

Artículo de Investigación

From literary text to film: Analysis of two female characters in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), by Emily Brontë and their representation in the film directed by William Wyler (1939)

Del texto literario a la película: análisis de dos personajes femeninos en *Wuthering Heights*, de Emily Brontë y su representación en la película dirigida por William Wyler (1939)

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Abstract:

Introduction: *Wuthering Heights* (1847) has been filmed and televised many times, and this paper proposes to study two female characters from Emily Brontë's literary text and their representation in the movie directed by Wyler (1939). In the novel, the author denounces the social discrimination faced by women through two characters, Catherine Earnshaw and Isabella Linton, and the aim is to analyse their representation in this film. This version stops to highlight Catherine's childhood, and the viewer needs to understand why this character chooses to belong to the Linton world. The film omits an essential part of Isabella Linton's story, that of an abused woman. **Methodology:** The methodology used for this analysis is Stoneman's reception and cultural dissemination aesthetics, providing a clear framework for our study. **Discussion:** The discussion will focus on the discrepancies in the representation of

the female characters, highlighting the urgent need for critical analysis. **Conclusions:** This adaptation is a censored version that does not represent the social dismissal of women that Emily Brontë intended through her female characters.

Keywords: Emily Brontë; *Wuthering Heights*; cultural dissemination; film adaptations; Wyler; female characters; Catherine Earnshaw; Isabella Linton.

Resumen:

Introducción: *Wuthering Heights* (1847) ha sido llevada al cine y a la televisión en numerosas ocasiones, y en este trabajo se propone un estudio de dos personajes femeninos del texto literario de Emily Brontë y su representación en la película dirigida por Wyler (1939). En la novela, la autora denuncia la discriminación social a la que se enfrentaban las mujeres a través de dos personajes, Catherine Earnshaw e Isabella Linton, y el objetivo es analizar su representación en esta película. Esta versión se detiene en destacar la infancia de Catherine, y el espectador debe comprender por qué este personaje elige pertenecer al mundo de los Linton. La película omite una parte esencial de la historia de Isabella Linton, la de una mujer maltratada. **Metodología:** La metodología utilizada para este análisis es la estética de recepción y diseminación cultural de Stoneman, que proporciona un marco claro para nuestro análisis. **Discusión:** El debate se centrará en las discrepancias en la representación de los personajes femeninos, haciendo hincapié en la urgente necesidad de un análisis crítico. **Conclusiones:** Esta adaptación es una versión censurada que no representa la reivindicación social de la mujer que Emily Brontë pretendía a través de sus personajes femeninos.

Palabras clave: Emily Brontë; *Wuthering Heights*; diseminación cultural; adaptaciones cinematográficas; Wyler; personajes femeninos; Catherine Earnshaw; Isabella Linton.

1. Introduction

Wuthering Heights (Brontë, 1847 [2003]) perplexed critics, who could not comprehend its lack of traditional morality. The raw intensity of the characters' emotions, love and hatred, was deemed uncivilised. Most English and American reviews were scathing, condemning its violence, lack of realism, and perceived immorality, starkly contrasting to the contemporary Victorian novels. However, many critics failed to acknowledge that, beyond these intense emotions, Emily Brontë used her characters to critique women's unequal social situation in the Victorian era. Emily Brontë and *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1847 [2003]) have gained international recognition, largely due to the numerous films. However, the novel's initial publication sparked a profound sense of wonder and uncertainty, a testament to its enduring intrigue. However, as time passed, the proper depth and brilliance of Emily Brontë's novel began to emerge, solidifying her enduring literary legacy. *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is not a mere depiction of wild passion, and the author's reputation transformed from the 1920s onwards when critics unearthed the novel's unique spatial and temporal structure, characterised by its non-linear narrative and the use of multiple narrators (Kindelán, 1989, p. 69).

The author's life was intricately woven with those of her two sisters, Charlotte and Anne Brontë. All three have left an indelible mark in history as three undisputed leaders of Victorian Literature. The Brontës, like other authors, encountered unique challenges as women writers in the 19th century. These challenges, which were significant and often overlooked, only serve to highlight the weight of their achievements. Furthermore, the adaptation of the three Brontë sisters, *To Walk Invisible* (Wainright, 2016), delved deeper into the captivating mystery of their lives and the enduring impact of their novels. Today, Brontëan cultural dissemination, similar to Austenmania, holds significant cultural weight. According to this author, one possible

reason could be the late 20th-century nostalgia for an idealised past that Jane Austen's novels seem to embody (Muñoz Valdivieso 2007, pp. 289–90). This paper will explore the phenomenon of the cultural dissemination of Emily Brontë and the films based on the novel. In 1920, director A.V. Bramble's first film, *Wuthering Heights*, was released in the UK, starring Milton Rosmer as Heathcliff and Colette Brettel as Catherine Hareton. This film was followed by Goldwyn & Wyler's adaptation (1939).

Luis Buñuel's *Abismos de Pasión* was released in 1953. Starring Jorge Mistral as Heathcliff and Irasema Dilian as Catherine, *Abismos de Pasión* is a film that showcases a wealth of symbolism and a magnificent characterisation. Buñuel, as both a reader and a creator, imbues the love scenes with an excess of cruelty to better convey his interpretation of the novel. The characters never kiss each other on the mouth, except when Isabel lightly kisses Alejandro at the church exit after the wedding. However, he immediately wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. Instead, we find kisses on the neck that look more like a bite than a kiss, called vampiric kisses. These kisses, with a pronounced gothic influence, add a unique aesthetic to the film, making it a visually captivating experience for the audience.

Wuthering Heights (1970), directed by Fuest, is a faithful adaptation of the classic novel. Starring Timothy Dalton, who also starred Rochester in the TV series *Jane Eyre* (Brontë, 1847 [1994]), the narrative opens with Catherine's funeral. Then, it transitions into a flashback that tells the story of Heathcliff and Catherine. While introducing an excess of explicit elements, this version remains true to the novel's themes and characters, such as the possibility that Heathcliff was Earnshaw's illegitimate child or the physical relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine.

Selway & Kosminski's film (1992) stars Juliette Binoche and Ralph Fiennes. This new project prompted Juliette Binoche to star in *Chocolat* (Brown & Hallström, 2000). The following TV series, directed and produced by West & Krishnamma (2003), was distributed on MTV channels (Aguilar Franch, 2009, p. 210). This film industry and many others have brought the 19th-century narratives to a modern audience and sparked discussions and interpretations, enriching the literary and film discourse. The audience's active participation in interpreting and discussing these adaptations is not a casual contribution but a significant and empowering role. Their diverse perspectives, each unique and valuable, significantly enrich the overall discourse, highlighting the influential and significant role they play in the adaptation process. Each adaptation offers a unique perspective, adding intrigue and open-mindedness to the audience's experience.

