoyed by a new range of audiences: “It is notable that the
New Women who looked back to Emily Brontë identified with the writer rather than her
heroine” (Stoneman 57). It is essential to consider where each generation felt a
connection to *Wuthering Heights* and with main female characters such as the selfish and
untamed Catherine Earnshaw, the first step for the new audiences was to understand the
author first and foremost.

However, going back to the connection between author and reader that critical
theorist Jauss was referring too, well, these more liberal and independent women found
their stronghold on the independent mind that created the novel: “As with the New
Women of the 1890s, recent women are happier to identify with the writer” (Stonewall
233). That was the first step to accepting not just Emily Brontë, but her creation as well.
What is also feasible is that Brontë influenced future generations of New Women with
her revolutionary ideas of female characters who could not only show their strong
personalities as some other Victorian novels had already started to show, but to go wild
with them. Bestsellers of Brontë’s time already included unique females characters such
as Emily St. Aubert, the heroine from Ann Radcliffe’s popular novel *The Mysteries of
Udolpho*. However the idea that a female character could not just stand out of the margins
but step outside of social expectations, that was even more radical and yet extremely well
depicted through both Catherine and her young daughter Catherine (Cathy II) and their
fight for freedom to love and act upon whims and desires unheard of before. It is these
themes of uncontrolled freedom and “mad love” that puts Brontë’s novel into perspective.
for future generations to look upon and be inspired. Where before it was a clearly defined role, as Ardis points out, now it was in resistance to that role: “Novels that explore alternatives to the Victorian opposition between motherhood and monstrousness, novels that challenge more and more radically the ideological monologue of nineteenth-century domestic realism” (82). *Wuthering Heights* is such an example, because even as Brontë’s female characters take on the domestic life and do become wives and daughters and take on the household duties, they also fight these accepted Victorian society roles and complicate them with savage actions and manipulations, and extremely turbulent emotions that they not stop to show. This lets the readers understand the possibilities and consequences, and opens up a road to be fascinated with such a plot and attempt to reinterpret it many times over.

The first attempt to reinterpret this fascinating and revolutionary plot comes with an adaptation in the early 1900s, the first dramatic interpretation of *Wuthering Heights* in the form of a silent picture. Interestingly enough, while there is little remaining of this historical example, Stoneman is able to dig up some key-changing factors that help to jumpstart the future of upcoming *Wuthering Heights* adaptations:

The first extended treatment of *Wuthering Heights* in another medium was the silent film directed by A.V. Bramble in 1920. According to a contemporary report, the film aims: ‘To reproduce the story as nearly as possible in the actual scenes in which Emily Brontë set it.’ There is no known copy of the film in existence…The film was clearly very different from the sanitized Hollywood
versions of the 1930s. Interestingly, it was not billed as a great love story but as ‘Emily Brontë’s tremendous Story of Hate’. (114-5)

Regrettably though besides the records of this productions having been made and a few surviving stills, nothing else of greater details exists on the first silent film of Wuthering Heights. And yet without any other records of their cultural impact or financial success/failure, a palpable chain reaction does occur. The 1920 version opened up possibilities of interpreting the novel in interesting and innovative ways for the British society to strongly contrast their interpretations from the American society. This movement would then start with a blaze and include half a dozen radio plays between the 1940s-1960s, three BBC film versions that were sadly also lost in archives from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, and about ten more opera/ theater interpretations that spanned from the 1970s to the latest one in 2009(Stoneman 206). Even more incredible, that even though England may have enjoyed the first wave of popular culture with Wuthering Heights, it was not the only one. Besides those earlier American productions, many parts of the world were taken by storm with the regeneration of Emily Brontë’s masterpiece. First came a full Spanish adaptation in the 1950s, shortly followed by a Bollywood interpretation, a few French additions, as well as an entire Egyptian series based on the novel, and continuing on with Filipino versions and even a Japanese film (Haire-Sargeant 170). Where Emily Brontë’s novel was initially hated by its native Victorian British society, now it has become beloved by the world enough times for many different cultures to want to take a piece for themselves. Each time an adaptation is created and introduced to a new audience, the very essence of the novel transcends over to still carry
on the message Brontë started so long ago. And when all these vastly different media adaptations came to be produced, societies apart and languages away, the impact is felt globally.

However out of the vast popular culture of *Wuthering Heights*, few adaptations have been able to achieve recognition outside of their own country or immediate reception. Those that have can be clearly separated into two nations: British or American. And it is the British adaptations that are most well documented down the decades, with financial analyses and literary reviews, and even reports on social impact. But what separates British adaptations even further from American ones are the general approaches made to interpret the novel, which is what adaptation critic and esteemed literary author Liora Brosh reflects to be one of the primary separating elements: “The standard British film version of the novel has been a prime example of those pervasive qualities of ‘good taste’, characterized by restraint, the British cinema’s ‘negative reactions’ to the more dangerously flamboyant and vigorous aspect of Hollywood”(65). Common themes such as a stronger fidelity to the original novel, a show of moderation even for the most savage and violent of scenes, and an intentional value placed on the woman’s role in society and not as a self-driven individual are further elements that tie British adaptations closer together and distance themselves from the American versions. These themes will be traced in the six more publicized British versions of *Wuthering Heights* released between 1970 and 2011. Each one offers its own strong interpretation, but is still ruled by the conventions of its specific time period and social standards.
In 1970, director Robert Fuest created a version of *Wuthering Heights* that shocked many viewers. It was the first British adaptation that gained audience recognition immediately after announcing its well-established set of cast members, including the already renowned Timothy Dalton and Anna Calder-Marshall, as well as Judy Cornwell, Julian Glover and Ian Ogilvy. The director cemented a path with his chosen actors who all had experience in major motion pictures, but most importantly experience in British dramas on stage as well as on film. Fuest felt it a necessity for them to breach the media barriers if for no other reason than to reach more viewers (Haire-Sargeant 178). Furthermore Fuest reconceived Emily Brontë’s novel into an image he felt society wanted above all else: “The Gothic romance with Dalton’s Heathcliff a triumphant example of its menacing swashbuckling hero” (Haire-Sargeant 181). That was how the film was advertised before it came out, with a gothic background and ads showing the clear image of the swashbuckling hero and his tragic maiden. Beneath the posters were taglines in the same mode, such as this one: “The power, the passion, the terror of Emily Bronte's immortal story of young love” (“Wuthering Heights 1970”, *IMDB*). That was the first step to simplifying an overly-complicated theme, and adapting it into a supposedly acceptable format: “Because audience members react in different ways to different media…the possible response of the target audience to a story is always going to be a concern of the adapter” (Hutcheon 114). Thus the main concern of Fuest was how to get a truly dark and tragic story to appeal to a feminine audience, and he accomplished this by focusing on a few themes instead of the many. Case in point, when
literary critic writer Haire-Sargeant touches on how this director did not add those further complex plot twists and depths that the novel contains, it made his adaptation weaker:

“Fuest shrinks or altogether dismisses subplots that in Brontë add their own metaphysical overtones…what Fuest’s version does best is to show us how Brontë’s great story has become the type for a debased though appealing genre: the Gothic romance” (181). So when Brontë’s novel came out in the 1840s, these very themes of metaphysical desires and overly complex subplots were ridiculed and most negatively reviewed, and yet now if the film adaptation lacks them, it lacks the novel’s strength. However, Fuest made no assumptions who his target audience was because he approached the project through a customary consumer-oriented perspective, and it may be said that he was paid off with both high-selling numbers and even a Golden Globe nomination (Haire-Sargeant 181). The film is thus shown to be another product of its time ruled by the conventions of targeting audiences to better establish the financial success of the project.

