



Adapting the Men in *Jane Eyre*

A Comparative Analysis of two Movie Adaptations (from 1943 and 2011) of the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, with a Focus on the Male Characters.

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Abstract

This is a comparative analysis of two film adaptations (from 1943 and 2011) of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, with a focus on the male characters. My aim is to study how patriarchal control is adapted for the screen, compared to the original novel. The focus is on the characters John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester and St. John Rivers. The analysis is about how the filmmakers depict the essence of the characters, why they chose to do so and what determinants influenced the two films; furthermore, how this affects Jane's character and her pursuit for independence. The thesis of this essay is that there is a difference in the interpretation of the male characters in the two films compared to the novel *Jane Eyre* and this affects Jane's pursuit for independence. My conclusion is that although the films differ in narration and filming technique, the strongest impact on the discourse is the changed script due to politics and production code.

Keywords: Male characters, Patriarchal control, Independence, Adaptation, Production code

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1. Introduction

Film makers often use novels for their literary source and the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë has been adapted numerous times into theatre, television productions and movies. Therefore I found it interesting to do a comparative analysis of two film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, one early from 1943 and the latest from 2011, to study the depiction of patriarchal control. I will focus on the characters John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester and St John Rivers, with an aim to investigate how the filmmakers depict the essence of these characters. I also want to investigate what the original meaning is behind a specific scene and how the filmmakers interpret it, taking political restrictions into account. Furthermore, I will try to establish what determinants influenced the two films and how they affect Jane's independence.

The thesis of this essay is that there is a difference in the interpretation of the male characters in the two films compared to the novel *Jane Eyre* and this affects Jane's pursuit for independence.

2. Background

2.1 The adaptation from 1943

Robert Stevenson directed the *Jane Eyre* movie from 1943 and it was a very successful movie when released with Orson Welles as Rochester and Joan Fontaine as Jane Eyre. Helen is played by a young Elizabeth Taylor. It was the first full-length film version of the novel and with a dramatic atmosphere created by shadows and sound effects. However, politics and time forced the screenplay writers to alter the script to such an extent that Brontë's purpose of demonstrating that women can be psychologically independent was completely erased (Atkins 1). This aspect of independence is one factor I have analysed and how it affects her happiness. I chose this version since it is a very successful one from that time period and although many newer versions has passed the audience still remembers this version.

2.2 The adaptation from 2011

The latest movie of *Jane Eyre*, directed by Cary Fukunaga, features the actors Michael Fassbender as Mr. Rochester and Mika Wasikowska as Jane Eyre. The movie has been well received by the critiques, and it was nominated for best costume at the Academy Awards. Director Fukunaga has altered the scenes, starting at the most dramatic point in the story, right when Jane leaves Thornfield. This gives the movie a reflective narration, and through flashbacks the audience also gets access to Jane's memories (Law 32). The reason I chose this movie is the interesting beginning of the movie, since it starts when the emotions are the most intense. It makes her life somewhat of a mystery and very gothic; furthermore, it is also an effective way for the audience to see what torments her and what makes her miserable. An interesting coincidence is that Fukunaga used to watch the 1943 version when he was young, and it was his favourite movie (*Popsugar*

entertainment 00:52) The gothic has inspired him and similarities between the two films can be seen, but Fukunaga has mostly made his own interpretation.

2.3 The novel and secondary sources

The novel *Jane Eyre* was released in 1847, at a time when women, with few exceptions, were dependent on men. When a woman married her money ceased to be hers and was automatically her husband's. It was also a time with great differences between the rich and the poor. The rich were educated and ruled the land, whereas the poor worked and lived under horrible circumstances. The rich married the rich to stay rich, not for love and divorce was not an option (Teachman 159). In this novel the protagonist Jane Eyre tells us about her life, starting with her childhood as an orphan, depending on the charity of her aunt and ending with her being an independent woman and marrying her employer the rich Mr. Rochester.

Jane Eyre takes the form of a woman's *Bildungsroman*, a common form of writing novels in the nineteenth century. It presents the story of a woman's education into life from childhood to adulthood. The education she gets and the people she meets teach her about life. In the end she has knowledge about life and the world she lives in. This perspective on the novel makes the novel more than a love story, it makes it a story about a woman who grows up and learns to stand on her own, in a world controlled by men. During childhood she is bullied by her cousin John Reed, in school she is controlled by Mr. Brocklehurst, as an adult she faces another man used to getting his own way, Mr. Rochester, and later in the story she learns to resist St. John's controlling behaviour. She learns that by refusing to be controlled and bullied by men, she can be independent and control her own destiny. Furthermore, her independence has many layers and can be further divided into a psychological, spiritual and a material independence, all of which are not so easily adapted to film.