Other film and television series worth mentioning include the version directed by Daniel Petrie in 1958, a significant adaptation featuring Heathcliff starring Richard Burton. In 1967, a Portuguese version was filmed, *Morro dos ventos vivantes*, directed by the Brazilian Muniz and starring Irina Greco and Altair Lima. Of the same nationality is the film *Vendaval* (De Moraes, 1973), in which Joana Fomm and Jonas Mello star Catarina and Rodolfo. In 1978, Peter Hammond directed a version of *Wuthering Heights* featuring actors Kay Ahehad and Ken Hutchinson. Subsequently, a series entitled *Wuthering Heights* (Alonso & Carbajal, 1979) was created in Mexico. Actors Alma Muriel and Gonzalo Vega starred Catherine and Heathcliff. In 1985, a new version of the novel appeared; this time, it was a French version entitled *Le Hurlevent* (Rivette, 1985).

The 1992 version, directed by Kosminsky, will be examined in more detail. Its unique approach to the plot's transposition and film discourse elements will be highlighted. In Kosminsky's film, one aspect differs markedly from Emily Brontë's novel. This point, vital from the analysis of the text, is the role of the narrator, in Emily Brontë's case, the combination of Lockwood's and Nelly Dean's narrations. The narrator's role is of utmost importance in the novel, shaping the

reader's understanding of the story. In the film, both characters lose the relevance that the role of the narrator in the text confers on them. Nelly Dean barely lets her voice be heard and remains on the sidelines of the story as a mere spectator. In the film, Nelly's role as an observer is passive, whereas her words shape the novel's story. This difference in Nelly's role in each version profoundly affects the circular development of the story. Lockwood, however, maintains his caricatured character and has minimal influence on the story's progression, appearing on the screen twice in the same scene, the one in which he believes he has seen the ghost of a young girl.

The fact that this is a fictional account is emphasised by the introduction of the voice of the narrator, Emily Brontë, who opens and closes the film with an excellently characterised Sinead O'Connor, making it clear that the story we are about to witness is nothing more than the fruit of her imagination, inspired by one of her long walks on the Haworth moors. This introduction of a heterodiegetic narrator gives the story a fantasy quality and, simultaneously, a greater objectivity than that of a protagonist narrator. The film's setting, particularly the choice of Wuthering Heights, deviates significantly from Emily Brontë's original vision. The towering structure, covered in ivy, and the surrounding landscape all contribute to a gothic atmosphere that permeates the story, intriguing the audience and inviting them to explore this captivating interpretation.

One of the standout elements of film discourse in this version is the use of lighting to add a mystical and ethereal quality to the characters. Light plays a prominent role in the scene at the beginning and end of the film. In this scene, Lockwood comes to Heathcliff and Cathy in fear, claiming to have seen Catherine's ghost. Heathcliff then enters the room, where a virginal Catherine gives off a heavenly light that symbolises the reunion that Heathcliff desires. While not a brilliant performance by its protagonists, the use of lighting in this scene is worth noting as it adds a mystical and ethereal quality to the characters. Binoche, for her part, becomes a much less passionate Catherine, and even her ghost appears as a ghost of virginal light far removed from other film versions. At the same time, the fact that the actress plays the role of mother and daughter with the simple difference of a blonde wig makes her performance less credible.

Fiennes' characterisation of Heathcliff is a refreshing departure from the elegant Hollywood gentleman like Olivier, as he recovers Heathcliff's wild and "gipsy" aspect. Edgar's character, on the other hand, is a precise embodiment of the traits of delicacy, weakness, and luxury that Emily intended. The editing of the shots, camera movements, and elements of cinematographic discourse add significant depth to the scenes, such as points of view and time shifts. In the fragment representing Catherine's wake, the camera follows Edgar's every movement as he slowly leans over the coffin containing his wife's lifeless body. Once Heathcliff manages to open the coffin, the camera lens, which has been rotating around him while digging, focuses on the protagonist from inside the grave, from the *abysses* containing the corpse of his beloved and not from his perspective. The treatment of the main themes of the novel in the film is quite faithful. The plot has been followed almost to the letter, and the dialogues have hardly been adapted, maintaining the Brontëan language and tone. If words create the novel's mood in the narrative, silences play a primordial role in the film, significantly shaping its emotional landscape. Filmic language adds elements that literature lacks so that silence can be as powerful as words. Accompanied by an expressive soundtrack, silence can convey ideas and feelings to the spectator, immersing them in the story's emotional depth.

The diversity of interpretations in film and TV series is a testament to the enduring fascination with these narratives. In 2011, a new version of the novel was released, directed by Andrea Arnold (Bernstein et al.). This film was unique in that Heathcliff was starred for the first time by a black actor (James Howson), a choice that sparked a heated debate among critics. This paper will analyse two female characters and their representation in Wyler's adaptation, providing a relevant and enlightening perspective.

2. Methodology

This paper's methodology is based on Stoneman's (1995) aesthetics of cultural dissemination and reception. This cultural dissemination vividly illustrates the influence of Emily Brontë's unique novel on a new wave of readers, who have ingeniously created new film adaptations based on the original story. This Brontëan cultural dissemination, a mass social phenomenon, is a compelling study area for English Literature courses.

This proposal emphasizes the student's active participation in the analysis of two female characters in *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë and the film directed by Wyler (1939). As the central figures in this process, the students play a crucial role, and their involvement is not just expected but valued. They are to read selected fragments of the novels and become familiar with the narrative structure, techniques and female characters. In this critical discussion, they are expected to be as objective as possible, understanding that their objectivity is crucial to the success of the analysis, and keep in mind the contrastive study of the novel and its film transposition.

3. Discussion: The Brontëan narrative

Wuthering Heights (Brontë, 1847 [2003]) has become one of the most famous love stories in English literary history. It is, undoubtedly, a genuinely peculiar love story since, most of the time, the manifestations of love are more violent reactions than affectionate ones. The theme of madness is hidden in Emily Brontë's novel, and yet it must be explored because of the repressive significance it implies. Could we say that the *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1847 [2003]) household is a house of madmen, with characters with conventional psychic conflicts and, on the contrary, with people with mental disorders? Over the years, the average reader has perhaps chosen to overlook allusions to mental illness in the novel. For this reason, *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1847 [2003]) is considered a novel of unbridled passionate love. The characters' inner conflicts will be explored, which are sometimes very serious regarding the behaviour they generate.

The accentuated violence is a consequence of the character's madness. So why is *Wuthering Heights* not a novel of violence and madness but of love? Is love the central theme of the story? Our analysis concluded that love is not the novel's central theme but essential. In fact, not many scenes show love, and when they do appear, it is not a conventional love but sometimes an unhealthy one. The madness, however, seems quite palpable, yet we do not perceive it at times, thanks to Emily's masterful concealment. Our main characters have exaggerated, violent reactions to ordinary situations, are unable to come to terms with specific experiences in their lives, behave in contradictory and obsessive ways, and occasionally exhibit delusions and paranoid visions. These schizoid visions are disguised to the reader as supernatural visions.