Of course, this is no different than any other literary work that connects to its time period. In fact, it is very similar to the critical reception of the first edition of *Wuthering Heights* that was received exceedingly negatively. So much so, that Charlotte Brontë had to revise with a detailed discussion hoping to reach out to the readers and make them understand her sister’s novel through a different perspective, before passing any harsher judgments the second time around. Yet there are further less noticeable elements that still show the era into which the movie was made. These little hints can be seen in particular character depictions, design and costume preferences, and so on. Writer Lin Haire-Sargeant points some of these very examples out: “Perhaps because of its privileging of
the physical over the spiritual, visually this film is more grounded in the time of its making… The women’s hair is ratted up and varnished smooth. Men’s coiffures are early Beatles. Costumes—solid-colored, generally clean, always unwrinkled—are probably polyester” (179). There are small details that place the film in this specific decade, from the characters to the designs and costumes. Choosing Timothy Dalton, a rising star of the 1970s after all was not the only linking connection to its time period. Nor are the costumes and hair styles the only indicators either; as with Fuest’s preference for focusing on the physical, there are quite a few other indicators of this decade within the film. For example, when Catherine marries Edgar, her transition into a wealthier lifestyle is lavishly shown with paintings, jewelry, fancy dinnerware, extravagant garden statues, and so on. And all these details that Fuest focuses on so intently, they give away his time stamp as a result, because those particular things are regenerating their era and not Victorian England’s in which the novel takes place. They are not the essence of the film; but when noticed, it does put the film onto a timeline.

What is more the show of restraint in many of the movie’s scenes also points to the fact that it was a British adaptation. Pushing for the G (general audience) rate on the MPAA rating scale, that is only the first indicator. The attempt to reach out to everyone is also ideal, instead of excessively illustrating the violence portrayed directly in the novel, which would have lost many perspective viewers. There are many scenes where Dalton’s Heathcliff is meant to be cruel and sadistic as he is in the novel, such as in his teenage years when provoked, he not only had sharp replies but sometimes even cruder actions to show his attitude: “You needn’t have touched me!” he answered, following her eye and
snatching away his hand. ‘I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty’” (Brontë 54). This part from the novel is during one of his arguments with Cathy where he shows his vicious temper. Yet in the movie, when he says these same words, instead of showing the violent side that his character is capable of as in the novel, Dalton’s Heathcliff merely storms off the screen (Fuest, *Wuthering Heights*). Other examples of where he is meant to be violent towards Cathy, such as in the stable scenes and out on the moors, these parts are cut as well. They only show Heathcliff’s intentions but never the outcomes.

To replace the boundless violence, the motifs of untamed wilderness are given their full view; and at times when the violent or sexual acts are meant to be occurring the actors are put into the distant view, putting just the nature itself upfront to represent the actions instead. Thus the director shows his hand once more, with placing the emphasis on the physical once more, and he makes a true effort to do so as well: “Fuest was part of a growing trend to film on location, in this case, the Yorkshire moors. Add candy-colored, careening tracks and zooms and television-influenced longshot-close-up pulses, and Fuest would seem at first to blast…the restrained Wyler into sepia-tinged storage” (Haire-Sargeant 178). The locations settings, the emphasis on close-ups even when on nature or emotional portrayal of the actors, the attention to color and detail do serve as a drastic contrast to American director Wyler’s *Wuthering Heights* from 1939. It is not just the obvious monochromatic difference, but the style choices of each director that sets the movies apart not just by nation, but also by time period. Whereas Wyler did not give extra efforts to location backgrounds or even nature shots, , his distinctive golden era
Hollywood version instead paid more attention to dramatic exchanges between the characters, painting up each actor more than their surroundings. Even with this contrast, Fuest’s version shows a project that uses the illusions of Brontë’s “mad love” theme to spark a more stereotypical take with the gothic romance angle.

Another issue common to British adaptations that also happened to be well shown in this example was the overall role placed on women, that does not seem to have changed with the centuries. British double standards seem to stay intact, as Brontë’s ideals for untamed and self-involved female characters do not quite measure up to the implication that they can mean more for their society, “British adaptations of this period focused on the relationship of women to British society as a whole” (Brosh 65). Women are envisioned by this film as units to move and place as needed, to have higher value in the end for their surroundings. The male characters clearly control the scenes with their speeches and motions, “In this film, the magic triangle of sex is all male—Heathcliff, Hindley, Edgar—with females Cathy, Isabella, and Nelly often sidelined as trophies in the males’ strutting competitions for alpha position” (Haire-Sargeant 180). The relationship therefore of women to their social standing is more clarified, as they are continually used as pawns and not protagonists, their actions defined by their male counterparts, as writer Haire-Sargeant so clearly illustrated. For example not in one single scene of this 1970 adaptation, does Catherine initiate any contact with Heathcliff, physical or otherwise. Whether it comes to playing, following, stalking, kissing, hitting or anything else: Heathcliff always starts and finishes the sequence of actions. Catherine though holds her purpose as well in this ploy of gender politics, in which her survival
depends on who she marries. Scholarly author Patsy Stoneman clarifies this very point, because it is not just about the leading man controlling the scene, but the female in the background that has given him that power by choosing him: “Since as a woman she can possess nothing in her own right, she must marry someone who can. In romantic terms Catherine may seem perverse and self-destructive in choosing Edgar, but in economic terms she had no other choice” (Stoneman 120). With this transition that Stoneman opens up, from a natural and untamed passion for Heathcliff to a necessity for Edgar in terms of economic survival, the audience cannot only see but grasp at the twisted reasons behind such plot-changing decisions. There is one scene in particular though where her attachment to Heathcliff has to be clearly renounced so that Edgar can now take over. In it, Catherine is picking flowers while Edgar is carefully watching her, shortly after Heathcliff has vanished and she became ill because of his loss. Linton’s family took her in, and then in their moments together, Edgar pushed for his dominance not just by overlooking her but also by guiding her thoughts, such as when he says in this flower-picking scene, “He won’t come back, not now” (Fuest, *Wuthering Heights*). He is referring to Heathcliff, trying to make her move on, and she does as a result, she replies to him: “I will try to make you happy” (Fuest, *Wuthering Heights*). This push for dominance is evident, where first Heathcliff controlled the scenes and now Edgar does the same thing. This does hold true to the book’s narrative as well, and at the same time allows for the director to show the scenes where fidelity is not an issue.

The one key difference that sets this movie apart from its other British adaptations is this issue of fidelity. Fidelity from a novel to a film interpretation means to include the
main plotline and all the little subplots, the major themes and elements, and even the importance of the scenes and locations. Where most British versions are truly considered to be loyal to the original work, Fuest’s takes many liberties that would have been considered unheard of for its category, some of which literary criticism writer Liora Brosh touches on: “British adaptations have generally been viewed as more restrained and more loyal to their sources than Hollywood productions… ‘British adaptations have exhibited a decorous, dogged fidelity to their sources, content to render through careful attention to their mise en scène the social values and emotional insight of those sources’” (65). Having said this and set up that pattern for not only showing restraint but fidelity to the original source, as another relevant contrast to that of particularly Wyler’s Hollywood version, the careful attention to specific scenes might show a clear view of British social values, but it still does not hide the fact that the 1970 adaptation has left many parts out and updated quite a few others: “Novel and film can share the same story, the same ‘raw materials’, but are distinguished by means of different plot strategies which alter sequence, highlight different emphases, which —in a word—defamiliarize the story” (McFarlane 23). In short, Fuest’s version does achieve this status of defamiliarizing the story. It is very important to remember that this movie ignores many subplots of the novel to focus on the love triangle of Catherine, Heathcliff, and Edgar. Considering that the second generation is completely left out to focus on this primary love triangle, and not the consequences left upon their children. This film, moreover, avoids the essential spiritual/mystical theme by neglecting to touch upon the ghostly visits or Heathcliff’s haunting visions. Not only that, but Fuest’s adaptation also neglects to include the novel’s
original outside perspective supplied by Lockwood. These are all vital aspects that would have solidified the fidelity of this film version, but they were not included. This is where the tribulation of adapting with specific consumer ideals comes into play: “The other major danger involved in the motivation to adapt for a wider audience is that a certain responsibility is placed on the adapters to make the ‘substitute’ experience ‘as good as, or better than (even if different from) that of reading original works’” (Hutcheon 120). So sometimes the motivation to appeal to this wider audience is that the scope of substituted experiences do not quite add up, which is why the adapter faces a list of benefits and deficits. The benefits for Fuest added up enough that he did not have to worry as much about keeping loyal to the entirety of novel, as to maybe the spirit of it. In this manner, however small, the essence of Brontë’s writing may be fortified by certain aspects of this adaptation, as critics have tended to also analyze this version in terms of these scenes where fidelity is at question. The unique aspect though is that even though Fuest places emphasis on the physical, the importance of nature does still show the untamed wildness and violence when the actors cannot show it on screen. Furthermore, a developed social status for the male and also female characters shows that Fuest may have had his own vision in mind for Wuthering Heights. But the start and end of his process happened to revolve around audience reception on all levels.

