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"Quem não arrisca, não petisca": Como as mudanças no enredo de *O morro dos ventos uivantes* de Emily Brontë acrescentam novos significados às suas adaptações para o cinema

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained": How the changes in the plot of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* add new meaning to its film adaptations

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Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar e discutir três adaptações do romance *O morro dos ventos uivantes*, de Emily Brontë, para o cinema a partir de teorias sobre adaptação midiática, intertextualidade, intermidialidade e remediação de Julie Sanders, Linda Hutcheon e Irina O. Rajewsky. Para essa análise selecionei as adaptações feitas pelos diretores William Wyler (1939), Peter Kominsky(1992), e Andrea Arnold (2011), as quais receberam o mesmo nome do romance. Este trabalho procura, ainda, demonstrar que as diferenças existentes entre romance e filme não significam necessariamente perdas em relação ao enredo do romance, mas sim a construção de novos significados e a discussão de outros temas pertinentes aos espectadores.

Palavras-chave: Adaptação midiática. Intertextualidade. Intermidialidade. Remediação.

Abstract: The aim of this article is to analyze and discuss three adaptations of the novel *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë, into film in light of theories about adaptation of media, intertextuality, intermediality and remediation by Julie Sanders, Linda Hutcheon and Irina O. Rajewsky. For this analysis, I selected the adaptations made by the directors William Wyler (1939), Peter Kominsky (1992), and Andrea Arnold (2011), which received the same title as the novel. This paper also intends to show that the differences between the novel and the films do not necessarily mean loss in relation to the plot of the novel; instead, they are responsible for the construction of new meanings and the discussion of other themes relevant to the spectators.

Keywords: Adaptation of media. Intertextuality. Intermediality. Remediation.

Having been adapted more than forty-eight times to film, television, radio, opera, and theater, the novel *Wuthering Heights*, written by Emily Brontë and published for the first time in 1847, had its famous characters portrayed in different ways and its major themes - love, hate, vengeance, social classes division, good and evil - shown through different perspectives. Classified as "mediatic transpositions" by Irina O. Rajewsky, the adaptations into film provide the spectator with the literary text at the same time in which s/he watches the movie, receiving the literary original version in its difference or equivalence (RAJEWSKY 2005).Thus, additional layers of meaning can be constructed by the act of referring the film to text, or of relating them.

In order to show these additional layers, this paper, then, aims to analyze three of the adaptations comparing them with one another and with the novel. The adaptations selected were the films by William Wyler (1939), Peter Kominsky(1992), and Andrea Arnold (2011), which present significant differences from the novel and from one another.

The novel, which was written between 1845 and 1846, and published under the pseudonym of Ellis Bell in 1847, was considered by some critics a mix of the gothic and the domestic genres. Although it was written at the time when the British novel was being consolidated as a genre that had the domestic as its distinguishing trait, *Wuthering Heights* displayed it in a peculiar way as argues Emily Rena-Dozier in her text "Gothic Criticisms: Wuthering Heights and Nineteenth-century Literary History":

> The British novel in the nineteenth century, it was generally agreed, was the domestic novel, and in order for the domestic novel to have triumphed, the gothic had to be defeated, excised from the body of the novel in order for healthy tissue to regrow.
>
> Wuthering Heights, however, carefully breaks down this opposition between gothic and domestic modes by illustrating the ways in which the domestic is predicated on acts of violence. Wuthering Heights is acutely critical of literary history, in that it embodies the instability of nineteenth-century literary history's division between gothic and domestic novels. (p. 759-760).

The novel presents two main narrators: Mr. Lockwood and Ellen Dean (Nelly). Mr. Lockwood is a tenant living on the property of Thrushcross Grange who introduces the novel with his account of the curious events that happened when he went to Wuthering Heights and met his landlord Heathcliff and his family. Nelly is a servant who worked all

her life for this family and who tells Lockwood what happened in the past. It's in this fashion that the reader gets acquainted with the story of Heathcliff, a dark-skinned boy who was found in Liverpool by Mr. Earnshaw and raised by him among his children, Catharine – same age as Heathcliff – and Hindley – older than both. The story focuses on the coming of age of these three characters, and on how cruelty, prejudice and rejection can lead to hatred and vengeance.