The possibility that they are ghosts returning from the afterlife with disturbed rest to communicate with the living is more palatable to the passionate reader than the stark reality: the mental illness of a heroic character. Heathcliff cannot be a villain to the readers, so Emily

Brontë keeps this male character in a love-hate relationship with them. Our relationship with him is full of ups and downs. We cannot come to accept his behaviour towards his son or young Cathy, but at times, he becomes the hero who fights for an impossible love in a hostile context, and this prevents us from condemning him.

Has Heathcliff gone mad after Catherine's death? He is incapable of showing affection; he makes those around him suffer; he wanders at night like a sleepwalker and thinks he sees the ghost of his deceased beloved everywhere. Is this the expected behaviour of a lover? For Wade Thompson, Emily Brontë has succeeded in deceiving generations of readers into believing they read a romantic and beautiful love story (Thompson, 1963b, p. 74).

Orphanhood and childhood are relevant themes in the novel. Mr Earnshaw's case shows a behaviour of resistance reflected in his attempt to replace his dead son with an abandoned child whom he will name after the first, Heathcliff. For Jeffrey Berman, Heathcliff's arrival in *Wuthering Heights* illustrates the theme of the replacement of the lost son as a symbolic birth: while the missing son is never to be named again, the new son, the little abandoned wanderer, is never to be named again. This concept of 'replacement of the lost son' is a central theme in the novel, and it helps to understand the dynamics of the characters' relationships (Berman, 1990, p. 86).

Hindley, for his part, evolves towards psychotic behaviour of an aggressive nature. His first loss will be his father's affection, who will focus all his attention and affection on the newcomer Heathcliff, leaving aside his two children, Catherine and Hindley. Hindley is the dispossessed, and Heathcliff is the usurper, as Nelly describes it when she relates the story of the two to an attentive Lockwood: "So from the very beginning he bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mrs Earnshaw's death, which happened in less than two years after, the young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges, and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 30). Hindley has lost his father's affection, his wife, and most importantly, his self-esteem. This loss of self-esteem leads to his inevitable self-destruction. The impact of these losses on Hindley's behaviour is profound, transforming him from a young boy full of potential to a bitter, vengeful man. After Frances Hindley's death, he is incapable of ever feeling affection for another person and becomes, in everyone's eyes, a kind of cruel demon. Berman (1920) explains that Hindley manifests the typical characteristics of children who have lost their parents in childhood. Hindley is the rejected son who repeats this behaviour now with his son and becomes the rejecting father.

For Heathcliff, superstition is not just a fear but a profound hope. His belief in the existence of ghosts is not just a casual conviction but a driving force that fuels his intense longing to win Catherine back. Heathcliff invokes the ghost of his beloved on several occasions, each time demonstrating his unwavering belief in the existence of spirits: "You know I was wild after she died, and eternally, from dawn to dawn, praying her to return to me her spirit. I have a strong faith in ghosts; I have a conviction that they can and do exist among us" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 220). This statement is the beginning of a disturbing and revealing account that shows the extent to which Heathcliff is obsessed with Catherine. Heathcliff describes his visit to Catherine's grave, the opening of it, and his desire to lie next to her. In these moments, Heathcliff is convinced that Catherine's spirit is with him. He senses its presence and feels it accompanying him across the moors.

He wishes to know where he can be reunited with his beloved, so death is not the answer he desires, so the idea of meeting his ghost fuels his hope of reunion. Revenge would be a secondary theme in Heathcliff's life, with Catherine coming first. Her death triggers his

psychological conflict, which leads him to desecrate her grave on two occasions. On his first visit to Catherine's grave, the supposed presence of her ghost causes him to desist in his attempt to open the coffin. Believing that Catherine's spirit is with him, not underground but above ground, soothes his lovesick mind and gives him the strength to live. There are scenes in which Heathcliff calls upon Catherine's spirit again despite the futility of his efforts. This invocation of Catherine's spirit, though it brings him no solace, is one of the most famous fragments of the novel:

"Make me wake in torment! "he cried [...] Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you - haunt me then! The murdered do haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts have wandered on earth. Be with me always - take any form - drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul! (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 130).

On his second visit to her grave, eighteen long years have passed, there has been no sign of Catherine's ghost despite her persistent call, and her memory has been a source of grief to him. This time, Heathcliff is relieved to learn that Catherine is indeed in the ground and that it is she, the same Catherine he remembered, whose corpse time has not changed as much as he might have expected. What is the reason for this change in his desires? After Catherine's death, Heathcliff takes his leitmotif, a recurring theme or motif that represents a character or an idea, as his reunion with her. He firmly believes the two are one person and wishes to reunite with his alter ego. Their reunion may happen on earth, between Heathcliff and Catherine's ghost in Wuthering Heights. For many years, Heathcliff harbours the hope of reunion in this life, and so he summons Catherine's ghost to join him forever. After long years of frustrating waiting, Heathcliff has to take the option of a reunion with Catherine in the other world as soon as possible, not in this one, so his death becomes imperative. He no longer wants her to return; eighteen years have shown him this is impossible, and now he wishes to go and find her where she has gone. After having analysed some of the most important themes of the Brontëan narrative, the following section of the paper will focus on William Wyler's version (1939).

4. The film directed by William Wyler (1939)

In this film directed by Wyler (1939), the narrative takes a unique turn, ending at what corresponds to Chapter XVII. It boldly removes the third generation, Cathy and Hareton, from the plot and reimagines the opening scene in which Lockwood arrives at Wuthering Heights. The film's narrative is a departure from the novel, presenting Lockwood's discovery in a way that might surprise and engage readers. He does not find Heathcliff living with Cathy and Hareton, but with his wife Isabella on the night Heathcliff summons Cathy's ghost from the window. Many critics have compared this film of Emily Brontë's novel to *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming, 1939), especially regarding the soundtrack and the heroines' personalities.

Vivien Leigh was the first actress proposed for the role of Catherine, a character that Oberon and her director took to occupy the leading role well above Heathcliff. Initially, the producer, Goldwyn, proposed the title *He Died for Her*, which encapsulates the spirit of the epic love poem that this version tried to capture, a departure from the more idyllic tone of the novel. The film's 8 Oscar nominations in 1939 and Gregg Toland's win for cinematography stand as a testament to its cinematic excellence, a quality that will leave the audience in awe.

The following section will analyse two female characters in the novel and their representation in the version directed by Wyler (1939). In the Brontëan novel, Catherine Earnshaw (second generation) and Catherine Linton (third generation) undergo significant transformations that

need to be clarified for the reader. Catherine Earnshaw (mother) becomes Catherine Linton when she marries Edgar Linton. Her daughter, also known as Catherine Linton (daughter) or Cathy, is forced by Heathcliff to marry Linton Heathcliff in 1800, thereby becoming Catherine Heathcliff. After Linton Heathcliff's death, she marries Hareton, a union that will take place in 1803, and she becomes Catherine Earnshaw, adopting her mother's maiden name. Throughout these three generations, Brontë's narrative serves as a powerful platform to champion women's rights through the experiences of her female characters: Catherine Earnshaw, Isabella Linton Heathcliff (second generation), and Cathy (third generation).

In Wyler's film (1939), the main female actresses are Merle Oberon (Catherine Earnshaw), and Geraldine Fitzgerald (Isabella Linton). This paper will analyze the story of two female characters in the novel and their representation in Wyler's film. In Catherine's story, Wyler emphasizes her childhood with Heathcliff, a period of innocence and vulnerability. Similarly, the film also omits an integral part of Isabella's story. Wyler's adaptation (1939) omits the character's development, leaving out her transformation from an innocent young girl to a victim of Heathcliff's abuse. In the novel, despite her innocence, Isabella is brave and runs away from home while pregnant because of Heathcliff's abuse.

4.1. Catherine Earnshaw's character in *Wuthering Heights* and Wyler's film

Catherine, one of the novel's most intricate and challenging characters, is a product of her past. Her selfish nature and complex personality are rooted in her childhood, where she was a victim of abuse and never experienced genuine care. This lack of love and nurturing influences her development as a woman. The tragedy of Catherine's character is that she begins her life as an unloved child, only to be drawn to Linton for the affection she craves. However, her journey into Linton's world leads to a sense of repression and, ultimately, her demise. Catherine's character is complex, and in Brontë's novel, the reader learns about her childhood, her development and even her death in chapter XV, when she gives birth to the young Cathy Linton. In the novel, Catherine Earnshaw seems to be to blame for the separation between her and Heathcliff, but for what reasons might she want to separate from Heathcliff? Although Catherine's character is capricious and ambivalent, the reader must understand the importance of one possible reason why she decides to marry Edgar: her protection needs. It is worth noting that the film adaptation does not depict Catherine as an abused child. In the diaries discovered by Lockwood, she admits to enduring abuse at home, a situation not unique to Heathcliff. In the film, Wyler focuses on the happy childhood of Catherine and Heathcliff:

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [SARITA WOOTEN]: I said your father was the emperor of China and your mother an Indian queen. It's true, Heathcliff. You were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. But I'm glad. I've always wanted to know somebody of noble birth.

HEATHCLIFF [REX DOWNING]: All the princes I ever read about had castles.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [SARITA WOOTEN]: Of course. They captured them. You must capture one too. There's a beautiful castle that lies waiting for your lance, Sir Prince.

HEATHCLIFF [REX DOWNING]: You mean Penistone Crag? Aw, that's just a rock.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [SARITA WOOTEN]: If you can't see that's a castle, you'll never be a prince (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939: 15' 19').

This abusive situation could be one of the reasons why Catherine Earnshaw decides to leave Heathcliff; she needs to feel protected. In Chapter IX, the character explains why she decides to marry Edgar Linton., showing the dire consequences of this union. Barnard and Barnard allude to the protagonist's relationship with the Linton family, "When the dogs bite her at Thrushcross Grange, she is forced to stay there, and so begins a process of double seduction

in which she is seduced to the more artificial and social values of the Lintons. In contrast, they, especially Edgar, are seduced by her vitality and beauty (Barnard & Barnard, 2003, p. 97).

Catherine's departure from *Wuthering Heights*, a place of raw emotion and untamed nature, to enter the alluring sphere of power and social status is a decision of profound significance. It marks a shift in her life, a departure from the familiar and a step into the unknown. It is a decision with which the writer Emily Brontë reflects an explicit criticism of the class society of her time in the novel. This quest for a better life is embodied in Catherine's free and uncoerced choice to accept Edgar Linton's proposal of marriage, which is the only means she has to rise socially and economically under the societal constraints of her time. However, as Catherine demonstrates in the conversation in Chapter IX, she is aware in her inner self that she is not acting correctly. This inner conflict, considered pivotal to the story's outcome, should be noted for its profound impact on the narrative tension.

When Edgar proposes to her, Cathy accepts, but not before voicing her misgivings to Nelly DEAN and fervently asserting that she and Heathcliff will always be one. After Cathy marries Edgar, her husband and Heathcliff compete for her affection. Torn between the two, Cathy willfully breaks her own heart. Mortally ill, Cathy-joined by Heathcliff-vows that their love shall outlast the grave. She dies directly after delivering a premature infant, Catherine LINTON. Her spirit haunts Heathcliff the rest of his life (Paddock and Rollyson, 2003, p. 35).

Nelly Dean knows Heathcliff's presence, and overhearing her words provokes a conflict. Having heard Catherine's words, Heathcliff flees and returns after three years to oust Linton and Earnshaw. The first of these runs from when Catherine approaches Nelly, asking, "Are you alone, Nelly?" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 60), concluding with the next doubt that Nelly throws into the air, "Where is the obstacle?" (Brontë 1847 [2003], p. 60). In this first part, in which Catherine seeks the external approval she wishes to hear to silence her conscience, the reader is privy to Catherine's affirmative response to Edgar and the frivolous motives that lead her to marry the young man.

This outward acceptance of Edgar's proposal starkly contrasts the inner conflict and doubt that Catherine experiences as she struggles to reconcile her desire for social and economic advancement with her true feelings for Heathcliff. This conflict, considered pivotal to the story's outcome, underscores the superficiality of Catherine's decision. When Nelly asks her: "Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?", (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 60). The young lady hastens to answer: "Well, because he is handsome and pleasant to be with [...] And because he is young and cheerful [...] And because he loves me [...] And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 61). Though these reasons may seem valid on the surface, they only highlight the hollowness of Catherine's decision.

NELLY [FLORA ROBSON]: Why do you love him?

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: He's handsome and pleasant to be with.

NELLY [FLORA ROBSON]: That's not enough.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: Because he'll be rich someday. I'll be the finest lady in the county.

NELLY [FLORA ROBSON]: Now tell me how you love him.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: I love the ground under his feet, the air above his head [...] and everything he touches (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939: 41' 29').

