

# Setting the Scene

**A Comparison of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and  
its 2006 Film Adaptation**

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## Introduction

Since Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre* is a very successful novel, read by many people all around the world, it is not surprising to find numerous film adaptations based on it. Each adaptation gives its own interpretation which draws attention to different aspects of the novel. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate how film makers adapt such an exceedingly famous written work onto screen.

In all fiction, the setting is of great importance. Kelley Griffith lists four aspects to consider when thinking about setting in fiction. The place; where the actions in the work occur, the time; when the events take place, the social environment and finally, the atmosphere (61). Brontë is an author who makes use of setting in an interesting and expressive way. Her novel *Jane Eyre* is a carefully designed work of art. By Brontë's detailed way of describing the setting, she does not only manage to create different atmospheres but she also gives an insight into the characters' feelings and moods. Since Brontë uses setting in such creative ways, for instance when setting an atmosphere, it is appealing to examine how directors can create similar feelings with the help of setting when adapting the novel into film.

Jane, the protagonist of *Jane Eyre*, inhabits five different locations in the novel. Brontë's depictions of these locations mediate different feelings to the reader. Also, Jane's moving from one location to another illustrates her journey through life. Numerous writers have researched the significance of place in *Jane Eyre* and much has been written about the importance of these locations with their different settings. A closer study of how Brontë sets the scenes at the different locations is important when interpreting the story. An example is the time, which is one of the aspects to take into account when studying the setting and is interesting to consider when reading *Jane Eyre*. The way in which Brontë makes use of the passage of time, for example, is significant to the reading experience of the novel.

This essay will compare the setting in *Jane Eyre* to the setting in the BBC adaptation from 2006. Even though there are numerous film adaptations based on the novel, the BBC version is one of the longer. One reason why it is interesting to study this particular film version is because it contains more material. The essay will study in what way the film version makes use of setting versus how the novel does it. It will examine how the setting is important when interpreting *Jane Eyre*; how the setting adds to the understanding to the novel and to the film. In addition, the essay will study if the adaptor's use of setting draws more attention to certain themes from the novel than others.

## Film Adaptation

Readers create fictional worlds for the characters of narratives, both with the help of the authors' depictions of the surroundings and with the readers' own imagination. When film makers adapt written works onto the screen the adaptations will also result in different versions with varying focuses on different events. Therefore, these interpretations are rarely the same and viewers often get disappointed with how the novel they have read has been translated into film when comparing the two. Chuck Leddy suggests that the main cause for disappointment is that novels and films do not use the same techniques to tell and present the story (paragraph 1). However, viewers expect the film to be as faithful to the novel as possible.

The matter of faithfulness seems to be one of the most essential when discussing film adaptation and numerous writers have done research on the matter. John C. Tibbetts and James M. Welsh are among these writers, and they argue that fidelity is a significant issue to discuss. However, they continue by stating that when film makers translate novels into films, their alterations need not always end up being a bad result of the original but the alterations they make might instead be the ultimate choice for the adjustment of making the novel into film (xxi). Thinking of adaptation in this way when comparing the two media is helpful when trying to understand the choices film makers make when they compose their adaptations.

When film makers attempt to adjust a written work onto the screen, they have several matters to take in mind. Donna Marie Nudd gives a number of examples; one of these issues is the difference in length between a novel and a film. Nudd states that it is quite impossible for a film adaptation to retain all the events and characters that a longer novel contains (523). Michael Riley is of a similar opinion and states that it is impossible for an adaptation to include every detail its literary work contains, with the result that certain events and characters will be excluded in the film version (145). These inevitable alterations are the main reason why viewers experience the adaptation as inadequate and unjustifiable to its novel (Nudd 523).

Nudd also discusses the matter of faithfulness and asks the question: "Faithful to what?" (523). Then she uses *Jane Eyre* as an example in arguing that there are several different genres that can be applied to this novel, for example "a romance", "a gothic mystery" and "a feminist classic". In conclusion she says that it is quite unfair to expect film

makers to keep all these features in mind when adapting, especially when they only have a few hours to work with (523). As it also appears, film producers working with adaptations do not only consider the novel but also previous adaptations made by others. Nudd states that “[f]or filmmakers, the original text is perhaps not Charlotte Brontë’s novel but rather the most famous *Jane Eyre* film made *before* the one the filmmakers are working on” (523). For example, Susanna White the director of the 2006 BBC version of *Jane Eyre* had numerous earlier versions to bear in mind when producing her own. Analysts studying the subject of adaptation seem to agree that focus should not lie on whether the film version is faithful to its novel, but rather on how film makers have adapted the written work in order to suit the medium of film.

There are a number of further reasons for the alterations made by adaptors. Nudd brings up restrictions due to a limited budget and also how a novel can contain events that are complicated to visualize on screen (525). Further, Sarah Mead-Willis has made a deeper analysis of the BBC version of *Jane Eyre* where she comes to the conclusion that the director has adjusted the political view in the film to suit today’s audience better (36). It can be understood that depending on when the adaptation is produced, the film maker will have to adjust it to the contemporary audience.

In conclusion, researchers studying the issue of film adaptation seem to agree that when comparing a film adaptation to its novel it should not be a question of faithfulness, but it should rather be a study of how the film maker has interpreted the written work and then translated it to suit the medium of film. These interpretations could perhaps even result in the reader discovering new exciting aspects of the novel.

## **Gateshead Hall**

“There was no possibility of taking a walk that day” (3) is the first line in *Jane Eyre*. Robert L. Patten suggests that this first sentence in the novel indicates that this is a story “about places, spaces, and the possibility of moving toward, away from, and within them physically or mentally” (148). Patten seems to suggest that the very beginning of the novel foreshadows the importance of place in *Jane Eyre*. The first place Jane inhabits is Gateshead Hall which is the starting point of her journey. Even though Charlotte Brontë does not dedicate many pages to the time when Jane lives here with the Reed family, her depiction of this location is

detailed. Also, the reader gets a sense of the atmosphere already in the opening scene. Jane, sitting in the window-seat, describes the rough weather outside and the feeling of “coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie” (3). Here Brontë makes use of an important image which will reoccur throughout the whole novel; ice and cold. The image of ice and cold has been analysed by several writers studying *Jane Eyre*. One of these writers is Catherine Lanone who compares Jane’s description of the desolate landscape outside to the solitude she experiences (118). Mary Burgan writes that “Jane’s position in the window seat ... is a deeply engrained emblem of her utter homelessness” (84). Ice and coldness represent alienation, solitude and sadness and Jane wants to get away from her lonely life at Gateshead Hall to find a warm place where she is loved and wanted.

After Jane’s depiction of the cold weather she describes how the Reed children are “clustered round their mama in the drawing-room ... by the fireside” (3). Here, the second image, parallel and in contrast to ice and cold is introduced; fire and warmth. While Jane sits all alone in the next room, secluded from the company of the family, Mrs Reed and her children are gathered around the warm fire. In contrast to ice, fire represents not only love and warmth but also the fiery emotions of passion. Debra Teachman writes that “Gateshead is the place in which the passions of childhood are given free reign” (2). Despite Jane’s cousin John Reed acting in a malicious manner towards her and getting away with it, Jane, on the other hand, “is punished for her fits of passion” (Teachman 2). As time goes by, Jane must learn when to give into her passionate feelings and when to suppress them. Throughout the novel, the interplay of hot fireplaces, icy weather and cold atmospheres will be central to the interpretation of *Jane Eyre*.

Crucial to the imagery of fire and ice is the event when Jane is sent to the Red Room as a punishment for having quarreled. “This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire” (9) are Jane’s words when describing the Red Room. Jane’s experience in the Red Room brings much information to the reader. Burgan connects Jane’s description of the gloomy Red Room to when she is sitting in the window seat and interprets these two events as indicating Jane’s feelings of loneliness (84). The event in the Red Room is also one of the instances where the perception of time is significant. Griffith explains that when important events take place in *Jane Eyre* time goes slower and the long time spent on describing Jane’s experience in the Red Room “corresponds to [her] perception of time, which in turn corresponds to her fear of the room” (63-64). Further, Teachman writes that the first correlation to moonlight

takes place in the Red Room where Jane experiences a strange light and at first reasons that it might be moonlight shining in through the window (21). While Jane is locked up in the Red Room she is terrified that the spirit of her dead uncle will come and haunt her, so when she realises that it is not the moon that causes the light in the room she believes that it is a ghost whereupon she panics, screams and wrenches the door (12). Teachman declares that “[c]ivilized society in *Jane Eyre*” expects women not to express their emotions freely. Further, she claims that “the natural light of the moon introduces the idea of using images of nature to indicate feelings that are more in tune with nature than with societal expectations” (21). In addition, the Red Room makes the colour red significant. Bettina L. Knapp explains how the colour red “stands for those earth-factors Jane represses: raw instinct, uncontrolled inner urges, and sexual passion” (paragraph 6). In the Red Room, it is impossible for Jane to control and suppress her strong emotions of fear as a woman is expected to do. Instead she gives into her natural emotions.

There are further associations to the Red Room. Jane’s experience there introduces the first supernatural sign and the first Gothic atmosphere in *Jane Eyre*. “Superstition was with me at that moment” (9) Jane declares. Together with the mystical beam of light in the room, the events in the Red Room certainly create an eerie and Gothic atmosphere. Further, Tamar Heller wants to compare the “domestic space” in *Jane Eyre* to a “prison” (50). Jane is a prisoner in the red chamber, terrified of the apparition of her uncle. Heller explains how Jane is sent there because she has rebelled against the unjust domestic treatment practiced against her (51) and that the domestic place of the different locations in the novel represents “incarceration and terror” (53). While Heller describes the Red Room as a jail where Jane is imprisoned, Knapp believes that the fact that Jane’s experience in the Red Room takes place at Gateshead is not by mere accident. Knapp sees the entire place of Gateshead as a prison where Jane is feeling completely isolated (paragraph 2). This first location which Jane inhabits provides important and meaningful information about her situation and her feelings of solitude and unhappiness as a child. Gateshead, being a cold and alienated place, generates sympathy for the protagonist.

The setting in the very beginning and in the first scene in the film version provides the viewer with much information about Jane’s feelings. Mead-Willis points out how “[t]he opening credits depict a field of swirling crimson fabric” and this red fabric represents “love, lust, passion, anger, and . . . madness” (30). All these representations are significant to *Jane Eyre* and the colour of red is a recurrent feature. The opening credits showing a red

fabric twirling around is also used in the 1996 version directed by Franco Zeffirelli (Mead-Willis 30). This imitation is one example where adaptors consider previous versions when producing their own. The opening credits in the 2006 version are followed by a scene which is set in a desert like landscape where Jane is all alone, surrounded by sand under a warm sun. The camera zooms in her face and when it zooms out back again, Jane is at Gateshead Hall in a gloomy room, reading a travel book. The desert landscape mediates Jane's loneliness, but also how she wants to get away from her place with the Reed family. She wants to escape the coldness to be somewhere warm instead.

When studying the location of Gateshead Hall in the film there is a certain pattern visible. Most often when Jane is in a room she is not given any light from candles but only by natural light from outside, for example by sitting in a window seat. The rooms usually seem dark, cold and solemn. Burgan writes that "Brontë rarely sets up a scene without establishing its sources of warmth and illumination" (84). She also states that Jane's inner wishes are produced by the want of light and warmth during her childhood (86). Since the issue of the setting of illumination is important in the novel, it is not strange to assume that the director Susanna White and the screen writer Sandy Welch have taken this matter seriously when adapting *Jane Eyre* into film.

In contrast to the novel, the scene in the Red Room is rather short but intense. A red light is set in the whole room. The camera is angled from the ceiling down towards where Jane sits crying. The angle of the camera makes her look really small and the fear of seeing the ghost of her uncle becomes very evident. When Jane looks up, she sees her uncle who sits in the bed while the whole room is struck by lightning. This scene brings on a supernatural effect which complements, even though in a rather drastic method, the Gothic atmosphere in this part of the story. The lightning can be seen as a reflection of the association to the moon in the novel and the connection with nature. Similarly to the novel, Jane gives in to her natural feelings and in complete terror she loudly bangs the door.

## **Lowood**

The next location Jane inhabits is the charity school at Lowood. Similar to her time at Gateshead Hall, Lowood is a place which does not offer much warmth or light and overall it is an austere place. Jane's time here is connected with cold and darkness. When she describes

one of the rooms at the school she explains how numerous girls are gathered there but they are only provided with two candles as a source of light (36). When she is taken to the dormitory, she notices how the only candle is put out after just a short time followed by total darkness and when she awakens the next day the room is ice cold (36). The schoolroom Jane also describes as being “cold and dimly lit” (37). There are numerous connections to ice and cold at Lowood. Even the pitchers where the girls wash themselves are frozen. Teachman explains that one reason for the cold in the scenes at Lowood is that the girls should learn to accept their lot and not protest when they encounter misery and distress (3). Lowood is a place where Jane must learn to subdue her passionate feelings (Teachman 6). The stern discipline and cold are supposed to harden the girls and to teach them a valuable lesson about the struggles in life. Lanone states that “ice signals the stages of Jane’s progress” (120). Lanone then refers to Jen Hill who compares Jane’s time at Lowood to an “Arctic exploration”, declaring that as Jane conquers the adversities at the school she gradually becomes braver, stronger and more persistent (120)<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, the weather during the time at the institution is cold. “Our clothing was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold”, Jane says (50). The children are forced to church every Sunday, and the icy weather makes the walk dreadful. “We set out cold, we arrived at church colder” (51) are Jane’s words about the walk. When the girls return from church, the bigger girls gather around the warm fire but the younger ones are farther away from the warmth (51). Cynthia Carlton-Ford comments on this instance and states that Jane’s seclusion from the fire is repeated several times through her story, as already shown at Gateshead, and which points to her alienation (380). The only instance when the setting of Lowood offers a big fire where Jane is welcomed is when Jane is invited into Miss Temple’s apartment (59). This is the only place where Jane is offered comfort and where she feels safe. By depicting a fire here, it is understood that Miss Temple is very warm and loving and thus also very important to Jane and her development as a person.

As previously stated, the film version does not dedicate much time to when Jane stays at Gateshead Hall and this is the same situation for the time dedicated to Lowood. However, the director and screenwriter seem to have taken the issue of light and cold into account when filming the episode at Lowood, because as in the novel, the school is depicted in a stern, somber and frigid manner. When Jane is travelling by horse and carriage to

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<sup>1</sup> Hill, Jen. *The Arctic in The Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press), 2007, p. 90. Quoted in Lanone, 120.

Lowood, it is night and it is snowing. When she arrives at the school she is carried into the dormitory which is a big and gloomy room. Since the ceiling, the walls and also the floor are built of stone, the room gives a cold impression. The icy atmosphere is even more prominent the next morning when the girls are to wash themselves. The water in the pitchers is frozen, so they have to use their jugs for cracking the ice first. Here the hardship of being a pupil at Lowood becomes obvious.

Light is scarce at the school. At the front of the big assembly hall there are only two single candles to light up the entire space but these candles are not even alight which makes the hall look dismal and cold. The only instance in the film where a fair amount of light and warmth is present in the room is when Jane lies next to her best friend Helen Burns who is dying. Helen tells Jane to come lie next to her because she sees how cold Jane is. Here many candles spread warmth and comfort to the two girls. Close by Helen, Jane does not feel cold and alone, but warm, loved and safe. After Helen's death follows a scene where Jane sits in the churchyard in grey weather, painting a picture of the church and the graves, among them Helen's. After the camera has zoomed in Jane and then out again, she is now eight years older, once more sitting in the churchyard. However, now the weather is sunny. The change of weather could be argued to represent Jane's shift of mood. From having been a lonely little girl, she is now a more confident young woman ready for her next episode in life. Helen's gravestone tells the year of her death, 1829, which sets the year of the present time in Jane's story. It is the year of 1837 and the eighteen-year-old Jane is about to leave Lowood.

## **Thornfield Hall**

The next location Jane inhabits is Thornfield Hall. When she has arrived at Thornfield she is taken on a tour around the mansion. Michael Klotz asserts that "Jane's view of rooms displays something of her emotional state" (13). When she views the drawing room she imagines having "caught a glimpse of a fairy place" but soon thereafter she states that "it was merely a very pretty drawing-room" (90). Jane's change of thoughts on the drawing room is her way of reminding herself that she is merely Mr Rochester's employee and that she cannot permit herself to wish for anything more (Klotz 15).

The interiors of different rooms also reveal information about other characters. Klotz writes that Jane pays special attention to the design of different places in order to obtain information about the owner of the housing (14). She is impressed by Thornfield Hall and tries to find out more information about its proprietor (90). The design of the drawing room gives her information about Mr Rochester. Klotz has made a deeper analysis of what this room represents. He points to the descriptions Jane makes of the contrasting red and white interiors in the room and states that the close description of the drawing room with its “rich contrast” is really a description of Mr Rochester as a person who is a man made up of a “general blending of snow and fire” (15). Klotz refers to the contrasting design of red and white when describing “Rochester’s fervent spirit and his repressive impulse” (15). This room mirrors Mr Rochester as a man with much passion inside, yet at the same time a man who on several occasions gives a cold appearance. Jane also notices that Mr Rochester is a fashion-conscious man since the interiors are modern and furniture that has gone out of fashion have been moved to the third floor (Klotz 17-18).

The third floor, where Mr Rochester keeps his wife Bertha imprisoned, is the part of the mansion which gives Thornfield Hall a Gothic and mysterious atmosphere. The old furniture; “bedsteads of a hundred years old; chests in oak or walnut ... rows of venerable chairs ... stools still more antiquated” (91), certainly adds to the eerie impression of the third storey. Jane comments on the design on this floor as “a home of the past: a shrine of memory” (91). She even remarks that if some sort of spirit was to haunt Thornfield, the third floor would be its residence (92). Klotz writes that by storing the old furniture on the third floor, Mr Rochester is trying to suppress his memory of the past. The old furniture represents the former Mr Rochester while the modern furniture in the drawing room represents his contemporary self (18). At a later stage, he and Jane are outside looking towards Thornfield Hall and Mr Rochester expresses his liking of its features. However, suddenly his face expresses something of “[p]ain, shame, ire, impatience, disgust, [and] detestation” (124). Mr Rochester is haunted by the presence of his wife who is locked up in one of the towers. Similarly to Gateshead and Lowood, domestic spaces at Thornfield Hall are connected to imprisonment and horror, where Bertha is locked up in the “Gothic region” adjacent to the pleasant and homely part of the mansion (Heller 53). It could be assumed that Mr Rochester is comparing these two parts, struggling with feelings of fondness for his mansion and disgust with the reminder of the past it contains. Both the exterior and the interiors of the mansion make it a mysterious location with an uncanny and Gothic atmosphere.

Carlton-Ford states that Jane frequently describes fire places throughout her whole story and “[t]o Jane, hearth fires are a symbol of intimacy” (378-379). When Jane arrives at Thornfield for the first time, she is immediately invited by Mrs Fairfax to come and warm herself by the fire place (82). Carlton-Ford writes that “Brontë carefully establishes hearth fires as an index to how included and ‘at home’ Jane feels” (375), that is, “[t]o be close to the hearth is to be valued, comfortable, included – to be home” (380). Jane yearns for a warm and hearty home and when she receives such a warm welcome by Mrs Fairfax, her wish comes true (Burgan 85).

However, while fire indicates a positive atmosphere to Jane, excessive amounts of fire are not as good (Burgan 86). Bertha is connected with events which contain too much fire and therefore she represents the woman with too much passion. She is the one to blame for setting Mr Rochester’s bed on fire, and also for burning down the entire Thornfield Hall. Eric Solomon writes that “Bertha represents the flames of hell-fire” (216) and Teachman describes her as “a mad-woman” who does not subdue her strong emotions but instead evidently reveals them (19). Bertha does not subdue her excessive emotions of passion. Furthermore, fire and passion is connected to the instance when Jane is to meet Mr Rochester at Thornfield Hall for the first time. Here she describes how “Two wax candles stood lighted on the table, and two on the mantelpiece” and also present in the room is “the light and heat of a superb fire” (104). It is when Jane is close to a fire that she feels secure and where she is most likely to give utterance to her thoughts. Jane and Mr Rochester’s first talk takes place by the fire since he wants to make her acquaintance (Carlton-Ford 379). At most times when Jane and Mr Rochester meet they are accompanied by a warm fire. Therefore, Mr Rochester is connected to fiery and passionate emotions and sometimes these can even be too much for Jane. The most evident instance of when there is too much fire and passion is when Mr Rochester is dressed up as a gypsy woman. Jane “feels his powerful attraction” (Solomon 216) which makes her exclaim: “Don’t keep me long; the fire scorches me” (176). Jane feels overwhelmed because of the fervent atmosphere in the room. Teachman writes that Thornfield is one of the places where Jane learns to give in to these fiery feelings (6). Natural, strong emotions are given free reign at Thornfield Hall.

The film version dedicates the majority of time to Thornfield. It is a dark night when Jane arrives and she looks anxious when gazing at her new residence which has a desolate exterior. Mead-Willis argues that the decision of filming the 2006 version of *Jane Eyre* at Haddon Hall in Derbyshire and the use of the “battlemented manor house” with “its

chilly, hilly environs” was a good choice for representing Thornfield Hall (30-31). The same mansion was also used in the 1996 version directed by Franco Zeffirelli (Mead-Willis 30-31). The fact that the 2006 version used the same location for filming the events at Thornfield as the 1996 version did is another example of where film adaptors take previous film versions in to consideration when producing their own. Already in the first scene, the setting with the gloomy mansion creates a Gothic atmosphere. This Gothic atmosphere will permeate the entire Thornfield part.

Compared to the novel, the film does not give much of a tour around the mansion. However, the first impression when viewing the inside of it is that it is not a bright or lively space. For example, in one of the rooms the furniture is covered by white fabric. The fact that the furniture is all covered is interesting when comparing the matter to the novel where Jane remarks on the meticulous tidiness that Mrs Fairfax maintains at Thornfield Hall (90). “No dust, no canvas coverings ... one would think they were inhabited daily” are Jane’s words about the rooms (90). In the novel, Mrs Fairfax makes sure to maintain the cleanliness in the mansion despite the fact that its master often away from home. In contrast, the film seems to point to the opposite, where the linen sheets imply that Mrs Fairfax does not maintain the cleanliness in the rooms. Neither do they look as if they were inhabited daily. Further, the film does not present the rooms Jane and Mrs Fairfax pass as being bright or alighted. Instead they look grey and gloomy. It is almost as if the mansion has gone into a deep sleep while waiting for its master to return home. Unfortunately, there is not much focus on the different rooms and their design which could have been a way of giving a hint of Mr Rochester’s character which the novel portrays in a detailed way. Instead there is much more focus on the third floor and its inhabitant Bertha. The third floor is dark with little furnishing and sparse adornment. However, there is one object decorating the third floor. An odd painting hangs on one of the walls, which pictures numerous disfigured, mad people and it sends out a feeling of unease. On one occasion in the film, Adèle even refers to this painting when talking about the ghost of Thornfield that wanders the halls. The third floor could also be presumed to be a cold space since Mrs Fairfax tells Jane that the north tower, as the film has named Bertha’s inhabitation, is a drafty place. All the different elements on the third floor give it an uncanny atmosphere.

Mr Rochester’s wife Bertha is the source of mystery at Thornfield Hall. On Jane’s first day at Thornfield she takes a walk in the garden. Suddenly she looks up towards the north tower and sees a red fabric fluttering in the air from one of its windows. Several

associations could be formed with the fluttering red fabric. Firstly, it can be linked to the opening credits in the beginning of the film where a red crimson fabric twirls around. As already stated, Mead-Willis asserts that this fabric represents “love, lust, passion, anger, and ... madness” (30). Furthermore the colour red represents “raw instinct, uncontrolled inner urges, and sexual passion” which are all feelings that Jane is trying to subdue (Knapp paragraph 6). Bertha, on the other hand, seems to embody these emotions. The symbolic meaning of the red fabric becomes even more clear now since it is connected to Bertha; the mad, angry imprisoned woman who has too much passion inside her. Secondly, the fact that the fabric is red could also be connected to the Red Room at Gateshead Hall, where Jane was imprisoned by Mrs Reed. Similarly, Bertha is a prisoner locked up in the north tower by Mr Rochester. Both the Red Room and the north tower are places where strong emotions like anger, madness and above all passion ravage. Teachman states that “Bertha displays the rage and violence that women were required to repress in Victorian life” (17). Both Jane as a child and Bertha should learn to suppress their too passionate feelings. Thirdly, it could also serve as a way of creating suspense and a Gothic atmosphere. Since the Red Room is considered as the haunted chamber, the colour red could be linked to a ghostly and mysterious atmosphere. This red fabric appears at several occasions during Jane’s stay at Thornfield. The north tower brings about the most eerie feelings and it also represents the mysterious part of Thornfield Hall.

As in the novel, the first occurrence of a fire at Thornfield Hall comes very early in the film. On Jane’s arrival, she is taken through some dark passages before finally reaching the kitchen where Mrs Fairfax sits waiting. The kitchen is much more illuminated than what she has seen so far of the mansion. Even though Mrs Fairfax does not directly ask Jane to come and sit with her next to the fire place, it becomes evident that Jane is more than welcome to warm herself in front of it while also having something to eat. By Jane’s expression of content, it becomes obvious that she feels comfortable and at home. Later in the film, when Mr Rochester comes to Thornfield Hall for the first time since Jane’s arrival and the two are to meet, he wants her to come and sit with him near the fire. It could be assumed that this invitation gives Jane the same homely feeling as she experienced previously with Mrs Fairfax. Similar to the novel, there is often much light and warmth when Jane and Mr Rochester meet and converse. However, the film does not seem to focus as much on images of fires at Thornfield as the novel does. Even though the film has a tendency to include candles and fire places when the two are together, it does not draw as much attention to them

as the novel does. For example, there is a fire burning in the hearth in the room when Mr Rochester brings a gypsy woman to Thornfield to tell Jane's fortune, while he hides behind a drape. However, whereas in the novel Jane cries out "Don't keep me long; the fire scorches me" (176), as to demonstrate a clear connection between the heat of the fire and the passionate feelings Mr Rochester sends out, the film does not draw any special attention to the fire in the room.

Images of nature are important in *Jane Eyre*. In the novel, shortly after Jane's arrival at Thornfield, she climbs the staircase to reach the top of the roof. At this point she has not yet met Mr Rochester. Up on the roof top she gazes at the extended, dim, solitary landscape before her (94). She speaks of her longings in life which are different from her current situation and also about women's situation (95). Teachman describes how images of nature are linked to natural feelings and are used when Jane experiences injustice. Teachman writes that what the novel says is "that women will have the same feelings, dreams, and needs for activity that men have" (21). Jane needs to go up onto the roof "in order to feel fully alive, in order to dream the dreams and have the visions that keep her sane" (Teachman 20). Judith Leggatt and Christopher Parkes also comment that by looking out over the landscape, Jane desires to get away from the tranquility and confinement at Thornfield Hall (181-82).

The film version also seems to have considered images of nature. As in the novel Jane climbs up on the roof to have a look at the extended landscape stretched out before her. However, in the film she does not give a speech about her desire for more excitement but sits silently and views the surroundings. Since images of nature in *Jane Eyre* are linked to natural feelings (Teachman 21), it can be assumed that the reason for her coming up here, viewing the beautiful surroundings is a reflection of her longing for a different and more exciting life. At this moment, since Jane has not yet met Mr Rochester, Thornfield Hall is not a very lively place.

Connected to images of nature are images of the moon which also are of importance in the novel. Peter Nockolds states that "The moon is especially prominent in *Jane Eyre*: Charlotte refers to the moon or moonlight in half of the thirty-eight chapters" (157). As already shown in connection to Jane's stay at Gateshead Hall and her experience in the Red Room, moonlight is associated with strong, natural feelings. Teachman writes that a further instance where the moon is shining is after Jane has been on the roof and talked about her wanting more out of life and longing for more excitement. Jane then takes a walk under "the rising moon; pale yet as a cloud, but brightening momentarily" (97, quoted in Teachman 21).

During this walk, under the moonlight, in a “moment of passion” Jane meets Rochester for the first time (Teachman 21). Since “the moon occurs on several occasions when Jane experiences more emotion than a respectable Victorian woman should” (Teachman 21), it can be assumed that there are strong emotions present during this first encounter.

In comparison to the novel where Brontë describes the moon on numerous occasions there is only one instance where the moon appears in the film. The moon is shining a short time after Mr Rochester has asked Jane to marry him. He is away from home and Bertha sneaks into Jane’s bed chamber and destroys her wedding veil. In addition, Jane has a bad dream about Mr Rochester leaving her. When he returns Jane tells him about this bad omen. After he has calmed her down, they look out the window where a full moon is shining in a dark blue sky. Since the moon is associated with strong emotions (Teachman 21), it could be argued that the reason why the film has chosen to include a full moon here is because there are many emotions present; distress over what has happened to the wedding veil and the bad dream, the strong love between Jane and Mr Rochester, excitement and anxiousness of the upcoming wedding.

Weather is connected to the images of nature and is meaningful to novel. Jane and Mr Rochester’s most emotional meeting takes place in stormy weather. Teachman writes that it is “thunder and lightning that accompany Jane’s excess of emotion when Mr. Rochester proposes marriage” (21). Unfortunately, the storm is not only a sign of fiery emotions. The lightning strikes down in the chestnut tree next to Jane and Mr Rochester and splits it in two, which can be interpreted as representing their future marriage; a marriage that can never become a true and lawful reunion because of him already being married to Bertha (Teachman 22).

The weather is also significant in the film. In one of the scenes the certain choice of weather helps to set the atmosphere. Mr Rochester and his guests are gathered in the drawing room. Outside the window there is thunder and lightning and Adèle tells the party about the ghost that haunts Thornfield Hall. Together with the raging storm outside and Adèle’s ghost story, the atmosphere in the room is truly intense and uncanny. Furthermore, as in the novel the most evident occurrence where weather is significant to the story is when Mr Rochester and Jane are outside under the big chestnut tree and they reveal the strong feelings they have for each other. At first the weather is warm and nice but as their conversation becomes more and more intense, so does the weather. When Mr Rochester finally asks Jane to be his wife, the sound of an impending storm closes in and the rain starts pouring down. Their

affectionate meeting ends with the lightning striking down in the big tree as a discharge of emotions. Evidently the scene in the film could be argued to have the same interpretation as in the novel, with the split tree representing an impossible true reunion.

## **Moor House**

Jane flees from Thornfield and Mr Rochester to seek nature and the moorland. Here the setting with Jane in the middle of nature is important. When viewing the landscape she describes the “great moors” and the “waves of mountains” that surround her (285). