

FILMING BRONTË'S MOORISH SOUNDSCAPE : AN AURAL ANALYSIS OF FIVE *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* FILM ADAPATIONS

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Abstract - This paper dissects the sound-effects codes of the Wuthering Heights film versions directed by Wyler, Buñuel, Fuest, Yoshida and Kosminsky in order to determine to what extent these film adaptors succeed in echoing thematically the novel's essential 'wuthering'. What such an analysis reveals is that, while Kosminsky's soundtrack is more consistently analogous to Brontë's moorish soundscape in its recreation of such crucial aural motifs as canine baying, avian trilling and gusty wind, even the soundtracks devised by Wyler, Yoshida, Fuest and Buñuel have their enviable moments of undoubted Brontëan significance.

Introduction

"Real sound does not merely add to the image, it multiplies it" Kurosawa (Richie 1984 : 226).

Studies of *Wuthering Heights* film adaptations, like those of other filmed fiction, usually concentrate almost exclusively on the problem of whether the novel's vital themes have been recreated analogously in predominantly visual images. While such an approach is understandably rooted in an essentially visual concept of film, it has been regrettably conducive to the underestimation of the medium's potential to enrich its visual appropriation of literary fiction by integrating it with what Bettetini (1973 : 111) calls "*sonic intervention*". To redress the balance, I intend to analyse some key features of the sound-effects tracks of the *Wuthering Heights* film versions directed by Wyler, Buñuel, Fuest, Yoshida and Kosminsky in order to determine what Brontëan thematic signification has been generated through what Metz (1982 : 189) describes as the "*association [of] an image and a sound, a background noise and a word, etc.*". In what follows, then, I would like to establish not simply whether the sound-effects codes of these five *Wuthering Heights* adaptations are reinforcing or counterpointing the words and images, but whether they are doing so in order to imbue the film proceedings with further intimations of Brontë's meaning.

The moorland soundtrack of *Wuthering Heights*

Of the five *Wuthering Heights* film-makers in question, Kosminsky strikes me as having created a soundtrack of a denser Brontëan nature, though I am not thereby denying the Brontëan implications of the soundtracks devised by Yoshida, Fuest, Buñuel and Wyler. For the latter soundtracks, though evidently less thematically comprehensive, are similarly Brontëan in their atmospheric and psychological suggestions. In his own way, then, each of these *Wuthering Heights* adaptors has succeeded in exploiting what Giannetti (1987 : 156) terms the “*symbolic functions [of] sound effects*” by intermeshing the latter with both visual and other aural elements in order to recreate crucial aspects of Brontë’s thematic network. What I intend to demonstrate, in fact, is the extent of these film-makers’ success at thematizing such recurrent sound-effects like whistling wind, cawing crows and/or baying hounds — the three major components of what I have called the moorish soundscape of *Wuthering Heights*.

As might be expected, all the five *Wuthering Heights* filmmakers concerned are most attentive to wind-effects in their aural recreation of the novel’s moorish atmosphere. This is certainly in accordance with what Woolf (1929 : 204) rightly says about Brontë — that she could “*by speaking of the moor make the wind blow and the thunder roar*”. Wyler, for instance, opens with a blinding blizzard, thereby exposing us in medias res, using Brontë’s Lockwood’s words, to “*the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge*”(1972 : 14)¹. More importantly, Wyler literally dramatizes Brontë’s Lockwood’s definition of ‘Wuthering’ as “*a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which [the house’s] station is exposed in stormy weather*” (p.14) by having the snow whirl wildly into the Heights when his Lockwood steps inside. The snow’s invasion of the Heights is clearly an ominous anticipation of Lockwood’s grisly encounter with Catherine’s snow-phantom, where Wyler dramatically integrates the moor-ghost’s wail “*Let me in*”² with the banging shutter and the moaning wind. Wyler’s emphasis on what may be termed a melancholic windiness indicates that the snowstorm is nothing but an anguished externalization of the ghostly Catherine’s frozen heart

¹ All references to Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* are taken from the 1972 Norton edition.