Julie Sanders claims, in the introduction to *Adaptation and Appropriation*, that adaptations can both convey the ideas in the novel or subvert them.

> To this end, adaptation could be defined as an inherently conservative genre. As Attridge continues: 'through their frequently overt collusiveness ... novels offer themselves not as challenges to the canon, but as canonic - as already canonized, one might say. They appear to locate themselves within an established literary culture, rather than presenting themselves as an assault on that culture' (1996: 169). Yet, as the notion of hostile takeover present in a term such as 'appropriation' implies, adaptation can also be oppositional, even subversive. There are as many opportunities for divergence as adherence, for assault as well as homage. (p. 9).

Thus, in the three adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* we can see points of "adherence" as well as points of "divergence". However, although spectators might expect a faithful transposition from one medium to the other, the differences between novel and film should not be perceived as some loss to the original; instead, they should be accounted as an addition, as the creation of a new meaning, even if it seems that the screenplay writer removed something the reader considered essential to the novel.

In Wyler and Arnold's adaptations, for example, half of the story is cut off from the screenplay. The novel presents an elaborate progression of the formation of the characters' personalities. It shows in detail the jealousy felt by Hindley and the consequent cruelty with which he treated Heathcliff; the friendship and love shared by Heathcliff and Catherine; the betrayal felt by Heathcliff when Catharine decides to marry Edgar Linton (a young man from a higher social position); and how all these facts are decisive to Heathcliff's desire for vengeance. Moreover, the second half of the novel, which is omitted from the 1939 and the 2011 versions, shows how this vengeance is developed and the bitterness it brings not only to Heathcliff, but also to everyone around him. It also presents a resolution for the novel's issues with the imminent marriage of Cathy (Catharine's daughter) and Hareton Earnshaw (Hindley's son). For the 1939 version the exclusion of the

whole second generation of the novel of the plot, as well as Hindley's wife (who dies after giving birth to Hareton in the novel), transforms the story in a tragedy with a gothic tone. Pamela Mills justifies Wyler's choice by saying that "finding one central theme on which to concentrate becomes vital because there are too many themes in the novel to all be represented in cinema" (MILLS 2013). In addition, there is the question of the "classical paradigm", a term that describes the dominant narrative structure in fiction film production since the 1910's.

> Derived from the live theater, the classical paradigm is a set of conventions, not rules. This narrative model is based on a conflict between a protagonist, who initiates the action, and an antagonist, who resists it. Most films in this form begin with an implied dramatic question. We want to know how the protagonist will get what he or she wants in the face of considerable opposition. The following scenes intensify this conflict in a rising pattern of action. This escalation is treated in terms of cause–effect, with each scene implying a link to the next.
>
> The conflict builds to its maximum tension in the climax. Here, the protagonist and antagonist clash overtly. One wins, the other loses. After their confrontation, the dramatic intensity subsides in the resolution. The story ends with some kind of formal closure— traditionally a wedding or a dance in comedies, a death in tragedies, a reunion or return to normal in dramas. The final shot— because of its privileged position—is often meant to be a philosophical overview of some kind, a summing up of the significance of the previous material. (GIANNETTI, 2008, p. 375-376).

The 1939 spectators' expectations, then, were related to the "classical paradigm". And that is what Wyler succeeds in fulfilling. There is the main conflict: Heathcliff's insertion in the Earnshaw family and his complicity with Catherine. Hindley is the antagonist who mistreats Heathcliff. Catherine also becomes an antagonist when she leaves Heathcliff to marry Edgar Linton. The action intensifies as Heathcliff comes back rich after a few years away. He is finally able to buy Wuthering Heights property and marry Isabella Linton as part of his revenge. Cathy's death can be seen as the climax. The remarkable performance of Merle Oberon (who plays Cathy) in this scene gives the spectators all the tension they were waiting for. As Wyler chose the tragedy form, its "formal closure" is Heathcliff's poetic death shown in the form of an encounter with Cathy.