1978 Version:

One of the strongest adaptations ever to be made, especially if considering the basis of fidelity to the novel’s plot, is the 1978 adaptation directed by Peter Hammond for BBC. Though its cast was less well known and production costs much lower than Fuest’s
version, this version was able to do something its predecessor was not: it dedicated the full screen time to develop not just the main plot, but all its sub-plots and themes as well. The idea of remaining loyal to an entire novel is not a clear-cut process either, there are many opinions present, to argue for how much constancy is necessary as literary theorist Brian McFarlane points out: “There will often be a distinction between being faithful to the ‘letter’, an approach which the more sophisticated writer may suggest is no way to ensure a ‘successful’ adaptation and to the ‘spirit’ or ‘essence’ of the work” (9). That is the divide into which Fuest and Hammond go, where Fuest did argue for the spirit of the work regardless of smaller deviations, Hammond maintained the idea that as little of the novel be changed as possible, that his screenwriters worked with the existing plot above all else. Thus came forth the project that is now considered the most zealous attempt to reproduce the novel in all of *Wuthering Heights*’ popular culture history as it strives to stay true to the entirety of novel, following closely each chapter, sometimes even line for line within the dialogues. Using Brontë’s actual language and dialogue helped Hammond make his adaptation true to the ‘letter’, as McFarlane exemplified. This was achieved by extending the length of one film into five parts, and therefore being now considered a mini television series. When it came out on DVD, it was actually called a television produced feature-length film, and yet when BBC showed this series on television, they broke it into a mini-series, so as to draw out more viewers with each portion (Hammond, *Wuthering Heights*). Where other films have also strived to change or adapt the antihero to appear more approachable to audiences, Hammond’s interpretation made Heathcliff truer to Brontë’s version: “Actor Ken Hutchison gives the bloodiest and basest rendition
of Heathcliff on record. Neither noble victim, vampire lover, brooding rock star, nor smirking action hero, Hutchinson’s is the hardest Heathcliff to love but, in the quotidian specifically of his flaws, the easiest to believe” (Haire-Sargeant 181). This adaptation allows for Heathcliff’s obsessive and turbulent love for Catherine be painted in full detail, leaving no part out even when it comes to his episodes of violent rage or undeniable greed.

Neither missing out on such previously forgotten yet essential characters as Lockwood nor forgetting to include the second generation to further depict the long-term consequences that Heathcliff and Catherine began, Hammond strove to address the sub-plots that were previously considered too complicated to adapt for the screen. In fact, he uses the sub-plots to develop his characters as fully as Brontë was able to do so in the novel. For example, due to the fact that he does not neglect Lockwood’s character, Hammond is able to show how Heathcliff interacts with this stranger and thus show his horrifying attitude outside of his established relationships with the Linton and Earnshaw families. One scene in particular, when Lockwood is staying the night at Wuthering Heights, and he encounters Catherine’s ghost while reading her diaries in her room, he is horrified and wakes the household with his screams. Heathcliff runs not to console his guest, but to show his terrible rage. He shouts Lockwood out of the room, and rages against the window and outside wind to see Catherine himself (Hammond, Wuthering Heights). His frustration, grief, and turbulent manner are keenly shown and stay very true to the descriptions of the novel, when Heathcliff also encounters Lockwood’s nightmare and wishes to meet Catherine’s ghost himself: “He got on the bed, and wrenched open the
lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. ‘Come in! Come in!’ he sobbed. ‘Cathy, do come. Oh, do--once more!’ There was such anguish in this gush of grief that accompanied this raving” (Brontë 29). These very details are entailed into the scene as Ken Hutchinson’s Heathcliff interprets this raving with just as many frightening tears and screams of anguish. Showing the depths to which this antihero can be pushed, not just as a gothic love interest, but as a man violently haunted by his past.

What is more, this 1978 version strove to make a stronger connection not just to the original novel but also to the author, and thus the production went to further troubles to establish this connection: “Faithful to Brontë, too, are the physical components of the production. Sets and setting have been designed to replicate not only the Yorkshire Emily Brontë created but also the Yorkshire in which she lived. In all of its artifacts, the film gives a vivid sense of time, place, and history” (Haire-Sargeant 182). Meaning that the locations of the real moors are not all as attempts are made to recreate Wuthering Heights by shooting in a real Yorkshire house. Also furniture is made to replicate the styles of old, all costumes are homespun, and even make-up is made to appeal to Brontë’s vivid descriptions (Haire-Sargeant 182). Such attention to detail and historical accuracy is a unique feat all its own, making this an adaptation bound to its legacy of remaining true and constant. And even setting the standard in terms of fidelity, for all other British versions to be measured by, the 1978 adaptation is a marker.

Though this adaptation does go to great lengths to show its loyalty to the novel and author, traces of the true time period in which it was made can still be seen. Due to
lack of proper financing, camera and frame shoots are often mishandled. When the emotional transformation of the actors’ faces during their most poignant scenes should be a close up; instead there are many obstacles in the way, some of which literary writer Lin Haire-Sargeant touches on as well: “Obscurity rules throughout this film. Actors’ head and feet are routinely cut off and we are left to follow their talking torsos…When there is an indoor shot, the fire roars. When there is an outdoor shot, the wind howls. Frames of shots often act more like masks, veiling what they are supposed to emphasize” (184). This makes the visual diversion an exasperating tactic, with all these distractions getting in the way of the most important parts. Restraint is also shown to once again reach wider audiences instead of curbing the reception possibilities with abhorrent violence, but also to remain true not just to the text, but the social implications placed on such a project as this. Hiring actors that would look the part such as Kay Adshead, John Duttine and even Cathryn Harrison, the production team allowed for the visual appeal to override the acting itself at times. Therefore showing another aspect of the filmmakers’ restraint, when allowing for the dedication to the script appease the actual dramatic scenes. The one element of intensity and pure rage that Brontë wrote into her novel may indeed be what this adaptation missed out on, “As it is, though Ken Hutchinson may be the only actor to have solved the problem of Heathcliff in a way Emily Brontë would have approved, his performance is history, and only history” (Haire-Sargeant 185). This shows that the performance of a lifetime is overshadowed by a cast not living up to its potential. The camera shooting experience is underperformed by lack of finances, and thus the filmmakers resort to tricks known only to the time period into which it was made. Above
all else, there is a restraint on movement and action that underplays the grandeur of the plot and its characters’ prospects, outside of emotional speeches. So where this adaptation can be commended on its dedication to its origins, as a masterpiece transcended into another art form it lacks the more exceptional qualities to survive: “Unavailable in commercial video and seldom shown on TV, the Hammond version of Wuthering Heights is sinking into a fate as murky as its soundtrack” (Haire-Sargeant 185). Though there are wonderful aspects to this version, there is unfortunately no appeal for it to last longer in popular culture history.