² All quotations from Wyler’s *Wuthering Heights* are taken from the sound-track of the Video Gems Ltd. Version (No. 9985/VHS).

raging for Heathcliff's love. Wyler's notion of transforming aurally the initial howling blizzard into an emotional whirlwind is, of course, essentially Brontëan. For as Miller (1963 : 166) remarks of Brontë's own windy introduction of the Heights : "*The storm which blows at the exterior of the house and gives it its name is echoed by the storm within the house, a tempest whose ultimate source, it may be, is the people living there*".

Miller's conjecture is deadly accurate. For Brontë's Catherine's dream-ghost, wailing "*Let me in — Let me in!*" (p.30), too assails Heathcliff's abode with "*the gusty wind, and the driving of the snow*"(p.30). Brontë's assimilation of dream-wraith and blizzard is undoubtedly of central significance, since it corroborates one of Davies' (1983 : 72) key statements : "*The root of the word 'wind' in Hebrew has the same meaning as our word 'spirit', and this fruitful pun which is traditional in Christian tradition, is a coincidence on which Emily Brontë drew*". Wyler clearly draws then on Brontë's Christian vision of the soul as windy spirit; and though he unfortunately mars Brontë's ambiguous effect by changing her Catherine's dream-ghost into an actual wraith, he at least reworks his Catherine's apparition in terms of what Williams (1987 : 19) calls "[*her*] *internal wild moor*" — that "*other world within [herself]*" (Williams 1987 : 12) where she dematerializes into a windy element. That Wyler embraces Brontë's concept of the wind as some kind of spiritual force is reaffirmed by his handling of Catherine's death-scene at the Grange. Powell (1989 : 12) rightly points out in fact that detail about "*the curtain stirring in the wind from the moors as Cathy lies dying*". What Powell fails to mention, however, is the more crucial suggestion that the gust of wind blowing through the curtain is an aural-visual metaphor for Catherine's gasping spirit breaking through the Linton manor. Wyler's integration of moor-wind and curtain becomes a most dramatic indication of Catherine's windy nature. The Catherine whom Wyler's Lockwood significantly confronts is a gusty ghost — a phantasmal embodiment of the spirit of the moor.

Wyler's Catherine anticipates in this respect her Fuest equivalent. Fuest follows Wyler closely, in fact, for though he sacrifices Lockwood's stormy encounter with Catherine's wraith, he presents the latter when he finally introduces her at the very end as an actual shade haunting her moor-grave. Like Wyler, then, Fuest changes Brontë's Catherine's dream-apparition into a spectral manifestation; and even more importantly, he likewise portrays Catherine's beckoning ghost as an uncanny wind-force. Hence Fuest's Catherine's billowing hair and dress, suggestive of the same moorish spirit

that stirs her Wyler equivalent's curtain. Again, Fuest echoes Wyler's handling of Catherine's wind-ghost in the initial Lockwood episode by reworking this integration of Catherine and the moor-wind in his singular opening sequence depicting Catherine's burial. For Fuest's pre-credits funeral scene establishes an appropriate ill-omened beginning reminiscent of Robert Browning's (1970 : 562) introductory verse : "*Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead*". Like Evelyn, in fact, whose untimely death the poet evokes in terms of a "*geranium-flower/ Beginning to die too*" (p.562), Catherine becomes in Shielders' memorial speech a flower ravaged by a stormy wind : "*The days of man are but as grass, for he flourisheth as a flower of the field, for as soon as the wind goes over it, it is gone*".³ Fuest's Catherine is definitely dead but, like Evelyn whom we are told "*will wake*" (1970 : 564), she returns ironically as wind-wraith in elemental fulfilment of what she has promised Heathcliff : "*When I'm dead I think I'll come and haunt you at sunset*". When viewed in this perspective, the wild wind tearing at Fuest's Heathcliff's black cloak during Catherine's interment accrues a supernatural suggestiveness which Fuest clearly exploits in counterpoint to Shielders' obituary vision of Catherine's corpse as a flower destroyed by a windy storm. What Fuest's Shielders fails to recognize, it seems, is that what reaps Catherine in the flower of her youth is, to quote Williams (1987 : 10) again, that "*internal storm[...]*", which she shares with her Wyler and Brontëan equivalents. Where both Wyler and Fuest differ from Brontë then is in their unequivocal attitude to Catherine's wind-wraith.