This series of statements undoubtedly does not express a severe and coherent reason for Catherine's desire to be engaged to Edgar. Her arguments, seemingly based solely on physical appearance, reflect the societal pressures of the time. These pressures, which weighed heavily on Catherine, dictated that a woman's worth was often tied to the wealth and status of her husband. Under these societal pressures, the female protagonist chooses a marriage based more on luxury than on love for Edgar, rejecting the genuine love she feels for Heathcliff and thus causing her eternal unhappiness. It should be borne in mind that this is a time when "Marriage was rightly regarded as a serious matter" (Thompson, 1963b, p. 19), being essential to achieving a particular social and economic security. This was a time when women had severely limited rights and opportunities, and marriage was often their only means of securing a stable social and economic position.

These limited rights and opportunities for women in that era significantly influenced Catherine's decision to marry Edgar. Marriage to Edgar was the only way she could secure a well-being position. In Fegan's words: "She loses her status as the daughter of the house, becoming a dependent of her stern older brother, who is set on founding his own family with Frances, a new dynasty which will exclude her" (2008, p. 95). Her brother Hindley, as the first-born, has inherited all the properties of the Earnshaw family. Moreover, it cannot be forgotten that Catherine, as a woman and in the presence of her brother Hindley, has inherited all the Earnshaw family estates. Therefore, unsurprisingly, she yearns for a union with Edgar Linton. The prospect he presents of escaping the oppressive world of Wuthering Heights and entering a new realm of comfort symbolizes Catherine's sole path to ascending the social and economic hierarchy. Heathcliff, in this new social sphere, is no longer her equal. Her inner turmoil is palpable, and she is torn between societal expectations and her true feelings.

Her choice will not only allow her to rise financially, but the Earnshaw and Linton families do not seem to object to the marriage as Nelly says: "Your brother will be pleased [...] The old lady and gentleman will not object- you will escape from a disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy, respectable one, and you love Edgar, and Edgar loves you. All seems smooth and easy---where is the obstacle?" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 62). However, Nelly, as a trusted servant and confidante, deeply understands Catherine's allure towards a refined life with Edgar Linton at Thrushcross Grange. This understanding is pivotal in Catherine's decision-making process, as Nelly can offer advice and reassurance that resonates with Catherine. Nelly often mirrors the societal norms of the time, where marriage was a means for women to secure their social and economic status. Her guidance is crucial in Catherine's journey, shaping her decisions and actions.

In the second part of the conversation, Catherine acknowledges the valid reason she could never marry Heathcliff, revealing to the reader that "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 63). This statement is the most explicit manifestation of the social conflict that permeates the novel. Heathcliff, faced with the servitude and misery to which he is subjected, cannot offer Catherine the status and social position she so fervently desires. In Wyler's adaptation, Catherine's emotional turmoil is evident in her words. She expresses her belief that marrying Heathcliff would be a degradation, yet she also longs for an escape from the disorderly, comfortless place: "It would degrade me to marry him. I wish he hadn't come back. It would be heaven to escape from this disorderly, comfortless place" (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939, 41' 57').

In the film, Merle Oberon identifies with Heathcliff faithfully based on the literary text as seen in the script: "And yet [...] he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same. Linton's is as different as frost from fire My one thought in living is Heathcliff. I am Heathcliff (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939: 43' 04'). At this time, Heathcliff had

neither property nor a recognised social position, which positively characterised and distinguished social groups in nineteenth-century Victorian England. The societal expectations were clear: “Daughters had to marry as judiciously as possible, to secure a proper position for themselves and at the same time to maintain the honour and interest of their families” (Reader, 1974, p. 33). Catherine, however, is not willing to succumb to the harsh reality of her playmate.

The societal pressure is palpable, as the reader is aware that no one is forcing Edgar’s sister to change, but that she is captivated by everything that Heathcliff lacks, and which does not even seem to be within her grasp, “Money, position, ease: the visible elements of society” (Williams, 1973, p. 67). Her freedom leads her down the wrong path when she understands the true meaning of her marriage to Edgar. Catherine is torn asunder by her love for Heathcliff and the societal pressures that tug her towards Edgar. Her heart a battleground, she grapples with the knowledge that her new social status could be a lifeline for Heathcliff, liberating him from the oppressive world of *Wuthering Heights*. This inner struggle is poignantly expressed in her conversation with Nelly: “Nelly, I see now, you think me a selfish wretch, but did it never strike you that, if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars? If I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise and place him out of my brother’s power” (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 64).

According to Ballesteros González, Catherine’s marriage to Edgar Linton, though driven by selfish designs, is a means to elevate Heathcliff through the social status she will gain with her husband (1998, p. 184). Upon hearing this, Nelly is surprised at the depth of Catherine’s intentions. It is not a simple matter of marrying Edgar for social status but a complex plan that involves the money of a man who is to become her husband and whose relations with Heathcliff are dire. As Eagleton describes, “In a crucial act of self-betrayal and bad faith, Catherine rejects Heathcliff as a suitor because he is socially inferior to Linton; and it is from this that the destruction follows” (1975, p. 101). This self-betrayal, a tragic turning point in the story, leads to destruction. The weight of her decisions is palpable, as she surrenders to the temptation of achieving a particular social and economic superiority, Catherine embarks on a journey of two parallel and opposite lives, marked by sorrow and regret.

As Edgar Linton’s wife, she adheres to the societal norms, a role she was pressured into, while as Heathcliff’s companion, she defies the immediate separation that Nelly predicts and Catherine refuses to accept. This refusal, expressed with an accent of indignation, underscores the societal implications of her decisions, highlighting the immense pressure she was under and the conflicts she had to navigate. Her defiance, expressed with an accent of indignation, underscores the societal implications of her decisions, highlighting the immense pressure she was under and the conflicts she had to navigate. It also evokes a sense of sympathy for Catherine, who was caught in the crossfire of societal expectations: “He quite deserted! We separated!” she exclaimed, with an accent of indignation: “Who is to separate us, pray? They’ll meet the fate of Milo! Not as long as I live, Ellen – for no mortal creature” (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 64).

According to Davies, “Emily Brontë undoubtedly recognised the permanent antipathy of interests between the ruling classes and the ruled, each tribe, class, sect, party and gender struggling for power without the violent natural and social orders” (1994, p. 240). This statement reinforces the idea of *Wuthering Heights* as a profound societal critique, in which the behaviour of its characters mirrors the reality of those years. The novel critiques the societal norms and power dynamics of the time, with the characters’ actions and relationships reflecting the more significant societal issues. At a time when social groups are sharply divided, it is substantial that the fundamental structure of the novel is rooted in a single conflict arising from the clash between different social groups.

The choice between Heathcliff and Edgar Linton is framed within an eminently patriarchal society, where the position of women from a legal point of view is invalid or at least relegated to that of the husband, who has priority in all areas related to the ownership of women's possessions. It is not surprising that Catherine, faced with the fact that her brother Hindley is male and first-born and, therefore, the sole beneficiary of the property, demonstrates a clear class consciousness. Catherine's choice, influenced by the promise of economic security that comes with marrying into the Linton family, significantly shapes her social position and future. Her marriage not only changes her economic status but also her social standing, highlighting the societal critique in the novel and the profound impact of societal norms on individual lives.