The impact still resounded to leave an effect on the social value that the filmmakers placed on women. The other aspect that rings true to the British culture: “British film represented women less in terms of their desires and desirability than in terms of their social roles” (Brosh 66). Those social roles are very well highlighted even in this adaptation; where every single female character has a defined position. Not even Kay Adshead’s interpretation of Catherine is able to break free of her existence in life, stuck to social conventions, which Hammond and his crew illustrate with her fancies for material possessions that a marriage to Edgar does offer her. The only chance at liberation that the female perspective is given is through death, which does show Brontë’s hand as well, and brings in the element of mysticism with the ghost of a happier Catherine than she was in life. But before her death, it is also shown that Catherine and all the other female characters are trapped by their surroundings, whereas Heathcliff is set free to travel and disappear off screen for a long period, supposedly getting richer with many unscrupulous schemes and conquests. The visual attempts to portray this social
construction can be most poignantly seen with food and hunger for its deeper implications resonate further than that, and this is something that Hammond achieves spot on even with misguided camera shoots. Author Patsy Stoneman cannot neglect to depict this deeper connection as well: “It represents starvation; she must eat to live, and, since as a woman she can possess nothing of her own right, she must marry someone who can. In Romantic terms Catherine may seem perverse and self-destructive in choosing Edgar, but in economic terms she had no other choice” (120). The deconstruction of such small actions as eating and living when taken apart do clearly show the gender roles as well. When refused or broken, the end result is death. These are the social implications that this adaptation is able to portray to stick with the ideology of women filling in for social value, and men for true liberation. Thus while a product of its time in reproducing the ideology of women as objects, and constrained by finances and social ideologies, Hammond’s 1978 adaptation is still able to define the route to fidelity while struggling with its many other inner deflections.

1992 Version:

Perhaps the most famous of all British adaptations is director Peter Kosminsky's version in 1992. Where Fuest was able to achieve global status with a well-known cast, Kosminsky achieved notoriety for controversial cast choices. The project was hyped on the glamour of famous actors that many considered not fit for their designated roles, with the fair coloring and complexion of Ralph Fiennes to stand in for the dark Heathcliff and the French star Juliette Binoche to represent the very British characters of both Catherine and her daughter (Alexander and Smith 194). This initial controversy did not subside
either, because what Kosminsky strived to do next was to create a loyal adaptation as well, only instead of leaning on the romantic triangle, he dove deeper into the supernatural and psychological elements that lie within the novel’s very themes. Where very few other adaptations strove to understand what Heathcliff felt and saw at the end right before his death, Kosminsky brings in one of the most controversial scenes of supernatural intervention to show an interpretation. In this scene, the dying Heathcliff walks into Catherine’s room and instead of seeing the actual physical surroundings of the room, he sees a bright light with the figure of Catherine’s ghost calling him forward. As he walks toward it, the film suddenly shows Heathcliff crossing the barrier and his ghost form coming out the other end, happily kissing his ethereal Catherine on their favorite spot on the moors (Kosminsky, *Wuthering Heights*). This paranormal interpretation of what Heathcliff saw in his dying moments and the addition of the lovers’ happy ghosts is pushing the boundaries of fidelity and creativity, but the director felt it necessary to push the themes into a full depiction of their possibilities.

This seemed very unconventional and therefore risky, but when it comes to adapting classics, Kosminsky may have had a point. A point that critical film theorist Linda Hutcheon also supports: “Themes are perhaps the easiest story elements to see as adaptable across media and even genres or framing contexts…Psychological development is part of the narrative and dramatic arc when characters are the focus of adaptations” (10-11). Establishing a strong foothold on the themes that can be transferred powerfully from text to film can be made that much more influential when the characters are developed properly to benefit from those themes. In Kosminsky’s case, psychology is
emphasized and with a push towards the haunting and gothic genre. Dreams, nightmares, apparitions and the afterlife fuel this adaptation as no other, thus bringing a different perspective to a stronger fidelity that others did not even think to attempt. Not by sticking to Brontë’s language and dialogue or by merely including the second generation subplot, but by using the strength of Brontë’s redefined gothic genre to the adaptation’s highest advantage. The animalistic magic and passion between Juliette Binoche’s Catherine and Ralph Fiennes’s Heathcliff carries the plot across and shows “mad love” just as Brontë meant it to be, with every emphasis on their turbulent emotions portrayed by darker strengths. Those dark strengths make up the psychological twists that push the bounds of the paranormal, and academic writer Saviour Catania exposes them as such: “Nothing is definite, for Kosminsky blurs the distinction between internal and external focalization. The result is a cinefantastic text where psychological and supernatural possibilities keep undercutting themselves in baffling Brontëan ways” (27). This idea of focalization to portray specific themes is also a new technique of the modern film tricks, thus establishing a link into the period of which this new adaptation was made, even as it is attempting to connect to Brontë’s themes of the past.

The modern aspect of the overall film is also fortified in this manner for Kosminsky applies a filmic trick of intensifying the emotions of the characters by condensing scenes, placing the emphasis on the moment of motion into a matter of seconds (Catania 27). This allows for the overall theme to hang over the parts that are meant to be poignant but instead run through quickly. Thus only allowing for the action, for the audience to just grasp at what emotions are being expressed or deeper ideas
shown, before it is onto the next scene. For example, when Heathcliff hears Catherine pouring out her heartfelt confession on whom and how she loves to Nelly, the one part that he overhears is: “It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how much I love him” (Brontë 80). In the novel, that is a heartrending plot twist because Heathcliff then leaves Wuthering Heights for a few years, and the readers get to see in detail how Catherine suffers in his absence. How she becomes very ill and depressed, and the slow climb to health that Edgar helps her achieve. Yet in Kosminsky’s version, it takes a matter of seconds for Catherine to grieve Heathcliff’s sudden absence, and then the audience is sudden thrust into her married life with Edgar. These sudden cuts are a filmic tactic, an unmistakable effort to fit into its time period by using these very methods: “This is the way we want our stories told these days…Now condensation, implication, collage are preferred in storytelling, visual or textual…In fact, Kosminsky’s cinematography is so much of the moment and in the moment that it is hard to isolate its most significant elements. Their kinship to the prevailing ideology—the hot quick fix of the ‘90s” (Haire-Sargeant 190). That is one of the main criticisms of this movie version, that even in its attempt to be true to the original novel, the context of its time prevails over it. The effort to include so much of the novel means to pass over the depths of Brontë’s details, as many previous adaptations have had to do as well.

However, where some descriptions of specific scenes in the novel can take up to twenty pages; in this version, they can take seconds. For example the childhood of Heathcliff and Catherine takes entire chapters within the novel, but here, it is a matter of minutes for young Heathcliff to be introduced into the Earnshaw family and then grown
up. These are the scenes and examples that critics such as Haire-Sargeant and Catania tend to pick up on and criticize for not giving its full artistic due. One most poignant scene where Heathcliff and Catherine are out on the moors enjoying the nature and freedom it offers, it takes only a few seconds to show what it means to them through Kosminsky’s visual portrayal, with Heathcliff’s short dialogue on their future and how nature can mold it. This is done as Ralph Fiennes’s Heathcliff chases Catherine (Juliette Binoche) on the rocks of the moor, and then when he catches her, he tells her to close her eyes. At that point, he quietly whispers to her: “If when you open your eyes the day is sunny and bright, so shall your future be. But if the day is for storms, so shall be your life” (Kosminsky, *Wuthering Heights*). It only takes a second for Catherine to open her eyes and laugh to see the sun. But as they turn their heads to see thunder growling in the background, and stormy clouds forming, Catherine fearlessly yells at Heathcliff and directly to the coming storm: “I don’t care! Do you hear? I don’t care” (Kosminsky, *Wuthering Heights*). That provoking few moments of speech signify everything of the untamed nature of their surroundings and their personalities. Kosminsky’s motive to make a point with only the barest of words, but even in those few words, the message still rings true similar to that portrayed in the novel.