The novel is also a love story with many dimensions and it is sprinkled with symbolism which makes this novel intriguing and fascinating for readers still today.

To understand the novel and its dimensions I have used the student guide *Understanding Jane Eyre* by Debra Teachman. The student casebook offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Charlotte Brontë's novel. It contains not only a literary analysis, but it also contextualizes the novel in terms of social issues. Debra Teachman is assistant professor in English at Marshall University in West Virginia and has also written two more books about Victorian female writers.

Other secondary sources used in this analysis is the work *Novel to film: an introduction to the theory of adaptation* by Brian McFarlane. He is Honorary Associate Professor at Monash University, Australia, and he is a distinguished figure in literature and film with several books on screen adaptations and British films.

Further sources have been two articles from *Literature film quarterly*, a journal that features scholarly considerations of films inspired by literary sources. One by Elizabeth Atkins in which she analyzes the 1943 film, the other by Michael Riley where he does a comparative analysis of two versions of adaptations, the 1943 compared to a version from 1977. For the analysis of the 2011 film I used an article from the journal *Screen Education* written by Shirley Law, I chose this article since it was more than a regular review of a film, it was educational. The journal is written by teachers for teachers to guide in education about film and therefore a reliable source. I also chose a review of the 2011 film by Steve Vineberg, from the magazine *Christian Century*. Vineberg teaches film and theatre at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts and the review was interesting.

In addition to the journals I also used *The Moviebook: an illustrated history of the cinema* to gather information about other films and the politics influencing the movie industry during the 1930's and 1940's in order to understand in which political climate the film from 1943 was formed.

3. Theory and method

3.1 Film adaptation theories

When studying adaptations the discourse of fidelity often comes to mind. The audience that is familiar with the novel usually tries to determine if the film is true to the original or not. McFarlane claims in his work *Novel to film*, that: “The insistence of fidelity [...] fails to take into serious account what may be transferred from novel to film, and what may require more complex processes of adaptation, and it marginalizes those production determinants which have nothing to do with the novel but may be powerfully influential upon the film”(10). When a new adaptation of a novel is released the director’s and actors’ fidelity to the original is analysed and questioned, but there is so much more that influence the final product. The novel and the film is two different mediums, and in the transformation process one must be aware that certain parts cannot be transformed directly from novel to the screen, but must first be interpreted. To understand the connection between film and literature, Brian McFarlane has made a distinction between the narrative functions which can be transferred and of those elements which require adaptation proper.

The narrative functions are parts that fairly easily can be transferred from novel to film and McFarlane uses Roland Barthes’ definitions of narrative functions within the novel, *distributional* and *integrational* functions, to explain this. The distributional functions include actions and events and they are linear in the story, whereas the integrational functions include psychological information of characters, notations of atmosphere, representations of place, and these functions are vertical in the story. Barthes subdivides the functions to include *cardinal* functions and *catalysers*. The cardinal functions of a novel are the main hinge-points that are important for the story, and these are sometimes altered when making a movie, such as changing the ending of the

story and can be a source of critique (14). The catalysers of a story are areas containing the small actions that enrich and root the cardinal functions in a particular kind of reality.

The adaptation proper, the *enunciation*, are the elements in between the lines that creates the feeling in the adaptation. When the novel uses verbal signs and symbols which work conceptually, the film uses cinematic signs with iconicity which work perceptually, thereby the parts with symbols and verbal signs will need adaptation to the cinematic signs most closely connected to it. The enunciation of the film is dependent on more than the script, it depends on the codes within the medium film, camera angles, and how textual cues are adapted into visual and iconic ones, music and sound, i.e. it is the sum of all these factors that creates the impact of the film.

3.2 Method

First the films were selected by age, one new and one older version. The film from 2011 was interesting to analyse because it was new and not many studies had been done on it, thereby creating an originality to the analysis. In order to decide on the older film, I settled for the 1943 version because it was a successful one and the films previous to this one were further from the original story, making them harder to compare. The later versions were either television productions or so recently produced they were more difficult to access, due to copyrights. Then I decided on which theory of adaptation I would be using in my analysis. The films were analysed into sequences and the parts identical were further studied. After this initial study, a thorough analysis of the sequences that the filmmakers chose as cardinal functions took place and also a closer analysis of the novel and how Brontë depicted these sequences. Other research studies, reports written about the films and interviews of the directors and cast have also been studied and analysed.