Catherine's ultimate choice of Edgar Linton catalyses the class conflict in *Wuthering Heights*. As Eagleton aptly describes, this choice is the novel's pivotal event, the decisive trigger of the tragedy (1975, p. 101). In her yearning to be part of the esteemed Linton family, not for their intrinsic qualities but for the social and economic power they represent, Catherine not only betrays herself but also her friendship with Heathcliff. Her departure from the oppressive world of the *Wuthering Heights* farmhouse is a betrayal that reverberates throughout the narrative, underscoring the emotional turmoil at the heart of the story. This betrayal, so profoundly felt by Heathcliff, is a stark reminder of the pain that pursuing social status can cause, and it invites us to sympathise with Heathcliff's suffering.

This personal decision that Catherine finally makes confirms William's words that "It is class and property that divide Heathcliff and Catherine" (1973, p. 176), with direct repercussions for Heathcliff, her playmate, who, driven by a deep sense of hatred and a burning desire for revenge, tries to obtain the social prestige he has never enjoyed. His pursuit is not just for power but for a sense of belonging and recognition, making his actions more desperate and his character more complex. Heathcliff's character, with his ambition, love, and vengeance, is a fascinating study of the complexities of human nature. Just before her death, Catherine's character alludes to "heather" and her childhood.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: Some heather. There's a beautiful patch near the castle. I want some from there. Near the castle?

EDGAR LINTON [DAVID NIVEN]: What castle, darling?

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: The castle on the moors, Edgar. Go there, please.

EDGAR LINTON [DAVID NIVEN]: There's no castle on the moors, darling. There is.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: It's on the Hill [...] beyond *Wuthering Heights*.

EDGAR LINTON [DAVID NIVEN]: You mean Penistone Crag.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: Yes. I was a queen there once. Go there, Edgar. Get me some heather, please (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939: 01'26' 44').

It is worth mentioning that this adaptation is a censored version that ends with Catherine's death. Wyler (1939) omits the third generation of characters and Heathcliff's revenge. At the film's conclusion, the spectators are left with a tender scene between Heathcliff and Catherine. This encounter occurs in Chapter XV of the novel, but this adaptation needs to convey the intentionality of the characters' words. Once again, we are dealing with a version that describes a romance between the protagonists:

HEATHCLIFF [LAURENCE OLIVIER]: Oh, Cathy, I never broke your heart. You broke it. You loved me! What right to throw love away for the poor fancy thing you felt for him? For a handful of worldliness? Misery, death and all the evils God and man could've handed down [...] would never have parted us. You did that alone. You wandered off [...] like a wanton, greedy child [...] to break your heart and mine.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW [MERLE OBERON]: Heathcliff, forgive me (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939: 01'31' 29').

The film ends with the death of the young Catherine. Wyler does not convey the story of Edgar's sister in its entirety, focusing on a young girl who was happy in her childhood and who marries Edgar to achieve social status. However, the film never shows that although Catherine has an ambivalent personality, she is a woman and does not have much of a chance in that society. Emily Brontë shows us a duality; on the one hand, she is an ambitious being who wants to climb the social ladder, but on the other hand, the role of women in Victorian times was relegated to the background. The film's viewer needs to read the novel to at least try to understand Cathy's complex personality and to understand Brontë's social critique. The film's choice to end with the end of the young Catherine is significant as it leaves the audience with a sense of incompleteness, mirroring the unresolved nature of Cathy's character in the novel. Wyler's decision to omit the third generation of characters and Heathcliff's acts of revenge is significant. These omissions profoundly impact the film's ability to convey the novel's themes fully.

4.2. Isabella Linton's character in Wuthering Heights and Wyler's film

In Chapter 10, Heathcliff returns after three years of absence. Isabella, a charming young lady of eighteen, though she behaved childishly, was not immune to the visitor's allure: "She was at that time a charming young lady of eighteen; infantile in manners, though possessed of keen wit, keen feelings, and a keen temper, too, if irritated" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 79). Her attraction to Heathcliff was undeniable, which led her to take the initiative to show her interest, courageously defying the Victorian norms that expected women to be passive and responsive in love. Isabella's boldness in this act and her courage to defy societal norms are genuinely inspiring and worthy of admiration.

Isabella Linton's character, as described by Barnard and Barnard, is shaped by her marriage to Heathcliff and her subsequent pregnancy. Her romantic whim, based on ignorance of his character and aims, gives her a specific strength and individuality that commands respect. Her need to oppose his neglect and mistreatment, especially during her pregnancy, adds depth to her portrayal and enhances the reader's understanding of her character. Isabella's defiance of Heathcliff's mistreatment, especially during her pregnancy, is a testament to her strength and resilience, evoking a profound sense of respect in the reader (Barnard & Barnard, 2003, p. 198). From the first meeting with Heathcliff after three years of asylum, the young woman cannot help but feel an irresistible attraction to the visitor, takes the initiative and shows her interest. The wily Heathcliff is interested in Isabella because she is the heir: "She is her brother's heir, is she not?" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 84).

Catherine, in the film, tries to persuade Heathcliff not to marry Edgar's sister because she does not deserve to be hurt by him. However, her attempt is in vain because Heathcliff, in the adaptation, is desperate for the young woman to see him as Isabella Linton's husband, not Edgar's sister, to see him as a desperate lover.

HEATHCLIFF [LAURENCE OLIVIER]: You must keep me tormented with that cruelty you think so pious. You've been smug and pleased with my vile love of you, haven't you? After this, you won't think of me as Cathy's foolish and despairing lover. You'll think of me as Isabella's husband [...] and be glad for my happiness [...] as I was for yours (1'17' 18').

The screen adaptation skillfully depicts Heathcliff's cunning takeover of the Wuthering Heights house and Hindley's addiction to alcohol: "He needs fire in his veins [...] a little courage with which to face his unhappy life" (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939 1'01' 59'). In the adaptation, Heathcliff cleverly alludes to Hindley's mistreatment of him: "You remember that time you hit me with a rock? The times you shamed and flogged me as your stable boy? You were a coward then, and you're a coward now" (1'02' 48'). Later in the film, Isabella visits Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, showing her dissatisfaction with how Edgar and Catherine have treated him, "I was furious with my brother, and Cathy too. I told them so. I thought they acted most shamefully" (1'04' 34').