The aspect of restraint thus is applied not only to the shortness of scenes to carry across the entirety of the novel, even including the second generation all into the length of 102 minutes, where Hammond’s five part TV series before strove to meet the same depth with more than twice the time. Restraint into the details and depths is one thing, but in the British favor, Kosminsky also shows restraint into the true violence of Heathcliff’s
actions. Instead he prefers to change his character to better fit the overall psychological mood of the movie, thus making him less volatile and belligerent, and more of the quiet sadist (Haire-Sargeant 185). Scenes that show Catherine hurting Heathcliff through her inconsiderate words of selfish actions, only has him reacting with vengeful acts after, but never in the moment. And though this is one of the few similar traits that connect Brontë’s representation of Heathcliff to Ralph Fiennes’ portrayal of Heathcliff, the visual showing of his quiet gloom and patient revenge make it that much more compelling for the audience. A restraint of sophistication it could be called, but also there is a new perspective applied to Heathcliff’s character: “Self-deception on Heathcliff’s part, a hallucinated vision emanating from his fiery kinship with Catherine and its deathly consummation” (Catania 26). How he might deceive at first only stands to show the strength of his character after, where his features and the close-ups on his internal turmoil suggest more than any act of violence might possibly have shown. Thus suggesting as Catania does; that towards the end of his life, all his deceptions to hide his real antagonism surface in the form of visions and hallucinations, so he can come closer to Catherine’s ghost, but at the same time hold his own ground with defiance in the still living form. This is another example of the film exemplifying the restraint necessary to depict a darker theme while meanwhile holding fast to Brontë’s ideals.

As for the social value British adaptations place on female characters, it is possible to say that Catherine and her daughter are still defined by the obligations society has placed on them. This opportunity for both generations has its strengths and weaknesses: “Kosminsky’s full portrayal of the second generation, with its opportunities
for repletion and confusion, does give a more complex rendering of the original than previous truncated films” (Stoneman 209). That complex rendering offers a more detailed viewing but at the same time, gives another great example for Kosminsky to exploit the social conventions with. However, the way Juliette Binoche represents each individual character shows this small break from the confines of gender roles; because throughout the whole film, she taunts and mimics and monopolizes her male counterparts. Though the film does stay true to the original narrative, there are changes that help to develop both Catherines more fully: as writer Haire-Sargeant comments, “More than in any other version, it is Cathy, not Heathcliff, who carries the film. First, the script gives her more development and power, in a balance with Heathcliff more closely reflective of Brontë’s intentions” (185). Binoche uses those unique abilities offered to her and represents them fully with a modern woman’s representation of a historically defined character. In portraying her life, it shows constantly where she laughs off Heathcliff’s advances, shocks her brother constantly, or even baits her new husband’s sister in the most wicked ways possible. In showing her death, her power grows as a ghost that haunts Heathcliff without end and even taunts Lockwood with memories of her childhood. It is with this unique diversion from the typical that Kosminsky’s adaptation is able to develop his female characters just as much as all the previous adaptations were able to highlight their male characters.

Though a product of its time with evident filming techniques and cutting revisions, constant shows of restraint, Kosminsky is still able to be loyal to the novel’s narrative, and goes as far as to even title the movie not just *Wuthering Heights*, but *Emily*
Brontë’s Wuthering Heights. This is a gesture to the past, a bow to the powers of the woman who created this work with all of its gothic themes and ideals. Though this perspective can also be turned around to show the filmmakers as being self-serving, by invoking the author to bring prestige to their version. And yet, not only do the filmmakers credit her name, she is also given a role in the film, as biography writers Alexander and Smith touch on: “By introducing Emily Brontë herself into the opening sequence, the film subscribes to the Romantic theory of literary inspiration which allows us to read the film as a fantasy of a single mind” (194). Kosminsky is able to add that personal touch with the authoress being in the movie, allowing the audience to make direct connections between the text, the movie, and the authoress in a truly Romantic sort of notion. However at the same time, a little more freedom is also given to the female characters as well as the freedom given to the authoress within her own work also signifies a break from social conventions altogether. Such practices make this adaptation all the more unique for revolutionizing relationships across all bounds.

1998 Version:

After such a grand showing and production of Kosminsky’s addition, it took only a few years before the attempt to recreate it was grabbed up once more. The next time was a television version with director David Skynner at the helm, casting lesser known actors into the main roles: with Robert Cavanah playing Heathcliff and Orla Brady playing Catherine. This adaptation succeeds in creating a more docile attempt at fidelity and restraint, hoping to reach out to the same audiences that flocked to Kosminsky’s version with the promise of a revamped edition(Alexander and Smith 493). Skynner
strove to keep the same appeal of authenticity with a realistic Wuthering Heights farmhouse location and more detailed scenes in the outdoors. Unlike any other adaptation, this one added more in-depth scenes on the moors, in the storms, on the fields and rivers to which Brontë herself dedicated many meticulous depictions. The landscapes were put up to much scrutiny because Skynner wanted the authentic look just as Brontë might have seen it: “The topography is equally precise. On going from Thrushcross Grange to the village of Gimmerton a highway branches off to the moor on the left. There is a stone pillar there. Thrushcross Grange lies to the south-west, Gimmerton to the east, and Wuthering Heights to the north” (Sanger 21). With such details the project was laid out with a plan for the movie’s fully mapped out locations, where not only is the stone pillar evident, but also the directions into town and towards the moors. This was an outstanding feat on the part of Skynner and his team, and did help to ground the very essence of nature’s appeal into the movie and the historical feel for precision.

It also creates a pattern that can easily be noticed and taken out of each adaptation, with the central scene of Heathcliff and Catherine on top of the moors. In this adaptation, they are searching for bird eggs and right before Catherine finds them and kisses Heathcliff for the first time, he tells her to trust him in guiding her to their location (Skynner, Wuthering Heights). This exercise of truth and faith ending with a physical embrace is the climactic scene to which adaptations tend to focus their theme of romance around, and as academic author Stoneman so acutely describes this: “‘Hilltop lovers’ motif which later became inseparable from popular ideas of the story” (Stoneman 116). This very motif of hilltop lovers is represented well by Skynner, for though he allows it
to happen and shows its impact on each character afterwards; he does not let it guide the entire film’s plot. No matter how inseparable this scene is with the natural and emotional impact, Skynner’s intent is to emphasize the spontaneous nature of their actions and surroundings: “This image of Catherine and Heathcliff, the lines of their bodies and the direction of their gaze repeating each other against the sky, offers us a picture of our own ideal identity, as one half of an inseparable pair who together take on sublimity. It is a picture of romantic love as a kind of heaven” (Stoneman 129). This is an example of how vital restraint is shown in this adaptation, never going further into their physical relationship other than the kiss, making the idea of “mad love” more symbolic. By doing so it also makes it less dark, leaning instead towards the sublime picture of heavenly experiences. Letting the audience participate in their experience, but not moving forward with the judgments of other characters, narrators, or even cultural expectations. Skynner accomplishes the duality of both expectations into this refined moderation as Kosminsky was also able to show previously.