Not so Kosminsky whose treatment of Catherine as wind-wraith departs from Wyler's and Fuest's by retaining an essential Brontëan ambivalence. Consider, for example, Kosminsky's Lockwood's nightmare where the branches of a wind-tossed tree crash through the casement and change into Catherine's ghostly arms accompanied by her voice wailing '*Let me in!*'⁴ That Kosminsky adheres strictly to Brontë by presenting Catherine's apparition within a dream-frame is, however, only half the point. More significantly, Kosminsky renders this dream-episode highly ambiguous by making it echo in aural-visual terms, not Catherine's delirium at the

³ All quotations from Fuest's *Wuthering Heights* are taken from the sound-track of the Congress Video version (No. 60900/VHS).

⁴ All quotations from Kosminsky's *Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights* are taken from the sound-track of the Paramount Pictures Video version (No. VHR 2749/VHS).

Grange like Brontë does, but the scene of Heathcliff's despair at Nelly's news of Catherine's death. As in Brontë, however, where Catherine's aural-vision of "*that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice*" (p.106) echoes Lockwood's dream of "*the fir bough repeat[ing] its teasing sound [...] as the blast wail[s] by*" (pp.30, 29), so in Kosminsky the unfathomable connection involves the wind/tree interaction. For Kosminsky aptly sets the scene of Nelly's sad tidings to Heathcliff on the windy heath, with the latter clutching a wind-lashed tree and invoking Catherine's phantom to haunt him, like his literary counterpart does among the larches. In Kosminsky's film, however, the supernatural resonances of the wind-thrashed tree are greater. For Kosminsky, it must be said, interpolates at one point a love scene at the Crag where Heathcliff ominously tells Catherine: "*I'll send your spirit into that tree*". Not surprisingly, then, Catherine's wraith is wind-tossed back into the Heights in arboreal disguise. But this is not meant to imply that what Kosminsky gains thematically by his integration of Catherine and the wind-whipped tree ruins the Brontëan ambiguity. For such an integration, it must be stressed, rightly finds its aural-visual culmination in Lockwood's nightmare, thereby retaining its baffling nature. Catherine's dream-apparition constitutes indeed a central source of ambiguity in Kosminsky's *Wuthering Heights*, with echoes of it resounding in many parts. To give another example: that moment at the Heights where Catherine blows into Heathcliff's hair and tells him: "*Don't you know I'll always come back?*" To add that Catherine utters this statement with the moor-wind blowing through the gables is to underline the scene's aural echoes of Catherine's dream-apparition, thereby heightening Kosminsky's Brontëan approach to the ambiguity of Catherine's wind-ghost.

But no such ambiguity haunts Buñuel's treatment of Brontë's wind-motif in his characterisation of the tragic heroine. Buñuel's is indeed a windy world as the film's other title *Cumbres Borrascosas* or *Stormy Heights* clearly indicates, but this terrain is totally lacking in wind-wraiths, or the possibility of such supernatural entities. Consider, for instance, that sequence where Alejandro (Heathcliff) implores Catalina (Catherine) to haunt him in elemental harmony with what Hoberman (1984: 52) calls "*the wind whistl[ing] through the palm [sic] trees*". This is evidently Buñuel's reworking of Brontë's Heathcliff's similar prayer under the larches, but with Kosminsky-like wind-effects added brusquely in evocation of what Brontë's Nelly says about the sudden "*wind shift[...]* from south to northeast" (p.140) after Catherine's death. Admittedly, the abrupt-