4. Results and analysis

4.1 Narration

The two films have different narrative techniques which affect the characters and their functions. The narration in the novel is first-person protagonist narration, with the protagonist Jane telling her own story from her perspective, whilst the film uses the camera as the narrator, which also can be done in different ways, as will be discussed in this chapter

The film from 1943 uses a first person narrator between the scenes, which implies that the story is the same as the novel it adapted from. The 1943 film starts with a book being presented with the title *Jane Eyre* on it. The book is then opened and Jane reads the text on the first page with a voice over: “Jane Eyre, Chapter 1, My name is Jane Eyre, I was born in 1820, a harsh time of change in England. Money and position seemed all that mattered. Charity was a disagreeable word. Religion too often wore a mask of bigotry and cruelty [...] as a child I lived with Mrs. Reed, at Gateshead Hall. I never remember she ever speaking a kind word to me.” This gives the illusion that this is the actual text from the book, but the actual text in the novel reads: “There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning” (Bronte 9). By using a phantom page with text in the film, the narrator tells us that this story comes from a book, but it also gives an introduction to the setting and the characters. It informs the audience about important issues recurring in the film, such as: class, charity, religion and bigotry. By using a text, that looks like it comes from the novel, the adaptation is accepted as that it is one of the classic novels. The narrator tells the audience what to expect from the characters, if they are good or bad, two juxtapositions often used for the different characters in this version.

The 2011 film uses a different narrating technique, and it puts a different perspective on the story, a psychological perspective. The film starts in the middle of the novel, in the climax of feelings, with pain and fear, when Jane runs out on the moors and leaves Thornfield. The vast landscape echoes loneliness and with a melancholy music playing it seems very desperate and frustrating. This gives an interesting beginning and it catches the attention from the audience. But it has another effect as well; “The real strength of the flashback technique is how it establishes the subjective voice of the protagonist and gives the spectator access to her memories”(Law 32). When the memories are displayed, the audience understands why. This is also very effective in this type of gothic novel, with many mysteries, since only one memory is displayed at a time.

To sum up, the narration technique used in 1943 gives the audience a preconceived idea of whether the character is good or bad, and what issues to expect. Whereas the narration used in the 2011 version gives access to the protagonist’s memory, which highlights important and traumatic aspects about the characters.

4.2 The cardinal functions around John Reed

In the *Jane Eyre* films there are certain episodes of the movie with cardinal functions, repeated in every adaptation, like the fight with John Reed and the Red Room. The male character and the incident in the Red Room has a great impact on Jane, although due to censorship in the 1943 film this part of the story was altered a great deal. Since the novel *Jane Eyre* is a bildungsroman it is easy to follow the experiences that Jane does since they build on one another, however, when a cardinal function is changed the consequences are greater, which is the case with 1943 version of the trauma in the red room.

John Reed in the novel

In the novel the character John Reed bullies Jane and he is also the main reason why she never is at rest and always on her guard while living at Gateshead Hall. He is the oldest son in the house she resides in. He is described as a boy four year older than herself, large and stout for his age, keen on sweets and he gorges himself habitually at the table (10). He is a spoiled boy who demands Jane to address him as Master, while he calls her an animal and a rat.

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when he came near. (10)

He torments Jane and he tries to make her so small that she will not be a threat to him. When Jane finally snaps and fights back she is punished and placed in the Red Room, a remote room where the late Mr. Reed passed away and Jane is convinced it is haunted.

John Reed in the 1943 film version

The two films portray John Reed differently in both size and looks which affects Jane's character. The 1943 version portrays him as a plump boy with golden locks and he wears a grey velvet jacket. He is the same size as Jane and there is no visual representation of a fight between Jane and him, only a retold fight. Mrs. Reed is fearsome and very dominant, showing her resentment against Jane. John Reed sits by his mother's side and this enforces the fact that she takes his side in the argument of whose fault it was. "Although an unsympathetic character in the book, the movie version of Aunt Reed portrays her as a scheming, evil witch" (Atkins 56). Furthermore Atkins claims that this change in characters comes from the production code. Hollywood changed the characters to good or bad to satisfy the new code. No fighting was allowed and the story was

altered to full fill the new requirements (56). As a result, Jane is not portrayed as a violent girl and the fight between her and John Reed is reduced to a shoving match. She is reduced to a girl that cannot defend herself, and this illustrates her weaker than she is in the novel, since she cannot even defend herself against a little boy that seems harmless.