Of course the impact of its time is also stamped upon this movie version. It can be seen in the costumes and make-up designs that are equal to the standards of 90’s ideology, the sequencing of events that are sewn quickly together in a chic style similar to that which Kosminsky relied on for the economic belief that time is money, only the emotional scenes are given their due and not as quickly hurried past (Haire-Sargeant 189-90). As a clearer effort for thematic rhythm and pace of storyline, Skynner also introduces the transitions between climatic scenes with music and a focus on the background, to clearly state a new sequence is coming on. Similar camera techniques and
tricks are all but efforts to make a full storyline run smoothly; but in doing so, they give up their time stamp as well. When it comes to the constrictions of British social standards, even in this modern interpretation such concerns are not abandoned. For while the desires and hopes of Catherine and even Nelly (her devoted caretaker) remain evident, in scenes such as where Catherine expresses a desire for newer dresses or Nelly for Heathcliff to stay away if just for the peace of her mind, they are few and far in between. The majority of scenes place these women as pawns, with Catherine being moved between Heathcliff, her brother, and Edgar, for who owns her and keeps her in the end seems to be the end goal. At one point, even Edgar presents an ultimatum to Catherine, saying that either she declare herself to be his and remain married to him in body and mind, or else he will forsake her (Skynner, *Wuthering Heights*). To be owned and considered as property; and the only way out, is shown with Catherine’s emotional down spiral towards insanity, illness, and death. Nelly, a smaller example but still just as clear, remains the housekeeper no matter how much she hates who owns the house she works for, she still works and services the house. Where she was loyal to Catherine in living, there was nothing left for her but to take care of Catherine’s child after, and that meant she was an asset to be moved with the child, when needed by those who owned their lives: first Edgar and then Heathcliff (Skynner, *Wuthering Heights*). These examples show that while an adaptation may be current, the themes of old still control the overall product. When it came to restraint and fidelity, Skynner delivered in full, he added no new interpretation of the social value for women though and was still defined by his time due to filming techniques and narration alternatives.
2009 Version:

This British addition to the popular culture of *Wuthering Heights* came in the format of the most unique interpretations of the novel, as it veered off the main course of interpretation. The creative differences taken though boils down to one reason, which Hutcheon comments on as well: “One way to gain respectability or increase cultural capital is for an adaptation to be upwardly mobile…Today’s television adaptations of British eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels may also want to benefit from their adapted works’ cultural cachet” (91). The cultural cachet that society was so fascinated with is indeed the focus of the film, whereas to make it “upwardly mobile” so as to reach more audiences, it meant to make that cachet more modern. Director Coky Giedroyc directed the 2009 adaptation as a two part television serial for the ITV network, and he cast actors Tom Hardy as a brooding Heathcliff and Charlotte Riley as a wild Catherine, before fame touched their careers. He made these new stars take on the pivotal roles but with changes to the narration and even their personalities, thus bringing up the issue of fidelity above all else. The reasons of course behind this choice of actors and styling of the film deals directly with consumerist demands as any other film would seek to meet, and as literary author Hila Shachar points out: “The story of *Wuthering Heights* is updated for a modern teenage audience with a young, good-looking cast, explicit sexualisation of relationships, a quick-paced storyline, and edgy music, lighting and camerawork” (146). The expectations of their target audience fueled the filmmakers’ every decision, thus fidelity was on the line between a little historical context and a wider breach of modernistic touches.
Giedroyc maintained that he was not simply following in the spirit of the novel, but he was taking Emily Brontë’s direct ideas and themes and giving them the modern interpretation, and this approach was backed up by the writer of this version, Peter Bowker (Giedroyc, *Wuthering Heights*). One thing the filmmakers decided to change was the time in which the movie took place, and Shachar notes this distinct change: “ITV’s *Wuthering Heights* ‘updates’ Brontë’s narrative by setting it a year after the date of its first publication, 1848, rather than the original date with which the novel begins, 1812. The story of *Wuthering Heights* is thus located within a distinct mid-Victorian society rather than a late eighteenth -century one” (147). The filmmakers changed up the time periods of Brontë’s novel to appeal to the wider Victorian society ideals, to align the Victorian genres in the novel more closely to its time period and not the 18th century (Shachar 147). But that was just the beginning; the filmmakers also decided to update the original novel to a more current ideology. They did this specifically by beginning the movie with a mystery; they erased the back-story of how Heathcliff was introduced and raised in the Earnshaw family, and instead start with how an older Heathcliff receives his ailing nephew (Linton) to be put in his charge. And then they develop the storyline from there, trying to give more room for the second generation to develop and leaving the tribulations and struggles of the first generation as flashbacks. So while they veer away from the complexities of earlier plots, they do give room for the smaller sub-plots in the novel’s later chapters to be fully examined. That is what Giedroyc and Bowker maintain to be the loyal interpretation of Brontë’s novel as it gives a new face to an older problem,
which many previous filmmakers simply avoided due to the frustrating structure of the novel’s storyline.

So in changing the course of the novel, this adaptation takes on the new course of tracking its fidelity through different alternatives. In one way, by going back to the idea that this story is not at all a love story but one of revenge and damage. Another way, by keeping the intensity of Brontë’s characters and including their violent downfalls. The hold on restraint is barely maintained, for both the volatile actions and even sexual encounters are shown to the viewers, but again only by distancing the viewers with cameras moving into the distance, lighting being turned down, and the framing edited to catch glimpses and not the entirety. These ploys help maintain a certain control over how much of the violence and passion can be revealed. And similar to all the previous adaptations, the filming tactics of this version also makes it a clear product of its time. The most obvious of these examples is the more current use of flashbacks: “The cinema is indeed capable of flashbacks and flashforwards, and its very immediacy can make the shifts potentially more effective than in prose fiction where the narrating voice stands between the characters immersed in time and the reader” (Hutcheon 63).

In these particular scenes, this more modern technique of flashing back to essential scenes or even at times to future to show consequences, actually help to smoothly regulate the transitions in a storyline divided down between two generations. It is effectively employed here, for example where the movie starts with a focus on young Catherine (or Cathy II) and how she first meets the older Heathcliff and he takes her to meet his son (Hareton). By starting the end of the novel and showing the first interaction
between Heathcliff and his Catherine’s daughter, they open up an ideal moment to show how Heathcliff met her mother as well. So as Cathy II is playing outdoors, meeting her cousin, encountering Wuthering Heights for the first time in her life, the film switches to also show how Heathcliff first comes to Wuthering Heights as well, how he first meets Catherine, and how their story together begins (Giedroyc, *Wuthering Heights*). The interactions of the children are mirrored by the interactions of their parents, making a complex structure more modern. Other aspects of its modernity can be unmistakably seen in updated costumes that do not connect to the time period, even jewelry and hat garments that belong to the present and not at all to the past. So even though Catherine is shown wearing long dresses and skirts befitting a previous century interpretation, she is also constantly wearing knitted caps such as beanies worn in the current times, or flimsy scarves that started to be modeled only in the 21st century. One specific costume that echoes the designs of the 21st century is Catherine’s wedding dress: no frolics, bows, or ribbons as would usually have been adorned for a 19th century piece. Instead a simple white gown with an open bodice, and leaves with flowers weaving throw the hair and back of the gown (Giedroyc, *Wuthering Heights*). These interactions of the modern world upon a classic tale do not take away from the essence of *Wuthering Heights*, but they do change the implications of fidelity, and a time placement of production.