The next time they meet is at the ball. Isabella addresses Heathcliff, "I was afraid you wouldn't come. Tonight would've been ruined if you hadn't" (1'07' 48'), and her brother Edgar considers that for his sister Heathcliff, it is a whim, "It's just a young girl's fancy, but one must not inflame it [...] with too much opposition, but let it spend itself harmlessly in a few dances" (1'07' 48'). At the age of nineteen, Isabella Linton, a young woman with her life ahead of her, makes a fateful decision to elope with Heathcliff. This act, orchestrated by Heathcliff, cunningly strips Isabella of any economic power, as no pre-nuptial agreement is in place (Pike, 2009, p. 358). However, it's crucial to recognize that Isabella's choices were significantly influenced by Heathcliff's manipulation, a key element in the power dynamics of their relationship. In this adaptation directed by Wyler, Doctor Kennet suggests to Isabella that she should return to her brother, who is suffering because Catherine is dying.

KENNETH [DONALD CRISP]: I brought you into the world [...] but it's a world you're not going to grace very long if you stay here. Dear child, I must tell you this. Go back where you belong, back with Edgar for a month or two. It would mean your salvation, and his.

ISABELLA [GERALDINE FITZGERALD]: Edgar's disowned me.

KENNETH [DONALD CRISP]: Nonsense. That was natural under the circumstances, but he needs you now.

ISABELLA [GERALDINE FITZGERALD]: He does. Why?

KENNETH [DONALD CRISP]: Cathy is gravely ill. In fact, it's only a matter of days. Hours, perhaps (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939, 1'21' 12').

Following the consummation of their union in 1784, Isabella Heathcliff becomes a victim of both physical and psychological abuse. Heathcliff's marriage to Isabella is solely driven by economic and social interests. In the narrative, Catherine attempts to caution Isabella about Heathcliff's true intentions, but Isabella, driven by her desire to please Heathcliff, disregards her advice:

ISABELLA [GERALDINE FITZGERALD]: Do you imagine that I don't know why you're acting so? Because you love him. Yes! You love him! And you're mad with pain at the thought of my marrying him. You want him to pine and dream of you [...] die for you, while you live in comfort as Mrs. Linton. You don't want him to be happy. You want to make him suffer. You want to destroy him! But I want to make him happy, and I will! (Goldwyn & Wyler, 1939, 1'15' 39').

In a society deeply divided by class, Isabella's elopement with Heathcliff brings disgrace to her family. Despite her pleas for forgiveness, her brother refuses to accept her back at the Farm. Isabella's role as the third narrator is not crucial; it is enlightening, as a significant part of the story is revealed through her extensive letter to Nelly. Isabella's perspective, which provides a unique and critical insight into the inhumane treatment she endured at the hands of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, is of utmost importance. It is worth mentioning that this part of the novel, in which Heathcliff mistreats the woman, does not appear in Wyler's film (1939). This film does not show the character's true personality or her evolution as an abused woman. Isabella's suffering at the hands of Heathcliff is not just severe; it is brutal and relentless, and it is this inhumane treatment that we, as readers, must empathize with a profound sense of outrage. Isabella's perspective is a critical element that draws us into the narrative, making us more engaged in her story.

Approximately six weeks after Isabella's departure, Nelly Dean receives a letter in which Isabella tells her version of events. In this letter, she recounts the inhumane treatment she received from Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, "Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil? [...] but, I beseech you to explain, if you can, what I have married [...]" (Brontë 1847 [2003], p. 106). In Chapter XIV, after reading Isabella's letter, Nelly, deeply affected by its contents, asks Edgar to forgive her. However, Edgar's refusal to forgive Nelly adds a dramatic element to the narrative. This letter is never shown in the film. Visiting *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly finds Isabella in a depressed state, enduring her husband's abuse and contempt.

One of Heathcliff's aims is to make his wife hate him and make her life miserable. The villain is well aware that Isabella is beginning to understand his true nature, "I think she begins to know me: I don't perceive the silly smiles and grimaces that provoked me at first; [...]" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 118). In chapter XVII, two significant events unfold-her husband's abandonment and her subsequent flight to London. Isabella, in a state of emotional upheaval, leaves her home and bursts into the house in *Wuthering Heights*, in a physically distressed state, breathless and bleeding (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 132).

Isabella's flight from *Wuthering Heights* is a powerful symbol of her inability to endure the physical and psychological abuse she endures. Pykett, in his analysis of Isabella's narrative in Chapter XVII, underscores the extreme male violence in *Wuthering Heights* to the point of it being almost a parody (1989: 70). The reader is witness to her overwhelming sense of guilt. Having eloped with Heathcliff, she is severed from the departed Catherine, with no opportunity for reconciliation. In haste, she hurls his engagement ring into the fire. This act of discarding the ring, a potent symbol of her captivity and anguish, marks a pivotal juncture in Isabella's flight: "'This is the last thing of his I have about me:' she slipped the gold ring from her third finger and threw it on the floor. 'I'll smash it!' she continued, striking it with childish spite, 'and then I'll burn it!' and she took and dropped the misused article among the coals" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 133).

Isabella, in a state of deep regret over her marriage, as can be deduced from her words, "Monster! would that he could be blotted out of creation, and out of my memory!" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 134), swiftly changes her clothes and requests a carriage to take her to Gimmerton, where she plans to head to an undisclosed location. In the film, the female character never utters these words; again, the omission is detected. Isabella does not dare to delay her departure, fearing that Heathcliff might pursue her and cause trouble at the Farm. It is worth noting that Isabella is aware that if she leaves her husband, she will have to go far away, "It is strong enough to make me feel pretty certain that he would not chase me over England, supposing I contrived a clear escape; and therefore I must get quite away" (Brontë,

1847 [2003], p. 134). In the novel, the young Isabella Linton undergoes a profound transformation in her personality to the point where she wishes she had never met Heathcliff.

Emily Brontë denounced a case of gender violence through this character's story. She takes pleasure in provoking her aggressor, Heathcliff, "I experienced pleasure in being able to exasperate him: the sense of pleasure woke my instinct of self-preservation, so I fairly broke free [...]" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 134).

ISABELLA [GERALDINE FITZGERALD]: If Cathy died [...] I might begin to live.

KENNETH [DONALD CRISP]: Begin to live, eh? In this house with Heathcliff, nothing can live (1'21' 55').

In her story, she narrates her ordeal in *Wuthering Heights* and her escape. It all begins when Isabella witnesses a cruel scene in which Hindley, Catherine's brother, attempts to murder Heathcliff. This incident, culminating in the novel's ongoing power struggles and conflicts, sets the tone for the hostile environment Isabella finds herself in. In this hostile environment, Hindley asks Isabella, "Are you willing to endure to the last and not once attempt a repayment?" (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 136). Catherine's brother think they both have a profoundly personal score to settle with Heathcliff. This personal nature of the score adds a layer of emotional investment to the characters. Edgar's sister believes that revenge and violence are a double-edged sword.