John Reed in the 2011 film version

The film from 2011 portrays John Reed as slightly taller and larger than Jane, which displays the physical inferiority that Jane has compared to him. He wears a short black jacket and carries a sword while saying: “Where are you rat?” He hunts her down in the house when she tries to hide. The fear she has for him is shown as she curls up in the window seat behind the curtain. When he finds her he throws the book at her. She has an outburst of passion when she is hit and forces herself on top of John, punching his chest with her fists. They are parted by the servants and she is forced into the Red room in where she experiences something supernatural when smoke comes down the chimney and she believes it is a ghost that is coming for her, and therefore she has a fit. This is a cardinal function in the story, as it triggers her departure to Lowood School and that is the reason the episode in the red room is included in both films. The character Jane is through the inferior John Reed, depicted psychologically stronger with greater integrity.

Debra Teachman whilst discussing the men in Jane’s life in the novel claims that John Reed feels he has a right to bully Jane, due to Jane’s dependent status in the family. She also claims that when Jane fights back and ends up in the Red room and falls ill from the terror, she learns that rebellion can have a positive effect towards bullies, even though it can be traumatic at the time (Teachman 10). The trauma with the lock up in the Red Room was a scene both films included, the first less than the last. This illustrates that this is a cardinal function in the story that affects the rest of the story and is of great importance to the outcome.

Since the Red Room episode is reduced in the first film, the audience's understanding of her trauma and thereby her relief and growth towards independence is diminished. Censorship altered John Reeds function from a bully to a harmless cousin. They compensated some of the atmosphere by portraying Mrs. Reed more fearsome than in the novel, thereby Jane is liberated from Mrs. Reed rather than John Reed. However, in the 2011 film, the bullying of John Reed is visualized through a flashback, like some hurtful memory, creating a psychological feeling that this episode is essential to Jane's identity, the very essence to her personality, since the scene with the rat is presented after she is trying to answer the question: "who are you?" Thereby her identity is very closely connected to the standing up to John Reed and the Reeds, but it also visualizes an identity crisis, since the Reeds is the only family Jane has left, but they have rejected her, so she is all alone.

To sum up, the character John Reed is portrayed in the films with the same scenes, so this has been a cardinal function in the novel for the filmmakers. They have though, due to political restrictions altered the essence of John Reed to an angel like little boy in the 1943 film, which generates a less independent Jane. While the narration of the 2011 film creates a John Reed that generates a mentally stronger and independent Jane, than the previous film.

4.3 How censorship shaped Mr. Brocklehurst

There are also other factors involved, such as politics that affects the contents of a movie, more so in the first one due to massive censorship done during this period. The first movie was made 1943 and during this time Hollywood with its entertainment industry was one of the few sectors that were growing in the States, but there was also a public demand for better moral. Hollywood was at this time producing movies with questionable moral, which irritated the puritans and to avoid

outside censorship, Hollywood created its own censorship agency, PCA, Production Code Administration (Shiach 17). All scripts had to be approved by this agency before the filming could start. The censorship included violence and sex, which meant that no improper behaviour should be seen and this made the movies entertaining for the mass and suitable for the entire family. Therefore the scripts were altered to avoid anything that contained immoral behaviour. Therefore there is no violence, no improper kissing and ministers could not be portrayed as evil or funny since religion was not to be mocked on (Atkins 56). All these types of censorship can be identified in the 1943 movie and the censorship also affect the main story.

Mr. Brocklehurst in the novel

Mr. Brocklehurst was one character that was affected by the censorship, but although he is depicted very differently in the two films, the essence of his character is still dark and evil. In the novel Brontë describes Mr. Brocklehurst as a large, harsh and prim man with prominent teeth. Jane says: “I saw myself transformed under Mr. Brocklehurst’s eye into an artful, noxious child” (Brontë 34). He makes her rebellious and she does not like the way she transforms when he is around. Since Jane Eyre is a bildungsroman, this episode with Mr. Brocklehurst is an experience that formed Jane. The injustice of Mr. Brocklehurst to call her a liar and to punish her, makes her resent Mr. Brocklehurst. In the novel, Brontë describes Jane’s feelings with the change of season, spring comes and it gets easier at the same time as Brocklehurst never visits the school (78). Later in the novel Jane learns that in order to survive at Lowood, she has to stay plain and keep a low profile. This is shown in both films, as her character as an adult is very humble and controlled, however, in the novel she also tells us that after the improvements, due to public awareness, there was a happy period, something that would contradict the feeling of resentment toward this period in the

films. By telling us that it was a happy period after Brocklehurst lost his power, she underlines that it is Brocklehurst, not Lowood, Jane resents in the novel.