When it comes to the structure of class, social expectations, and gender roles, that part is as evident as in all the previous adaptations. The divide between the female and male characters comes in a clear fight for domination, where the girls (Catherine and later her daughter Cathy II) reach a stage where they give up that control: “Whereas girls reach
what society defines as normal maturity by recognizing their own inferiority and powerlessness, and compensate for this by attaching themselves to a powerful male” (Stoneman 120). This stage that Stoneman is describing is shown first when Catherine gives in to marry Edgar as Heathcliff has now disappeared, and then when Cathy II gives in to taking care of her nephew and obeying all the troubled requests of her new guardian, Heathcliff. Their fight for domination was never an issue, just a matter of how much they had to bend to show their powerless situation, which is depicted in full spectrum within Giedroyc’s adaptation. At one point, Catherine is even apologizing to Heathcliff for giving in to her marriage with Edgar, for sleeping with her husband, and even for her lack of options: all these are her sad reasons formatted as an apology to a returned Heathcliff, and showing in their own right, who holds the power over each character (Giedroyc, *Wuthering Heights*). This part shows that Catherine is not only constricted by social conventions, but also that power is connected only with the masculine: “Thus, when Catherine takes the normal female role, attaching herself to the lord of the manor as a way of coping with her childish lack of power, Heathcliff takes a ‘normal’ masculine route to acquiring power in his own right… he accumulates exactly that kind of power which distinguishes Edgar Linton as a patriarchal figure” (Stoneman 120). The normal female role of weakness, and thus showing the true source of competition being between Heathcliff and Edgar is shown in both the novel and the film. Where one is an accepted patriarchal figure, the other must fight to steal that position for himself. And the way Giedroyc shows Heathcliff gambling for land and position sets up the battle, where he eventually will have to fight and win ownership of Catherine (in the sense of her afterlife)
and the children of the second generation. These are all attempts to set up a social hierarchy of gender roles, and it is the British interpretation of them. And in these ways, it also shows this movie adaptation to possibly being a bit more radical in the sense of starting halfway through the novel. Yet it addresses its issues of fidelity by staying true to the contemporary ideals and intense themes that Brontë had laid out in her novel.

Restraint is less shown with more scenes of violence; but by being a product of its time, Giedroyc is able to employ filming techniques to avoid the full severity of such scenes. One keen example is when Heathcliff is fighting a drunken Hareton Earnshaw (Catherine’s older brother). Hareton has become so drunk that he draws a pistol on Heathcliff, wishing to kill the demon that is now controlling Wuthering Heights, but then Heathcliff quickly reaches for the pistol to avoid death. In reaching for it, the two men begin to grabble and fight for control of the pistol and instead of seeing their violent punches and bloody hits against each other; the scene fades quickly into the aftermath, where Heathcliff and Hareton are both bloody but tired and barely breathing, lying next to each other on the floor (Giedroyc, Wuthering Heights). Therefore, the severity of their full battle is cut to only see the beginning and ending of their fight, but the consequences of their actions are not lost in between, only amplified by the fewer moments seen. With these new interpretations of violent scenes, a timeline unfolding to show the younger and older generations alongside each other, updated costumes and dialogues, this is indeed a strong and bold take on Wuthering Heights. In this manner, director Giedroyc makes his adaptation a unique revolutionary step to the evolving popular culture of Wuthering Heights.
2011 Version:

The newest addition also happens to be the most experimental in its interpretation of Brontë’s novel. Director Andrea Arnold adapted the novel in 2011 with new talent in the form of James Howson, playing a literal dark Heathcliff and Kaya Scodelario as his untamable counterpart, Catherine. By casting both new talent and making Heathcliff dark-skinned, the controversy of this movie adaptation started as soon as the casting choices were made public, in a similar wave of frenzy to that of Kosminsly’s adaptation. Great liberties were also taken to set this adaptation apart from all its previous British predecessors, establishing the unique narrative twists and character changes to make it focused on the raw undertone and not on the complex structure of the story itself. Arnold attempts to break from the cycle of accepted interpretations, knowing full well that each version is molded by when and how it is made. Just as Hutcheon points out that each adaptation is made up of a broad identity, “That connection is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity. This is what keeps under control the ‘background noise’ of all the other intertextual parallels to the work the audience might make that are due to similar artistic and social conventions” (21). Two very important parts that Arnold acknowledges and pushes to create his own unique version: artistic and social conventions, which are developed carefully throughout the narrative. By situating the film into a raw expression of emotions rather than grand speeches and larger than life actions, the aim at an experimental artistic appeal is developed. The filmmakers meant to separate their adaptation’s identity from the rest of the versions already slated into popular culture history. The filmmakers’ primary goal
was to make it completely its own, as literary critic and reviewer Leslie Felperin describes: “And admirable attempt to strip the story of *Wuthering Heights* down to its barest, most primal elements” (27). The social conventions are also attempted to be broken or remade into a different image, one rigidly defined by a historical social hierarchy and then thrown into the wind without regard.

That is how the story unfolds, with a young Catherine and Heathcliff roaming the outsides, developing only an interest for the untamed qualities of nature. No social class issues, no gender roles: not yet. Those are hastily thrown in at the end and even then, without much consequence because that is not the intent of the plot: only the raw emotions and savage expressions of each character are focused on. So even though it shows that Heathcliff has the mark of a slave on his back does not keep him from coming back a wealthy and free suitor. Or simply because Catherine is a woman defined to one marital status as in the novel, it does not keep her from running out with Heathcliff while still married to Edgar. A particular interpretation that not too many other film adaptations include, that Catherine still is involved in a physical manner with Heathcliff after her marriage. Social convention is downplayed in the face of passion and pain, which are shown to be all-consuming and the focus of the entire film. This relates back to the potent idea driving Brontë’s novel, that Catherine and Heathcliff are part of a “mad love” that cannot be calmed or controlled. Literary writer Nicola Thompson actually touches on this aspect as well, aligning the idea of “mad love” with a perspective that can only align with being offensive: “Too coarse, too suggestive, and too pagan” (52). These definitions of “mad love” that push to suggest a violent passion that is almost insulting in its depiction
for readers, that is how Arnold shows his artistic flair as well. He pushes his actors to portray Heathcliff and Catherine in a coarser, wilder, and almost pagan manner when it comes to their interactions between each other and nature. One evident example is in the scene where teenaged Heathcliff and Catherine may start by playing as innocent children in the moors, chasing and calling each other through the fog. However, that quickly changes to show something more coarse and suggestive in their unruly manner when Heathcliff catches up with Catherine and throws her into the mud, and she simply stares back at him in defiance and throws mud in his face. They next tussle as animals in the mud without saying anything, just growling and at times laughing, but the closeness of their interaction is perceived as far from innocent or childish, especially as Heathcliff sits on top of Catherine for moments on end (Arnold, *Wuthering Heights*). Suggesting that social decorum is unknown to these characters but also that they are closer to the untamed wildness as the nature they love to play in. Director Arnold’s distinct taste for raw and feral displays of emotion and interaction between Catherine and Heathcliff goes alongside the aspect of “mad love”, where it is keenly developed not through their dialogues, but through their coarse natures and uncivilized actions towards each other.