ness with which Catalina's death erupts into anguished waves of gusty monstera and banana branches is extremely weird; but nothing of an unnatural nature manifests when Alejandro begs Catalina to "show [her]self".⁵ Not even a hallucinated wraith. Just tossing foliage and swirling leaves indicating that, like Macbeth's, Alejandro's life "is fall'n into the sere" (Shakespeare 1970 : 152). What blows Alejandro to Catalina's — and Death's — way is then the wind of fate, that same wind which, Brontë's Nelly observes, "makes the lattice [...] flap [...] to and fro" (p.264) at Heathcliff's death. This is, I think, the Brontëan wind to which Sylvia Plath's 'Wuthering Heights' draws our attention as it "Pours by like destiny, bending / Everything in one direction" (1981 : 167). For Brontëan destiny is clearly the wind's own as 'High waving heather' demonstrates in its windy vision of "Man's spirit [...] / Shining and lowering and swelling and dying" (Brontë 1941 : 31) — a vision which makes Plath's "one direction" an elegiac euphemism for Brontë's 'mooryard', that graveyard of the heath to which "the life-giving wind" (Brontë 1941 : 31) inevitably leads. Buñuel's notion of superimposing Catalina's flickering funeral candle on stormy clouds becomes then a most fitting way of reaffirming Brontë's concept of human life as tragic windy strife.

Similar thematic preoccupations characterise Yoshida's Brontëan vision. For Yoshida's world, though wraithless like Buñuel's, is even more windswept, and in constant wail. Like Buñuel, in fact, Yoshida, while doing away with the Brontëan possibility of wraiths, reworks the image of Brontë's Catherine as tragic wind-waif. Consider, for instance, that sequence where Kinu's (Catherine's) conversation with Sato (Nelly) concerning the necessity of her becoming a vestal virgin is accompanied throughout by the wind's mournful sound. The moaning wind functions here, through its interaction with Kinu's doleful words, as an aural register of the latter's unvoiced sobbing at the dismal prospect of Onimaru's (Heathcliff's) loss, thereby recreating analogously that "night of weeping" (p.107) Brontë's Catherine experiences when Hindley separates her from Heathcliff. What makes the wind the major aural element in Yoshida's film — whose title *Arashi Ga Oka* significantly translates as *The Hill of the Storm* — is therefore not its ubiquitous presence, but its unfailing evocative power. This is a result of Yoshida having succeeded in imbuing the

⁵ All quotations from Buñuel's *Abismos de Pasión* are taken from the English subtitles of the Media Home Entertainment video version (No. CC5038).

wind with an emotional awareness corresponding to that of a fatal mourner. Hence Mitsuhiro's (Edgar's) assimilation in Kinu's death-scene of her clattering Onimaru with the wind, an equivalence that acts like a shivering echo of his earlier warning to Sato : "*The wind isn't good for her [Kinu's] health. One shouldn't open the door like that*".⁶ Yoshida's association of the wind with Kinu's aural vision of Onimaru as horseman of death is further affirmed by having the wind wail on the latter's reaping trail in moaning interplay with a flickering oil-lamp suggestive of a life in imminent danger of being blown out. One cannot help recalling here Catalina's funeral taper looming in the stormy skyscape, and Catherine's and Joseph's attic candles flickering in the windswept eyes of Mrs. Linton's delirious mind. Like Catherine and Catalina, then, Kinu is rightly conceived as a fragile flame exposed to the vagaries of the heath-wind.

But if Catherine's filmic realisation depends to a great extent on an aural recreation of her as a windy waif, so does Heathcliff's depend for the most part on an aural recreation of him as a baying hound. Wyler strikes the right note in fact when, Brontë-like, he integrates Heathcliff's snapping tone with his dogs' barking at Lockwood's intrusive arrival. What Miller (1963 : 166) says about Brontë's Lockwood then, that his "*encounter with Heathcliff's dogs is really his first encounter with the true nature of their owner*", is equally applicable to his Wyler equivalent. Wyler's Heathcliff implicitly admits this when, rephrasing his Brontëan counterpart's words, he allies himself with the Heights ferocious cur : "*Guests are so rare in this house that I hardly know how to receive them — I and my dog*". Significantly, Wyler departs from Brontë's depiction of Heathcliff's unexpected reappearance on the Linton porch by reworking his script-writers' interpolated scene showing Heathcliff "*in the gathering twilight, while the dogs sniff and growl around his feet*" (Hecht & MacArthur 1943 : 316). No such scene exists in Wyler's film, but what announces Heathcliff's sudden return is the barking of the Grange curs. "*What's the matter with the dogs ?*", Catherine ominously asks before Heathcliff snarls his way back into her life. But why should Wyler, one might ask, initiate the lovers' reunion in terms of strange dog barks? The reason is, I think, Wyler's fidelity to the canine aspect of Brontë's