Mr. Brocklehurst in the 1943 film

In the 1943 film censorship stripped the character Mr. Brocklehurst of all evangelical aspects and he is reduced to a school administrator, however, still powerful. Mr. Brocklehurst is dressed in a black long coat, has grey hair and dark eyebrows and he looks very harsh. Atkins claims that “the filmmaker had to eliminate the references to Mr. Brocklehurst’s ecclesiastical life because the 1930 Production Code dictates under Section VII Religion. “1. No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith. 2. Ministers of religion in their character as ministers of religion should not be used as comic characters or villains.” Thus, Mr. Brocklehurst is reduced from clergyman to Mr. Brocklehurst Esq., Chairman of the Board of Trustees.” (Atkins 3). However, not all evangelical characteristics are eliminated, Mr. Brocklehurst still talks about Jane as being a servant of the evil one in the scene with the stool:

Pupils, observe this child. She is yet young, she possesses the ordinary form of girlhood. Who would have believed that the evil one, had already found in her a servant and an agent. Therefore you must be on your guard against her. Shun her example. [...] for it is my duty to warn you: This girl is a – liar! (00:08:43)

This shows that although his title has been changed, his speech is still that of a clergyman,. This change from a man of God to a man of the world is important because it alters the magnitude of Jane’s liberation when she finally leaves Lowood. Her spiritual liberation is reduced to a psychological liberation.

Mr. Brocklehurst in the 2011 film

The 2011 version of Mr. Brocklehurst only appears for a short period of time, but he, by glimpses of Jane's memories as flashbacks. One flashback comes when St John Rivers asks her if she had a thorough education and she replies- "Yes, sir, most thorough!" Then she recalls Mr. Brocklehurst as he enters during Mrs. Scatchered's beating of Helen Burns, he does not interrupt the beating, but says : "It is your mission to render her contrite and self-denying, continue" (00:14:05) By using the words *mission* and *contrite* the connotation is biblical, although he is not dressed as a clergyman.. The episode on the stool is almost exactly as in the novel and it is also illustrated in the first movie, however, in the earlier film there is no physical beating of the girls. The beating was removed in the 1943 version by the screenwriters to pass the censorship of the Production Code. This shows that the episode on the stool has a cardinal function, to illustrate the patriarchal control of Mr. Brocklehurst.

The function of Mr. Brocklehurst in the 1943 film is to be the villain, the cruel gatekeeper of the prison, the one she is forced to endure during ten years and when she finally is released, she has grown strong and independent during this time. In the second film the function is to mirror St John Rivers, revealing the similar traits he share with Mr. Brocklehurst. Jane is reminded of her past while living at the Rivers, how she was oppressed by Mr. Brocklehurst and the hardships he put her through during the Lowood years, while the clergyman Rivers is the rescuer. The function here is to illustrate the two sides of religion Jane experiences, religion of duty and religion of heart. While she is taught religion of duty by Mr. Brocklehurst, she experiences in the beginning of the 2011 film a merciful and loving religion, and that is why they mirror each other.

Both films depicts the Lowood episode dark and miserable, and Jane's friend Helen Burns is the only thing that makes life bearable. Both films leave out the character Miss Temple, although she is Jane's support in the novel throughout her years at Lowood. Her absence makes the time at

Lowood more painful and dark, although in the novel Jane describes this as: "During my eight years, my life was uniform: but not unhappy, because it was not inactive. I had the means of an excellent education placed within my reach" (84). So in the novel, she is content with her life, this however, does not come across in the films. When she leaves Lowood in the films, she does not even say goodbye, but in the novel, she only wants to leave because Miss Temple has married and left.

To conclude, Mr. Brocklehurst is depicted hard, dark and cruel in both of films, but without the context of his religious control at Lowood, Jane spiritual independence is substituted for a psychological independence.

4.4 Patriarchal control by Mr. Rochester

Patriarchal control is used by Mr. Rochester to force Jane into marriage, but the depiction of this in the movies has switched from a cold departure to a passionate emotional one. The scene chosen for analysis is the scene when Rochester tries to convince Jane to stay, even though she knows he is married. This is an important scene and a turning point in the story in which Rochester displays his full power, but also Jane's power. In the novel Jane takes a stand to demonstrate that she is not interested in going to France and live with him. When she tries to leave he says: "I could bend her with my finger and thumb: and what good would it do if I bent, if I up tore, if I crushed her? (322)" This shows how dominant Rochester is in physical strength compared to Jane, but also that he is aware of his strength. This is a cardinal function in the novel and it has been used in both films, but somewhat differently

The 1943 film

The two adaptations have displayed this scene when Jane rejects Rochester's offer in different ways, with various outcome. The 1943 movie displays Rochester's controlling behaviour, with physical power and male superiority since Orson Wells is two feet taller than Joan Foontaine. She is on her way out and he pleases:

Rochester: Stay with me Jane, it would be hurting nobody

Jane: We would be hurting ourselves

Rochester: Would it be so wicked to love me, would it? (grabs on to her shoulders, shaking her) I could crush you between my hands...(lets go of her) Just...you would still be free. (she leaves) (1:24:51)

Here Rochester emphasizes the word "hurting" and that he could crush her between his hands, demonstrating his power, but although this demonstrates him as weaker than the novel, the dark atmosphere and the physical superiority he come across as controlling and dominant and could hurt her.