Catharine's Death - *Wuthering Heights* (1939) Dir. William Wyler

In the 2011 version, however, the deletion of the second half of the novel is done differently and has different effects. While in Wyler's film the children of Heathcliff, Catherine and Hindley are omitted in Arnold's film only Hareton (Hindley's son) appears. Hareton in the novel is mistreated by Heathcliff in the same way (maybe worse) Hindley mistreated him when he was a child. The 2011 version, however, signalizes in Hareton the evil influence as well as the evil character of Heathcliff. In many instances the spectator can see how Hareton performs actions reflecting the cruelty he "learned" from Heathcliff.

While in Wyle's film Heathcliff appears to be fitting in the role of the standard hero from love stories with a justification for his anger and his vengeance, Arnold's film shows Heathcliff as a product of anger, who grows among cruelty and who becomes cruel. The wronged hero of the 1939 version avenges himself only on Hindley, Isabella and Edgar instead of using their children as tools, as we can see in the novel. In the 2011 version, however, it is possible to see how this cruelty is shown as a personality trait and as a legacy he passes on to Hareton. Heathcliff is shown to use animals as the target of his anger. When he was a child, he calmly carries a lamb on his back and when Hindley offends him, he slits the lamb's throat. Another instance of his vindictiveness is when he is hunting and he breaks the neck of a rabbit caught in his snare after seeing Cathy and Edgar together. In both scenes, Heathcliff shows a certain indifference, a certain detachment – if not pleasure – in killing those animals. In this sense, Heathcliff appears to be crueler in Arnold's version than his character in the literary text. Peter Bradshaw in his review of the version released in 2011 asserts that:

> In the most extraordinary way, Arnold achieves a kind of pre-literary reality effect. Her film is not presented as another layer of

> interpretation, superimposed on a classic's frills and those of all the other remembered versions, but an attempt to create something that might have existed before the book, something on which the book might have been based, a raw semi-articulate series of events, later polished and refined as a literary gemstone. That is an illusion, of course, but a convincing and thrilling one. (BRADSHAW eletronic file).

Arnold, thus, focuses on the psychological side of Heathcliff's vileness, while Wyler and Kominsky seem to privilege the physical brutality of the character.

Linda Hutcheon also discusses the exclusion or maintenance of certain aspects of the novel in the film. She considers the act of adaptation "a process of creation" involving "both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation". She says that such an act "has been called both appropriation and salvaging" and that "for every aggressive appropriator outed by a political component, there is a patient salvager". (8) In this fashion, while both Wyler and Arnold recreate the novel, in some sense, by excluding the second half of it, Kominsky acts as a true "patient salvager" who keeps as close to the novel's plot as he can. In Kominsky's film, the spectators can have a more complete view of the development of the characters shown in the novel, as mentioned before. The vengeance carried by Heathcliff is, thus, more elaborated; more like an exercise of calculation and patience. As in the novel, Kominsky's Heathcliff uses the children (not only Cathy Linton and Hareton Earnshaw, but his own son, Linton) in his intricate plot of revenge. He forces his sick son to write to Cathy and when she comes for a visit he keeps her captive and forces her to marry Linton. It is only after their marriage that his vengeance is complete. Heathcliff becomes the master of both properties, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, although Catherine's ghost still haunts him.