Thus, social value is only in the background and fidelity is through the expression of savage and intense emotions of the novel. Restraint is actually very well shown here, even more so than any other adaptation, as violence and heated arguments or even moments of physical interaction are limited to the very minimum. Shown through shaky camera shoots, or blurred out in the sidelines, one again director Arnold is putting only one thing into focus, and that is the raw range of emotions a human character can show.
This film declares its own ownership of time and space, it makes itself a product of the future era where the naturalistic approach is placed far above anything else. Literary critic and reviewer Robbie Collin illustrates the depths to which this adaptation goes to make its naturalistic agenda well known, and he touches on some particularly unique moments in his “Wuthering Heights Review”:

Heathcliff and Cathy grow close, and Arnold shows the pair chasing each other across the moors, grappling in the mud and stuffing food into one another’s mouths, with only sparse dialogue and no music. They’re more like lion cubs than kids, and with so much wind and rain driving into the handheld camera, the film often has the feel of a wildlife documentary. In one of its most reelingly intimate moments, after Heathcliff is beaten by a farmhand, Cathy takes him to a rocky outcrop and licks at the open wounds on his back. (The Telegraph)

As this film reviewer describes one of the most distressing scenes of the film, he is also making a very good point. The elements of their childhood, the way they interact as animals with each other, the heavy weather that is their only background noise, Arnold is simply reducing the film down to its most naked representation of the idea Brontë started in her novel. The idea that the human condition goes deeper than words or actions, it is in the base of human nature. That essence is prevailed upon when all else fails, when fidelity is questioned or social values taken apart, the message of the novel transcends into this work of art, as Arnold would have it be seen.
CONCLUSION: THE REVOLVING DOORS OF EVOLUTION

I’ve done no injustice, and I repent of nothing.

I’m too happy; and yet I’m not happy enough.

My soul’s bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself.

-- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 322

When all is said and done, the exceptional strength and broad influence of Emily Brontë’s only novel cannot be denied. Its beginning may have been rough and clouded in shady publishing deals and shocked reviews, but the spirit of the work prevailed. Though the creator was a woman who shunned society and proved her reclusive lifestyle as the one way for her to exist, it also led to great amounts of freedom to express oneself as few other women were able to do in the constricted times of Victorian England. Comparing the novel’s reception in the present cannot be properly done though, without giving credence to its first waves of reception: “*Wuthering Heights* has become something of a standard by which the taste—the aesthetic and critical climate of its period—has been judged... *Wuthering Heights* led an independent, if stormy, existence: it was neither understood nor ignored” (Hewish 160). To become that standard by which anything else can be compared to, the novel first had to go through its “stormy existence” and survive it, which it did. Though Emily Brontë did not survive to see her novel succeed and prevail, her sisters made sure it did. Correcting previous errors with an appalling publisher and even worse reviews, they brought a new face to the second edition with
touching words of enlightenment for its preface, new publisher with new circulation, and worldwide reach on the second time around because of an already established notoriety.

Thus a process was established for the novel’s progression from being considered an offensive work to an intriguing artwork worthy of literary analysis: as biography writer Hewish states, “Our own preoccupation with media and communication and our understanding of the striking influence of convention on the functioning of an art form in a given period make the baffled awe that was the average Victorian reaction to *Wuthering Heights* easier to understand” (161). Hewish establishes this chain of cause and effect in two time periods no less, where in the present it is easier to critique because there are more means of accomplishing this, and as a result more ideas to push through than ever before. In the Victorian time period, there simply was no capability to express these individual ideas and interpretations through various kinds of media. The adaptation of a literary work is a more modern phenomenon, showing not only the capability to do so but also the desire. An obsession with how one influence inspires another is only the beginning of a literary process that may start with critical reviews and end with breath-taking innovative adaptations. Therefore the extent of one reaction could be more forcefully felt than ever thought plausible by critics and film reviewers alike. This also unfortunately paints the realistic scenario in which Emily Brontë found herself feeling apprehensive in giving up her very personal manuscript to a world already proven to be vicious with harshly constructed opinions and socially-ruled judgments. Yet with a little courage and her sisters’ unremitting persuasion, Emily Brontë was eventually won over,
and that is where her apprehension turned to fear. Fear that the world could now indeed read her work, her personal ideas made real through her storyline and characters, and turn it away with those ruthless reviews that made her first apprehensive in ever publishing anything. What made this fear even more powerful is that at this step, there could be no going back, as those reviews were already published and her fear was realized with each vindictive word that she read: “If it was complained that the vivid scenes banished sleep and disturbed mental peace, Ellis Bell [Emily Brontë] would wonder what was meant and suspect affectation. Her mind gathered those tragic and terrible traits in the secret annals of every rude vicinage” (Crandall 127). This nerve-wrecking process into which the novel was born left its mark not just on its creator who died shortly after *Wuthering Heights* was published, but also on all future adaptations that attempted to revive the biographical connections and atmosphere. That is why biography writer Norma Crandall continuously shows these correlations between author and novel, between the Emily Brontë’s internal battles and public notoriety. They depict the beginning of a legend, Emily Brontë’s life and legacy. Only now the author’s early feelings, her personality and all the possibly recorded ideas of her traits and likes, can be put together to show this formula of not only how but why *Wuthering Heights* was made public.

The receiving end was merely the second step of its revolution, and the third was to take all the reception and mold it into a new media: film adaptation. From all its grand scale of adaptations, of which so many radio recordings and early movie interpretations have been sadly lost, to its more publicized and better recorded films, *Wuthering Heights* has continued to live in popular culture. Eight top-grossing films broken down into
specific times of release and then separated into two nationalities: the American ones versus the British adaptations. With the American crossovers, the only two adaptations to date of 1939 and 2003 represent a unique category all their own. While attempting to remain true to the spirit of the text, Wyler’s 1939 version took great liberties but was still rewarded financially and acknowledged with achievement awards as well. This perspective can be considered by the responsibility Wyler took for his project, “It is evident from both studio press releases and critical response that the director is ultimately held responsible for the overall vision and therefore for the adaptation as adaptation” (Hutcheon 85). The appeal for the process of new interpretations makes the appeal even strong for unique adaptations, and Wyler stepped forward with such an idea. By formatting the target audiences and defending the creative liberties they took, this American interpretation held its ground. *MTV’s Wuthering Heights* that was more recently released in 2003 held its own ground as well by only catering to its target audience of young adults and the fan communities of their larger MTV network. Also, by respecting the creative differences necessary to make a novel from 1847 more modern and appealing to the younger generations, director Krishnamma was able to successfully reach out to the younger generations while still keeping some very essential themes and ideals intact from the novel.

By ending with the British versions of 1970, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2009 and the final version of 2011, the analysis of each film’s loyalty to Emily Brontë’s novel and financial success spell out what was done properly to keep *Wuthering Heights* alive, and therefore repeated again and again. The layout to the British adaptations also happens to show their
strength towards more loyal interpretations, a keener sense of the natural scenery that
Emily Brontë herself could not live without, and a customary addition of the second
generation that the American films often left out. Each adaptation is unique and powerful
in its own right, showing that they are just as important as the original novel. Together
these adaptations reveal a transformation down the ages of how England interprets the
one masterpiece. In this way though, Emily Brontë’s novel has made a full
transformation down the decades, each version representing *Wuthering Heights*
differently and yet contributing to a spellbinding chapter in the history of popular culture
that unites them all.
WORKS CITED


98


This is a list of adaptations of Wuthering Heights, which was Emily Brontë's only novel. It was first published in 1847 under the pseudonym Ellis Bell, and a posthumous second edition was edited by her sister Charlotte. 1920: The earliest version of Wuthering Heights is filmed in England, directed by A.V. Bramble. It is unknown if any prints still exist. 1939: Wuthering Heights, starring Merle Oberon as Catherine Earnshaw Linton, Laurence Olivier as Heathcliff, David Niven as Edgar Linton, Flora Likewise, nearly all Emily Brontë’s biographers and scholars over the past century have been women. I have never understood the cult of St Emily of Haworth. Indeed, I have spent a reading lifetime struggling to get to the end of Wuthering Heights, the screechy melodrama about two families living on the Yorkshire Moors who inter-marry, squabble, die, buy land, lose land, beat each other up and have children to whom they give bafflingly identical names. In this bafflement I am in good company. In order to excuse the coarseness of Wuthering Heights, with its madness and perverse sexuality elements that were also worryingly present in Jane Eyre Charlotte turned Emily into an idiot savant, who did not know what she had done.