The 2011 film

In the 2011 film, the same scene is much more emotional with tears coming out, both from Jane's and Rochester's eyes. Jane has fainted just before and Rochester carries her to the chair by the fireplace. He says while is trying to convince her to stay:

Rochester: Who would you offend by living with me? Who would care?

Jane: I would!

Rochester: You would rather drive me to madness, than brake some mere human law?

Jane: I must respect myself.

Rochester: Listen to me...(he puts his fingers round her neck as to show he can strangle her) I can bend you with my finger and my thumb, mere read your feel in my hand, (releases his grip) but whatever I do, I cannot get at you and it is your soul that I want, why do you not come by your own free will?

Jane: Oh, God help me! (she leaves) (1:32:02)

Jane is being bullied by Rochester into staying with him in both films, but the 2011 film uses spiritual quotes that implies that Mr. Rochester is in fact the devil. In the 1943 film the character Rochester is depicted in physical inferiority to Jane, which also gives him the upper hand, i.e. they are not depicted as equals. The 2011 film also uses physical threat, but also symbolism and intertextuality, when the movement of Rochester and his lines, implies the similarities between the character Rochester and the character count Dracula. When Rochester grabs Jane's neck and approaches her neck as he intends to bite her, and forever condemn her to hell, and says that it is her soul he wants. Rochester also talks about free will, which is an important religious aspect. Thereby Jane is forced to choose between to live in forever condemnation or to live as a spinster alone, neither is any appealing to her, however, by leaving Rochester she demonstrates her psychological independence.

My analysis to this, is that the films have adapted and added symbols that Brontë could not, since the novel about count Dracula was not written until 1897. The novel *Jane Eyre* contains so much symbolism and many levels, which today's readers do not grasp. Therefore new symbols familiar to the modern audience are added, that psychologically set the atmosphere. The function of the patriarchal controlled Rochester is to demonstrate Jane's psychological independence, which is also revealed to the audience in both films, although more so in the last one, which also is much more passionate and emotional adaption, demonstrating that the separation is painful.

Language and symbolism

One factor involved in creating the essence of the characters is the use of language. In the 1943 film Jane narrates the following about the character Rochester: "beneath the harsh mask he assumed lay a tortured soul, fine, gentle and kindle". Despite the introduction, Orson Wells fails to verify Jane's judgement on him, since his performance lacks the specific tenderness. Riley claims that: "the film never penetrates the underlying significance of the tormented love of Jane and

Rochester”(153). This could be due to the fact that the novel is filled with spiritual values and a feeling of ambiguity, since Jane is torn between the love for God and the love for Rochester; however, in the film without the religious aspects this is never clear to the audience and the film is turned into a simple love story.

Language is used in a much more sophisticated way in the last movie, although it is filmed sixty years later. Dir. Fukunaga says: “I was trying to maintain as much as possible of the beauty and lyricism of her prose, but also to make it accessible to the twenty-eleven audience, in terms of being able to understand what the characters are saying and get the humour of it”(*Empire magazine* 04:04). When they compressed the scenes, lines were shortened, which speeded up the scenes. The departure scene when Jane leaves Rochester illustrates this, since in the novel many lines are monologues. Although monologues can be effective in writing illustrating the scene, they are often shortened when the camera is visualizing the scene. Fukunaga also found the beautiful language in the film somewhat limiting, with improvisations difficult. The actors northern accents also helped build up a believable atmosphere for a nineteenth century feeling.

Since the language in Brontë’s novel is very symbolic, it also interesting to analyse how the symbolism have been interpreted by the filmmakers. One important symbol in the novel is the horse-chestnut tree: ”occurring exactly at the centre of the novel, the lightning striking the tree is indeed a central symbol, expressing the spiritual calamity in Rochester’s attempt to ignore God’s will”(Riley 153) This episode has a cardinal function, and therefore it is included in the films. However, the symbolism of the tree is revealed later in the novel when Jane tells Rochester: ”You are no ruin, sir- no lightning-struck tree: you are green and vigorous” (450), and this is more difficult for the audience to grasp. Riley claims that Stevenson’s interpretation:”exemplifies a misplaced fidelity which betrays the original, for the effects that the literary symbol and that of its cinematic counterpart are decidedly different” (153). The difference is that the connotation with a

word of a tree and the film sequence of a tree are different. Stevenson never returns to the tree, but Fukunaga makes an attempt to show the relevance of this symbol when he in the closing scene places Rochester under the lightning-struck tree, rather than at the Ferndean. The tree fills an important function for those who have read the book, and the lightning and change in weather also intensifies the feelings overall. However, the symbolism of the tree is only apparent to those familiar with the work, but Fukunaga creates a new meaning for the tree and by placing Rochester by it, he shows the audience that it is an important symbol.

