

Comparing Emile Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and its Film Adaptation of Kosminsky

JUBINAROSA. S.S.
PhD Research Scholar
Department of Tribal Studies
School for the Study of Culture
Central University of Jharkhand, India

Abstract

Wuthering Heights can be considered as one of the classic novels in the history of English fiction. The Destructiveness of a Love That Never Changes is the basic theme of the novel. Catherine and Heathcliff's passion for one another seems to be the centre of *Wuthering Heights*. The great literature have been attracted to film directors in all time. The possibility to verbal, audible and visual expression of the written form has become a great challenge. By the end of the twentieth century as the number of adaptations increased, the interest in the theory of film adaptation extended. A bunch of novels have been adapted, many of them even plenty of times and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is one among them. The current paper entitled Comparing Emile Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and its Film Adaptation of Kosminsky discusses different aspects of narration in literary form as well as in cinematography.

Keywords: Film Adaptation, cinematography, omniscient narration.

Since the beginning of cinematography the great literature has been attracted to film directors. The possibility to verbally, audibly and visually express the written form has become a great challenge. By the end of the twentieth century as the number of adaptations increased, the interest in the theory of film adaptation extended. A bunch of novels have been adapted, many of them even plenty of times and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is one among them. Neil

Sinyard identifies adaptation as interpretation, as “an activity of literary criticism, a critical essay” which “selects some episodes, excludes others, offers preferred alternatives. It focuses on specific areas of the novel, expands or contracts detail, and has imaginative flights about some characters. In the process, like the best criticism, it can throw new light on the original” (117). In the above comment one can understand that adaptation is also a form of reinterpretation. It may or may not have some changes from the original work. In film adaptation screen play writers are more concern with visual perfection, the interest of audience and so on. So there are possibility of dissimilarity between film adaptation and it’s original work. Here in this paper I have chosen a work of Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* and Kosminsky’s Adaptation, 1992 of the same title.

In order to adapt a novel into a film, the filmmaker undertakes the task of discerning what the novel is in the same fashion as a critic who analyses the text for the novelist’s chief concerns and searches for a conclusive reading. The filmmaker approaches production knowing that she must balance audience appeal with fidelity to the text and must appease critics, fans of the novel and an audience that is new to the material. With every adaptation comes tension because each cinematic adaptation portrays a different reading of the novel and a different understanding on the part of the directors and script writers behind the film. Critics frequently resort to the complaint that a film cannot portray the intricacies, subtleties and ambiguities of a novel and with a text as psychologically complex and as thrilling canon as *Wuthering Heights*. Although notoriously difficult to adapt it exists in dozens of film and television versions, radio plays and musicals across languages. In reducing the two- volume novel into a feature-length film, directors must consider over- arching themes- is it a story of love or revenge?- but there are other considerations and complexities which are no less incidental.

Emile Bronte one of the distinctive Victorian novelist and poet who is best known for her novel *Wuthering Heights* can be considered as a classic of English literature. She remains a mysterious figure and a challenge to biographers because information about her is sparse, due to her solitary and reclusive nature. It can be observed that her love of moors is manifest in *Wuthering Heights*. She found bliss in solitude. Of all the influences on Emily's life, the landscape of her home at Haworth had the greatest effect in shaping her imagination and creative talent. *Wuthering Heights* is an artistically and intellectually well constructed and unconventional novel. The structure is a little difficult to understand, at first. But Emily Bronte sets the scene to enable the readers to familiarize themselves with the eerie, the extraordinary and the sensational events in the novel. The story begins in the middle with Mr. Lockwood's visit to Wuthering Heights. This time coincides with the climax of Heathcliff's revenge when he has at last obtained complete power over young Cathy and Hareton. Heathcliff is all powerful, dominating and triumphant whereas Hareton and Cathy are miserable. The introduction of the storm and Catherine's ghost begging to enter, introduce Mr. Lockwood and the readers to a world of discord. The plot is so remote from our experience that it is not possible to believe it completely. So Emily Bronte strikes the right emotional key and begins straightaway with infernal passions and spirits so that she can induce within the readers a heightened and inflamed imagination which makes it possible for them to accept without any difficulty, the most strange and sensational events of the climax.