As observed so far, in the three films, in more than one way, characters, plot and scenery were reinvented. An aspect mentioned before, the Gothic tone and elements (which for some critics is a strong characteristic of the novel and for others not), is differently represented in the three versions. The appearance of Catherine's ghost, for example, is totally erased from Arnold's film. In this version, the frame narrative and the character of Lockwood do not appear at all. The film is open ended, closing with Heathcliff receiving Hindley's land and seeing a bird, whose falling feather, reminded him of Cathy. The scene shifts to a flashback, a scene from the beginning of the film, although the scene is now shot from a different angle. On the other hand, Kominsky and Wyler decided for salvaging the Gothic tone and presented both Catharine's ghost and the character of Lockwood. Saviour Catania argues that:

> Kosminsky likewise holds us in constant suspension by materializing Catherine's phantom through the immateriality of Lockwood's harrowing nightmare and Heathcliff s suggested hallucination. We are thereby plunged into nebulous subjective states whose illogical logicality precludes any definite supernatural or psychological interpretations. Kosminsky differs radically from previous Wuthering Heights film adaptors by neither rationalizing nor taking Catherine's ghost for granted. (CATANIA 2012, p.27).

Wyle, also seems to suggest, at first, as only Lockwood can see the ghost, although we can hear the ghost's voice, that it might be a hallucination too. Nevertheless, in the end, there is a witness saying that he saw a woman with Heathcliff and that the woman disappeared. Again, the ghost is immaterial for the spectator. What appears in this scene is Nelly picturing the couple walking in the snowy moors. Likewise, in Kominsky's film, this encounter of Catherine('s ghost) and Heathcliff also represents Heathcliff's death, as if their "happy ending" would be possible only in an after-life plan.

Catherine and Heathcliff in the moors - *Wuthering Heights* (1992) Dir. Peter Kominsky

Another important change that can be seen in the three adaptations is Cathy and Heathcliff's portrayal. Even though the three of them incorporated Catherine´s fiery personality and the anger that grows in Heathcliff in the novel, in each of them the characters are shown under a different light. Pamela Mills comments on the 1939 version saying that:

> The film presents Catherine and Heathcliff as wild, playful, imaginative children with a strong affection for each other but certainly with no dark motives or actual cruelty in their natures. The first scene that features the two of them together uses long shots as the camera pans action shots of them riding their horses across the moors. The only scenes of their childhood take place in bright sunlight to indicate a sense of freedom that they find only in the natural setting of the moors. (MILLS, 1996, p. 417).

In both 1939 and 1992 versions childhood elapses fast and most of the events from the novel happen with the characters already grown up. Arnold, however, focuses on the characters in their adolescence. Even after time had passed and the actors were changed, the scenes are permeated with flashbacks.

The spectator can see a difference in Cathy's personality, as well as in the atmosphere of the film, in the remarkable scene when Cathy tells Nelly that Edgar has proposed and Heathcliff overhears part of the conversation. While Merle Oberon in the 1939 version performs the scene in an inflamed manner, walking around the kitchen and looking at the camera with rather expressive eyes; Juliette Binoche (who plays both Catharine and Cathy Linton in the 1992 version) speaks quietly, facing Nelly, at times looking down, with tears in her eyes. Shannon Beer (who plays a young Catherine in 2011 version) is also in tears, implying certain despair. In this version, the spectator never gets to the part "I am Heathcliff", since the point of view is Heathcliff's and he leaves just before that. While Wyle's film focus**es** on the expressiveness of Catherine's character as a conflicted young woman, Kominsky and Arnold opt to display the social conflict presented in the novel, i.e. to have a better life Cathy should marry Edgar, which was the sensible thing to do**.** Arnold and Kominsky's films also show the issue of gender. For Cathy, the only possible way of social ascension was marrying a rich man. Heathcliff, on the other hand, did not have the same constraints; he did not need to marry to achieve some sort of social ascension. His marriage to Isabelle Linton is merely part of his vengeance against Catherine and Edgar.