The conclusion to this chapter is that the two adaptations focus on different aspects of patriarchal control when they are trying to capture the essence of the story. The 1943 version focus on the Byronic hero that rescues Jane from all the misery but they never end up as equals, while the 2011 version focus more on symbolism to capture the ambiguity of the novel, that Rochester has a tender and passionate side apart from his rough manners.

4.5 The double in St John Rivers

In the novel there are many sets of doubles, a technique used throughout history for many purposes. “In *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Bronte uses the technique of doubles in several ways. Locations and characters double each other. The clearest sets of doubles is Jane’s two sets of cousins” (Teachman 7). In the 2011 film, the doubling takes place between several characters, not only her cousins. The character St John Rivers is depicted with a strong religious drive and so is Mr. Brocklehurst. One review commented on this connection: “St John Rivers, the devout missionary who rescues Jane from starvation after she run away from Thornfield, comes across as humane but equally unyielding echo of Mr. Brocklehurst”(Vineberg 59). This implies that St. John Rivers doubles Mr. Brocklehurst, and the two clergymen have similarities. When Jane meets Rivers he reminds her of

situations she has experienced already. She reflects back to her childhood on different traumatic episodes. He tries to convince her to marry him. However, since there is no Miss Oliver in the 2011 film this makes the character St John colder than in the novel where he is torn between lust and divine calling.

Furthermore, it would humanize him and he would also be too much a resemblance of Mr. Rochester. Jane is struggling with the question of marriage and it is easier for the viewers to sympathize with Rochester if the characters are somewhat different. Teachman claims “St John Rivers attempts to bully her into marriage with him, by appealing to her sense of duty, honor and gratitude.” She continues: “He reminds her there is something in her past that she must avoid reverting to” (Teachman 13). When she is reminded of the thing in her life she is fleeing from, the narrative camera, of the 2011 film, envisions her thoughts. St John Rivers is a powerful man and he has a great influence on Jane in the novel. The narrative method of starting with him as the rescuer, makes him friendly, kind and sincere. The retrospective view, constantly returning to St John Rivers, makes it easier for the viewer to feel the transformation from warm to cold.

The two films differ very much in their interpretation of his characters importance. The first film has completely erased him but the last film has interpreted the meeting with the St John Rivers character as the turning point for Jane. When she meets him she is hurt and it is through his questions that she finally takes a stand for what she believes in. Through him she makes up her mind of what is important to her, not to the public or God, but only what is important to her. But it is also through him that she is reminded of the dark episodes of her life when she has been treated badly. He is an important character and a cardinal function in the story and that is why the 2011 film starts with him.

To sum up, the function of the St John Rivers is to remind Jane of the men she has encountered through her life. The patriarchal control she has endured and to finally reject the

proposal of marriage without love. The depiction of his character in the adaptation of 2011, with the retrospective narration, illustrates the double visually, and as he transforms from warm to cold Jane's pursuit for psychological independence is revealed.

4.6 The dilemma of the happy ending

The 1943 film changed the ending, which completely erased Brontë's purpose with the novel, that of demonstrating that women can be independent. "When a major cardinal function is deleted or altered in the film version of a novel, this apt to the occasional critical outrage and popular disaffection" (McFarlane 14). When an ending is changed, to a happy ending, people who are familiar with the novel, will object. This is what happened to the 1943 version of *Jane Eyre*. The screenwriters completely changed the ending, from a feminist ending to a nice fairy tale. After the character Jane flees from Rochester she ends up back at Gateshead, nursing Mrs. Reed until she dies and after this there is nothing left for Jane, she is all alone. She has nowhere to stay and she is even so desperate that she considers taking up teaching back at Lowood again. She even writes the letter to Mr. Brocklehurst and it is through this letter, that the audience sees her pain. Atkins claims that this alteration in the story is due to the production code. The story writers alter the very essence of the novel, when they suggest that she could accept going back to Lowood. "The movie omits the entire episode concerning Jane's independence, and no compromise is made; she simply never inherits the wealth or the relations" (Atkins 60). They eliminate her material independence and the feminist view because it is too strong for Hollywood and instead they narrow it down to a love story.