When Hindley asks Isabella to help him kill Heathcliff, she bravely refuses, a testament to her courage. Unfortunately, Heathcliff accuses her of conspiring against him and violently attacks her. This cruel scene is not the only instance of physical violence readers will witness in the novel. Heathcliff's actions are not just brutal but shockingly so, as he attempts to assault her, even throwing a knife that fortunately only wounds her ear. Despite these terrifying experiences, Isabella's courage shines through as she escapes to the Farm, a testament to her bravery and endurance that inspires admiration in the audience.

In a bold act that defies the norms of her time, Edgar's sister flees to an unknown destination, which Nelly Dean, the story's narrator, reveals to be somewhere in the south, near London. There, she gives birth and christens her son Linton (Brontë, 1847 [2003], p. 142). Despite the social expectations of the Victorian era, Isabella is a victim of her husband's abuse. She bravely decides to run away while pregnant. This act of defiance inspires admiration for her courage and determination. As Paddock and Rollynson note, Isabella's actions significantly impact the story, shaping its course and the fate of its characters: "When Isabella finally manages to escape from her husband and *Wuthering Heights*, she is obliged to reside away from Thrushcross Grange. Edgar sees her again only 12 years later when she is dying; she asks her brother to take charge of her son, Linton Heathcliff" (2003, p. 97).

Edgar's sister, an essential character in the story, does not go unnoticed by the novel's reader. The young woman, a victim of gender violence, undergoes a profound change in her personality to the point where she begins to feel aggressive instincts and hatred. Nor is there any suggestion that Isabella faces her future motherhood with joy but fears giving birth in *Wuthering Heights* in a hostile environment. It's important to note that the film oversimplifies the character's true story and does not show her as an abused woman fleeing Heathcliff. In Chapter XVII of the novel, Heathcliff and Hindley have a violent confrontation, and Heathcliff threatens Isabella with a knife. At this point, the young woman decides to flee because she feels her life is threatened. This crucial scene, which unfortunately does not appear in the film adaptation, is a significant part of Isabella's story, vividly illustrating the extent of her mistreatment.

Emily Brontë leaves Isabella's life in London shrouded in a veil of mystery that she never unveils to the reader. After her demise, her son Linton Heathcliff is left an orphan. Linton's role in the narrative is significant as he becomes a pawn in Heathcliff's schemes. Seizing the opportunity, Heathcliff claims custody of the child, ultimately allowing him to triumph over the Lintons and inherit their estates. Isabella's absence in Linton's life and her enigmatic past leaves the reader deeply engaged in the puzzle of her life. This mystery keeps the reader involved and invested in the narrative, feeling a part of the unfolding story as they strive to uncover the truth about Isabella's life. The reader's role in uncovering the truth about Isabella's life is crucial, making them feel more involved in the narrative and actively participating in the story's progression.

In the novel, after Heathcliff's death, the reader's anticipation of Hareton and Cathy's happy marriage becomes a significant part of the narrative's progression and the characters' development. This anticipation, deeply rooted in the reader's investment in the story, fills them with hope for a brighter future: "[...] The reader is invited to contemplate a happier future, with Hareton presumably inheriting the fee and the equitable interest, and Catherine inheriting the life interest in the Linton estate" (Ward, 2012, p. 61). This hopeful anticipation of a positive outcome instils a sense of optimism in the reader, who eagerly looks forward to the potential happiness of the characters. The anticipation of a positive outcome with Hareton and Cathy's marriage is a beacon of hope, making the reader feel more optimistic about the characters' future. Wyler's film, in its omission of the entire history of the novel's third-generation characters and much of the plot, places a strong emphasis on the passionate romance between Heathcliff and Catherine. This focus, however, results in a less pronounced portrayal of Heathcliff's fierceness and desire for revenge, and the mistreatment of the third-generation characters (Hareton Earnshaw, Cathy Linton, and his son Linton-Heathcliff) is left unexplored.

5. Conclusions

Emily Brontë, driven by her literary aspirations, gave birth to *Wuthering Heights* in 1847. While some readers may misperceive it as a romantic love story, it is a novel that revolves around orphaned children grappling with the abandonment of their parents, violence, revenge and abuse. The writer, leading a quiet life, breathed life into characters with an obsessive-compulsive nature. Starved of his father's affection, Hindley becomes fixated on degrading Heathcliff. Heathcliff, in turn, is consumed by his obsession with Catherine, a central theme that permeates the novel. The novel's intricate characters and intense themes have piqued significant critical interest, a testament to its enduring relevance, and ignited a vigorous debate among scholars and enthusiasts who dissect it from various angles. In this study, we aim to draw the reader into the obsessive and aggressive world of the novel, a world that has sparked such significant critical interest. The house of *Wuthering Heights* symbolises a hostile world in which the characters struggle to survive.

This world is a powerful critique of the destructive nature of obsessive love and the consequences of parental neglect. By understanding the characters' motivations and the societal context, the reader can truly appreciate the depth of Brontë's novel. She is considered a literary legend, but at the time of her publication, critics in her homeland failed to appreciate the importance she attached to women in Victorian society. The societal constraints women faced in the Victorian era, such as limited rights and the expectation of obedience, are central to the novel's themes and the characters' actions. Brontë criticises the society around her and recounts these social constraints, crucial to understanding the characters' actions and the novel's themes.

Through the stories of two generations of female protagonists, Brontë shines a light on the societal constraints women face in Victorian society. In a patriarchal society where men were the custodians of children and women were legally and economically unprotected, Catherine Earnshaw's story becomes a powerful denouncement of the societal imposition of marriage. Her character reveals the oppressive nature of societal norms, a theme that resonates throughout the novel. In contrast, Isabella Linton defies the rules of Victorian etiquette by eloping and marrying without her family's consent, only to become a victim of her husband's abuse and eventually flee while pregnant.

Comparing the literary text of *Wuthering Heights* and the film directed by Wyler (1939) is a valuable exercise. It must allow students to improve their critical skills by analysing textual and audiovisual discourses. It is also worth noting that these adaptations are part of *Wuthering Heights*' cultural legacy. As students of English, it is our responsibility to delve into this phenomenon of Brontë's cultural dissemination to preserve and understand the impact of her work. Brontë's unique novel has been adapted more than a hundred times for film and television, and this film was the second adaptation to be released.

As noted in the analysis, Wyler (1939) depicts a romantic relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff, emphasising a happy childhood. However, Catherine needs to run away from home because she is also an affectionless child who has grown up in a hostile home. As the analysis explains, marriage is Catherine's only option for survival in a class society. In the case of Isabella, there are significant omissions in this film, where it is never shown that Heathcliff brutally assaults her or that she runs away pregnant. Therefore, it is considered necessary to analyse other more current adaptations of the novel by students or viewers. These adaptations, being more recent, may offer a different perspective on the novel, its themes, and its characters, thereby enriching the students' understanding of the text.

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