In 1939, an adaptation was created by William Wyler in the USA with Laurence Olivier in the leading role of Heathcliff. Even though the adaptation is did not correspond with the original work, it was nominated for eight Oscar's Academy Award. In 1954, famous Louis Bunuel

created a Mexican adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* in his own fashion. Another film from 1970 with Timothy Dalton was impressive but the second part of the book was completely missing. Kosminsky's version of 1992 has become the most elaborate adaptation of the novel so far, trying to capture the whole story, as well as the themes and motives which are described in the book. Andrea Arnold's film from 2011 is the latest adaptation. The 1992 feature film adaptation of Emile Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* directed by Peter Kosminsky is an adorable version of visuals. The film stars Ralph Fiennes as the tortured Heathcliff and Juliette Binoche as the free-spirited Catherine Earnshaw made this movie success. Ralph Fiennes was fantastic as Heathcliff, for being so cold and cruel on the screen. This adaptation really captured the essence of the story.

Literature and film are two completely different media with their specific modes of expression, both have a unique goal; telling a story. The medium in which the story telling takes place is different. Though in this modern period the significance of visualization is not negligible:

If adaptations are, by this definition, such inferior and secondary creations, why then are they so omnipresent in our culture and, indeed, increasing steadily in numbers? Why, even according to 1992 statistics are 85 percent of all Oscar Winning Best Pictures adaptations? Why do adaptations make up 95 percent of all the miniseries and 70 percent of all the TV movies of the week that win Emmy Awards? Part of the answer no doubt has to do with the constant appearance of new media and new channels of mass diffusion (Groensteen 1998b: 9). These

have clearly fueled an enormous demand for all kinds of stories. Nonetheless, there must be something particularly appealing about adaptations as *adaptations*.
(Hutcheon, 4)

A serious analysis on both novel and film version of *Wuthering Heights* contributes a great deal of interesting thoughts. To intensify the colourful and much emotional scenes of the novel Kosminsky uses a technique of exaggeration. Cathy's early life is not associated with stillness; there are lots of fleeting experiences in her childhood shared with Heathcliff. The movie successfully eliminates all patterns of stillness which provides a better understanding on the emotional attachment of both characters together. The scenes on their physical needs and psychological urges are presented with the help of images like horse and the land of moors. These images appear to be more convincing than those of the novel just because of their visual participation. Unlike the gloomy and confusing atmosphere of the novel the film occupies a primary position when it focuses the camera on the greenery of the nature. One scene where Heathcliff and Catherine are enjoying a horse ride on the moors is followed by another which shows a funeral. So without providing unnecessary details all relevant information are included. The narrator comments on the happenings on the screen and gives another dimension to the scene. The omniscient narration shows the young riders full of mutual happiness, freedom and shared joy. The voice narration indicates that their happiness lasts over some time and eliminates the necessity of more shots, which would be otherwise necessary for expressing the long period of their happiness, and connects both scenes without any doubt of what is happening. But to bring the love closer to the literary work of Emile Bronte, the screenplay uses the dialogues taken directly from the novel.

The greatest motive of *Wuthering Heights*, love the most important element in the Kosminsky's adaptation. The love triangle between Heathcliff and Catherine, Edgar expressed by the passionate love between Heathcliff and Catherine, Edgar's tender affection for Catherine and Heathcliff's enmity towards Edgar dominate the film. At the very beginning of the film narrator defines the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine. She says that "Cathy was drawn to the silent, self-possessed boy" (Kosminsky, 1992; 9-10 min). The screenplay is written in the gothic fashion which is very dominated in the novel. After the death of Catherine, Edgar closes himself up but Heathcliff is searching for her. She seeks her everywhere and is getting mad:

I prey one prayer. (...) Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am leaving. (...) You said I killed you. Haunt me, then. I know that ghosts have wandered the earth. Be with me always, take any form, drive me mad...only do not leave me in this abyss where I can not find you. I can not live without my life. I can not live without my soul. (Kosminsky, 1992;61 min)

The end of the film shows Heathcliff as an empty, mentally broken man who does not possess any kind of pleasure. In his totally devastated state of mind he opens her coffin after many years she has been lying there to see a glimpse of what remains from her face. Through the copying of important passages from the book in its film version the love gains the features very similar to the ones which are used in the novel. Yet he has created the most faithful adaptation of Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*.

Bibliography

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Wordsworth ed. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1992.

Kosminsky, Peter, dir. *Wuthering Heights*. Perf. Juliette Binoche, Ralph Fiennes. Paramount Pictures, 1992. Film.

Brown, L. Cathleen. *Teaching Literary Theory Using Film Adaptations*. North Carolina: McFarland and Company. 2009.