Arnold's choice of having an African descendant as Heathcliff heightened the relation of hatred and violence between him and Hindley, taking it to a different level. It also places the film into the context of slavery, since Heathcliff appears to have been a slave. He has some scars on his back and speaks a different language other than English. This is another aspect of the novel that is differently approached by the three directors. In the novel, Heathcliff is presented as having dark skin and even called "gypsy". The racial conflict appears in the novel, although it is not fully foregrounded. Maja-lisa Von Sneidern discusses the issue of race in the novel, contrasting it with the historical period of slave trade in Liverpool, the place where Mr. Earnshaw found Heathcliff. For her the appearance of Heathcliff in the novel upsets the "social equilibrium" in the moors and the Victorian ideal of domesticity shared by the readers. She also adds that:

> Wuthering Heights is the site in which the problematics of an Anglo-Saxon mythology saddled with the fact of slavery and the "fact" of race are revealed, if not resolved. Bronte locates her plantation colony not on the margins of the empire, some exotic island half way around the world, but in the heart of Yorkshire. In the novel the Heights, corrupted by the introduction of the racially other, is the place where the figures of a system of bondage work out their relationships. These relationships are represented according to principles common to abolitionist, anti-abolitionist, and Anglo-Saxon racialist discourses available at the time the novel was composed. Heathcliff, Hindley and the elder Catherine are the agents who act out these relationships and principles. (SNEIDERN, 1995 p. 174).

The relationships presented by Sneidern, in some ways masked in the novel, are openly enacted in Arnold's film. Wyler's version, and it must be considered that it was released in 1939, has Lawrence Olivier as Heathcliff, portraying the role of a hero. The issue of race is erased not merely because it did not fit in the "classical paradigm" mentioned above, but also because it did not used to be discussed openly at that time. Kominsky managed to darken not only Heathcliff's (in this version played by Ralph Fiennes) hair, but his skin too, although the race question does not make the foreground as well. It is only in Arnold's version that it was given its true value. Heathcliff is inserted in the Earnshaws household and the conflicts that emerge, mainly with Hindley, are directly related of his race, language and origin. In addition, the film focuses almost exclusively on him. MacCarthy refers to it in his article saying that:

> Arnold's decision to adopt Heathcliff's point of view is also key. It

> enables his "monomania" (Bronte's term) regarding Catherine (Shannon Beer and Kaya Scodelario) to be all consuming, to such an extent that Cathy comes off as either the object of his obsession--his prey--or a fickle tease. It doesn't mean we are privy to Heathcliff's thoughts or gain psychological insight into his character, however. His relationship with Cathy has overwhelmingly carnal overtones from the moment he arrives at the Earnshaw farmhouse, a rustic hovel. (MACCARTHY, eletronic file).

Heathcliff is not only the protagonist, it is through him that we get the facts. The camera is most of the time on him or following him and his point of view.

Close-up of Heathcliff - *Wuthering Heights* (2011) Dir. Andrea Arnold

Furthermore, Arnold focuses on Heathfcliff's facial expression. There is a great number of close-ups on Heathcliff's face rather than the use of dialogs. Differently from Wyler's Heathcliff and his eloquence, Arnold's Heathcliff cannot communicate at first and when he learns the English language, it seems that he prefers not to speak it. Even Heathcliff's habit of self-inflicting pain by hitting his head on the wall is a sign of his difficulty to communicate. The film is also remarkable by the use of the landscape. Almost each scene starts with the appearance of the landscape, in a sense setting the tone of the film. The moors are shown in a very positive way, differently from the previous versions, due to the photography of such scenes. Instead of the "low key" light, usually used in mysteries and thrillers, in Arnold's version the spectator has the landscape illuminated by the available lighting, and a natural contrast between the landscape and the characters' clothing, almost like in a documentary.

Finally, the aspects analyzed above, and many others that can be analyzed in further studies, show that adaptations can be regarded as an addition to the meanings offered by the literary text. Sanders states that:

> On the surface, all screen versions of novels are transpositions in the sense that they take a text from one genre and deliver it to new audiences by means of the aesthetic conventions of an entirely different generic process (here novel into film). But many adaptations, of novels and other generic forms, contain further layers of transposition, relocating their source texts not just generically, but in cultural, geographical and temporal terms. (SANDERS, 2006, p.20).

And such layers are what makes the adaptation in a certain way original. The *Wuthering Heights* directors achieved, each in a different way, the creation of a new work. This new work discusses differently not only the issues present in the novel, but new ones that the spectator has to face up in the adaptation. Racism, slavery and gender relations are some of them, although further analysis will show many others.

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