Furthermore, even if the cardinal functions are preserved, the catalysers surrounding and supporting the story may be altered, which also is the case at the end in the 1943 film. When Jane

returns to Rochester at the end he is not completely blind and has not lost his right arm so he will not be dependent on Jane as he does in the book. “By taking away Jane’s psychological and material independence, and all that precipitates it, *Jane Eyre* becomes a simple romance which advocates patience in case the first wife dies”(Atkins 60). All for a happy ending, but with the changed catalyser, Jane does not get the psychological advantage of him, as she would if he were completely dependent on her and the happiness from gaining independence is removed.

Thus the changed ending also changes the understanding of her independence. As Jane does not receive material independence, she is still dependent on him. Furthermore, since he is not hurt much in the fire, he will not be physically dependent on her either. Therefore they are not equals and her independency is not revealed through this interpretation.

The ending in the 2011 was short, and Jane returns to Rochester dressed in laced gloves, visualizing her material independence. She has inherited the money, but not the relatives. Her first word when he sits devastated by the broken chestnut tree is: “Edward, I have come back to you”(01:53:07) rather than addressing him: Master, as she does in the novel when she talks to him. By changing just one word, Fukunaga illustrates that Jane and Rochester are equals from this point on in the film. They are also both dressed in brown, further illustrating them as equals. Director Fukunaga has chosen a “quiet ending” for his film and leaves the marriage and last part of the novel to the imagination of the audience.

To sum up, the different endings limits Jane’s possibility for independence. No matter how well it is put together, the script sets the limit to what is possible to visualize. The later film has more liberty in the script, but also new technique. Colour instead of black-and white also widens the possibility of interpretation.

5. Discussion

A critical approach towards this analysis could be: cannot the catalysers or the enunciation in the adaptation make up for the lost cardinal functions? Yes, they can, but only to some extent, since this story is a bildungsroman, with important different experiences, each cardinal function builds on the next. This has been acknowledged by director Fukunaga in the 2011 version, which shows more fidelity towards the original.

Another critical aspect is that the study is only of one gender: men, which reveals only one side of the story; however, there is so much more that affects the character Jane, like her female role models and the family she finally gets with the Rivers' siblings. This could be analysed further and could be a continuation of this study, to analyse how the female characters are depicted in the two films and how they affect Jane.

The two films chosen have a great age difference, so how can one expect anything but differences in a comparative analysis? Well, it is no surprise that the result is very divergent since the two films are so different, but it is also interesting in the parts they do share. Another interesting aspect is that the films have evolved so much during the last sixty years, and yet they chose to adapt the same novel. It is interesting how the contemporary politics reflect on the film, more so in the first one though, although in another sixty years researchers probably will see the same reflection of contemporary politics today on this last film.

6. Conclusion

My conclusion to this analysis is that the two films have chosen to adapt the same characters and scenes, but although they have very different filming technique and narration, the fact that separates the two adaptations the most is the influence of politics and censorship in the 1943 version.

The patriarchal control depicted in the 1943 film was very much affected by censorship with altered scripts as a result. Some characters, like John Reed is depicted less controlling, others like Mr. Brocklehurst is depicted just as controlling as in the novel. However, without the religious context of his control at Lowood, Jane's spiritual independence is substituted for a psychological independence. Furthermore, the main male character Mr. Rochester, performed by Orson Wells in 1943 is a reflection of the idolized Byronic hero of the time. Wells captures the essence in the roughness but lacks to display the tenderness in the character, thereby Jane and Rochester never end up as equals.

The reflective narration in the 2011 film, gives the audience an understanding of Jane's identity and the trauma she has experienced. The film uses most of the same cardinal functions and the male characters all use patriarchal control, but the film still fails to reveal Jane's spiritual growth and independence. Furthermore, the use of symbolism, language and intertextuality to illustrate Jane's pursuit for independence, is much more sophisticated in this film, and this also helps in depicting Jane and Rochester as equals in the end.

Furthermore, a film adaptation is an interpretation, this must be remembered, so how much fidelity can be expected, and how much artistic freedom should a director be allowed? Well, here time and money talks, unfortunately. If the interpretation is too long or not successful enough, it does not matter how true it is to the original if no one wants to see it.

This analysis have shown that there are many different determinants that influence a movie production. Adapting Jane's pursuit for independence is not an easy task, but the directors have done their interpretation, and taken the political and moral codes in account, they have produced an attractive merchandise. The theme of independence continues to be the topic of the day and this is probably not the last adaptation of *Jane Eyre* the world will see.

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