⁶ All quotations from Yoshida's *Arashi Ga Oka* are taken from Tomoko Cassar's translation of the dialogue from the Pony Canyon Japanese video version (No. V148F1773/VHS).

Heathcliff's moorish nature — that element in his personality which Catherine instinctively adopts despite Hindley's repulsive response : “*Off, dog!*” (p.41). What Lockwood reads in Catherine's diary, in fact, about Heathcliff and her hiding “*snug[ly] [...] in the arch of the dresser*”(p.27), hints unmistakably at their canine instinct by evoking Lockwood's earlier observation that the Heights curs haunt exactly the same place : “*In an arch under the dresser, reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies [...]*”(pp.14-15). Hence Isabella's biting remark when she quarrels with Catherine about Heathcliff's love : “*You are a dog in the manger, Cathy, and desire no one to be loved but yourself!*” (p.89).

Heathcliff's canine relationship with Catherine reaches, however, a snarling climax in Catherine's death-chamber where Nelly observes him caressing her while “*grinding his teeth*” (p.133), which he does again when she tries to intervene : “*he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog*”(p.134). Isabella bites then into canine flesh again when, after Catherine's death, she taunts Heathcliff with his fawning obeisance to her : “*[...] if I were you, I'd go stretch myself over her grave and die like a faithful dog*” (p.146). So Wyler hits the thematic nail on its head when he juxtaposes Catherine's query about the barking dogs to the latter's growling message that Heathcliff has come home. Regrettably, however, Wyler fails to develop this essential canine connection. At no point, for instance, does Wyler include, like Brontë does, a watch-dog under Catherine's bedroom window, suggestive of Cerberus guarding the portals of Hades, and hence of Catherine's approaching passage to the nether world. Nor does Wyler interpolate any howling in canine sympathy with Catherine's and/or Heathcliff's death, like Saki (1982 : 410-414) does with his lupine requiem for the governess' demise in ‘The Wolves of Cernogratz’. Brontë's canine motif finds then no aural-visual treatment in the latter half of Wyler's film.

Still, the Heathcliff/dog connection which Wyler aurally establishes in Heathcliff's return sequence is of thematic centrality, and is arguably the only aural key moment for which Buñuel is clearly indebted to Wyler. For Buñuel, it must be said, recreates Wyler's Heathcliff/dog effect by having Eduardo's (Edgar's) question “*Why is that dog barking?*” function as an aural premonition of Alejandro's subsequent arrival. Buñuel differs from Wyler, however, in making the underlying Alejandro/dog connection evoke the white barking dog running at Isabel's (Isabella's) feet, thereby hinting at the latter's, and not Catalina's, appropriation of

Alejandro's canine nature. But Buñuel's approach, it must be stressed, is equally valid in Brontëan terms. For Brontë's Isabella is indeed a biter bit. Consider, for example, Brontë's Heathcliff's admission to Nelly: "*Now, was it not the depth of absurdity — of genuine idiocy — for that pitiful, slavish, mean-minded brach to dream that I could love her?*" (p.127). So Buñuel, while departing from Wyler's Brontëan vision of Heathcliff's and Catalina's canine relationship, focuses instead on Brontë's concept of Isabella as Heathcliff's bitch-mate.

Like Wyler, however, Buñuel fails to develop Brontë's dog-motif in the film's other sequences, since at no moment do dogs ever cross Alejandro's and Isabel's path again in any aural and/or visual way. I cannot help feeling then that Hoberman overstates the case when he claims that "*Abismos de Pasión resounds with the music of unmotivated dog barks*" (1984 : 52). Like Wyler, in fact, Buñuel refrains from underscoring Isabel's elopement with Alejandro by means of symbolic canine references. Still, Buñuel's notion of prefiguring Isabel's fate in Alejandro's jaws in terms of ominous barking is of vital thematic importance, and seems to have influenced Kosminsky's elopement sequence. For Kosminsky underlines Isabella's tragic plight by the faint baying of the manor hounds, thereby evoking what his Catherine, echoing Brontë's, tells Isabella about Heathcliff: "*he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man*". Unlike Wyler, then, Kosminsky makes Heathcliff's betrayal of Catherine *sound* as if it were an aural echo of Catherine's maiming by the Linton hounds. Kosminsky betters Wyler then in his thematic reworking of Skulker's attack on Brontë's Catherine — an episode which Buñuel discards by his excision of the first nine chapters of *Wuthering Heights*. Like Wyler and Buñuel, however, Kosminsky fails to develop Brontë's reiterative dog-motif into one of the thematic networks of his film.

Much weaker is Fuest's handling of the novel's canine element. For while staging, like Wyler and Kosminsky do, the growling hound attack on Catherine at the Grange, Fuest includes no other aural and/or visual evocation of Brontë's dog-theme. At no point, in fact, does Fuest develop the thematic possibilities of the Grange dog-scene, thereby denuding his depiction of Heathcliff's relationship with both Isabella and Catherine of much of its moorish savagery. Significantly, Fuest's Catherine, unlike the Catherines of Brontë and Kosminsky, refrains from describing Heathcliff to Isabella as a human incarnation of the most lethal member of the canine family. Brontë's dog-motif loses consequently its thematic vitality in Fuest's film. Wyler, Buñuel and Kosminsky are more thematically successful

than Fuest in this respect; and so is Yoshida who likewise retains something of Brontë's dog-motif but without including any barking canines in his film. I am referring here to that chilling sequence where Tae (Isabella), after being anally raped by Onimaru in dog-like fashion, kills herself by hanging. This is actually Yoshida's subtle reworking of Brontë's Heathcliff's symbolic hanging of Isabella Linton through the sadistic act of strangling Fanny, her pet springer :

The first thing that she [Isabella] saw me do, on coming out of the Grange, was to hang up her little dog, and when she pleaded for it, the first words I uttered were a wish that I had the hanging of every being belonging to her [...] (p.127).

I cannot help recalling here Klingopulos' remark that "*Heathcliff's cynical cruelty to the dog is an extension of his treatment of Isabella*" (1947 : 279). Isabella's hanged-bitch fate threatens, in fact, again when she witnesses Hareton "*hanging a litter of puppies from a chair-back*" (p.150), thereby justifying Miller's (1963 : 168) view that the Heights people "*live like ferocious dogs*". Hence the thematic aptness of Tae's dog-like rape and suicide by hanging — two unbearably painful events that bring to a tragic realisation Brontë's Heathcliff's perverse wish to kill Isabella by hanging her like her pet bitch. Having said this, I feel it necessary to add, however, that without prior knowledge of Brontë's dog-motif, a viewer of Yoshida's film might easily miss the Brontëan canine implications underlying Tae's rape and hanging. For these two terrible events do not evoke each other as self-sufficient visual symbols of a Brontëan-like canine existence, since nowhere does Yoshida rely for such a thematic effect on the visual and/or aural presence of curs. This is, I think, what weakens Yoshida's otherwise inventive reworking of Brontë's dog-theme.

Yoshida redresses, however, the thematic mistake of *not* including barking canines in his world by filling it with chattering birds. Admittedly, Yoshida's birds are largely invisible, but they are certainly present *aurally*. Yoshida's mountainous terrain constitutes, in fact, a soundscape teeming with unseen birds of dread, harbingers of ill-fate. Significantly, Onimaru's and Kinu's stoning in the forbidden village is eerily predicted by the raucous ravens whose off-screen cawing renders their aural presence even more conspicuously ominous by its evocation of the lovers viewed through the imprisoning bars of a wooden gate, caged in a frame within a frame. Portentous, too are the off-screen owls that herald the lovers' fare-

well tidings with their mournful hooting in the darkness. Yoshida often creates then what Nasta (1991 : 101) would term “*an unseen but heard additional meaning space*” by exploiting the aural fatality of invisible birds. But this central avian motif is, I think, Yoshida’s reworking of Brontë’s pillow episode where Catherine transforms her Linton chamber into a moorland aviary haunted by the feathery spectres of killed lapwings, moorcocks and wild ducks, or what Allott (1958 : 40) calls the birds “*of winter and death*” — flying omens of a foreboding fate, like the hanged hawks and crows of Hughes’ ‘November’ whirling in torrential rain (Hughes 1972 : 48). At no point does Yoshida include a similar scene in *Arashi Ga Oka*, but he certainly recreates in predominantly aural terms Brontë’s association of birds with tragic human waste. Hence Yoshida’s emphasis on the doves’ frenetic fluttering over the dead Shino’s (Frances’) body and their alarming cooing after Hidemaru’s (Hindley’s) stoning. The cooing doves are typically left off-screen in affirmation of Yoshida’s concern with the invisibility of the avian emissary of death. But Yoshida could have been influenced in this regard by Buñuel whose film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* which he admires so much (Collick 1993 : 40) likewise associates the sounds of unseen birds with the characters’ doomed fates. A case in point is Buñuel’s reworking of Brontë’s Catherine’s statement about Heathcliff’s moorish instinct to “*crush [Isabella] like a sparrow’s egg*”(p.90) into invisible birds piping heedlessly of Isabel’s similar predicament at El Robledal (*Wuthering Heights*) when she arrives there as Alejandro’s battered wife. The unseen birds’ trilling serves here as an ominous prolepsis of their chirping obliviousness of Eduardo’s subsequent rejection of his sister. Again, such uncaring off-screen liting prior to Catalina’s fatal childbirth hints at Buñuel’s atheistic notion of humanity’s ultimate aloneness. Buñuel certainly prefigures Yoshida then in his reliance on non-diegetic or asynchronous sound-effects that function like a tolling avian knell.

Fuest, too, shares Buñuel’s predilection for exploiting avian sound-effects as portents of chaos or death. Fuest initiates, for instance, Heathcliff’s stable-quarrel with Catherine about her planned visit to the Lintons by the discordant notes of off-screen croaking crows. Fuest’s invisible crows presiding aurally over the lovers’ conflict recall undoubtedly that Brontëan sequence where Linton Heathcliff pits his avian concept of heaven as “*larks singing high up over head*”(p.198) against the younger Catherine’s where “*not only larks, but throistles, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pour[...] out music on every side [...]*”(p.198).

What the younger Catherine's chanting birds clearly suggest is that her world is more "*awake and wild with joy*" (p.199) than Linton Heathcliff's, as she herself recognizes. But so is Fuest's Catherine's world when compared to Heathcliff's, given the latter's incapacity to integrate with the refined Lintons, like his literary equivalent. Hence Fuest's off-screen crows whose jarring cawing untunes the lovers' stable-meeting and intensifies their existential disagreement. So like Brontë, Fuest exploits avian sounds to dramatise the clash between two lovers falling out due to their conflicting outlooks on life. Fuest certainly demonstrates then in an analogous way Brontë's power of harnessing what Davies (1983 : 101) describes as the "*birds' [...] inhuman music call[ing] like an agent of destiny into the human world*". Also worth noting here is the aural basis of Linton's lark exaltation, for as Traversi (1949 : 166) points out "*Linton's larks [are] invisibly suspended in the heights of a uniform blue sky*". The episode's avian invisibility is a crucial factor in this context, since its unmistakable echo of the Tennysonian (1969 : 233) lark's "*sightless song*" might well be the real source of these *Wuthering Heights* film adaptors' preoccupation with bird sounds of a non-diegetic nature. What is certainly undeniable, however, is that Fuest recalls again Brontë's 'unseen larks' episode at Catherine's death. For Fuest clearly evokes the invisible crows croaking beyond the Heights stable by modulating the off-screen Catherine's death-cry at the Grange to *sound* like an unseen crow cawing her last.

Nowhere does Kosminsky resort to such an "*aural exchange[...]*", to use Weis' phrase (1982 : 145); but he does share Fuest's concern with the sounds of off-screen birds. Kosminsky's unseen birds recall, however, Buñuel's rather than Fuest's due to their incongruous joyful chirping in times of death or danger. Such avian lilting accompanies, in fact, the deceptively romantic sequence where Kosminsky's Heathcliff courts the doomed Isabella. Again, Kosminsky reinforces Edgar's aloneness at his final moments by evoking the lonely death-bed scene of Tennyson's 'Tears, idle tears' where unseen dawn birds, heedless of humanity's "*dying ears*" (1969 : 233), break into their ecstatic matins. The feeling of utter desolation which Kosminsky achieves by filling Edgar's death-chamber with melodious twitterings is not unlike that which Brontë's younger Catherine envisages for a dying Heathcliff when she tells him: "*Nobody loves you — nobody will cry for you, when you die!*"(p.228). So Kosminsky follows other *Wuthering Heights* adaptors in utilising off-screen bird sounds to create a moorish sound-track reeking of an avian apprehension worthy of Thomas' (1993 : 445) inauspicious statement: "*Fly, children, antici-*

pate the nightingale's migration". Wyler's sound-track is glaringly the only exception. For Wyler, it must be said, exploits no (non-) diegetic bird sounds for such thematic effects. Thematically speaking, this is one of Wyler's most regrettable aural omissions, for as Davies (1983 : 100) says: "*One of Emily Brontë's profoundest affinities is with the wild birds who are almost the sole living inhabitants of the moors*". True, Wyler (1939 : 243) does show, unlike Kosminsky, the Linton peacocks during Catherine's convalescence; and they do squawk when Isabella stumbles into them. But their squawking functions simply as a natural reaction that connotes nothing equivalent to the "*reflective, elegiac*" mood which Davy (1939 : 243) finds prevailing in Brontë's Linton manor. At no point, for instance, does Wyler include, like Kosminsky, the Grange peacocks' plaintive cry in fitting foreboding of Catherine's lament upon Heathcliff's return. Wyler is less thematically successful in this respect than Yoshida, Fuest, Kosminsky and Buñuel whose sound-tracks deftly exploit the off-screen chattering of Brontëan birds to imbue the interior settings with an almost palpable moorish atmosphere.

Conclusion

Of crucial importance, then, in any film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* is the necessity to make the sound-effects meaningful in terms of Brontëan character relations and affairs. This implies that the film adaptor of *Wuthering Heights* should strive to integrate the film's sound-effects with its visual images thereby creating what may be termed organic Brontëan significance. At no point, for instance, should the film adaptor be caught making up aurally for any absence of Brontëan visual meaning, just like the younger Catherine does when she "*lilt[s] a tune to supply [her] lack of conversation*"(p.177) with Hareton. Conversely, the film adaptor should demonstrate Nelly's ability to transform the "*murmur of the summer foliage*' [and the] '*full, mellow flow of the beck*' [into the] '*music [of] the Grange*'(p.131). To conclude, then, the sound-effects track of a *Wuthering Heights* film should echo the heath's symbolic blasts and evoke the metaphoric implications of the ominous and savage music of cawing crows and baying hounds. Only such a moorland soundtrack fits *Wuthering Heights*. It is indeed of vital necessity that the film adaptor of *Wuthering Heights* should utilise the resources of the sound-effects track to decode Brontë's moorish moan symbolised pre-eminently by that windy wail whose mystical suggestiveness affirms Yoshida's belief

that Brontë is the “*Delphic oracle*” (Collick1993 : 46) of the West Riding heath. If not, the film’s sound-effects code would be deprived of its essential Brontëan heart. And this is equally applicable to any other film adaptation whose sound-effects track should likewise voice its literary source’s thematic soul.

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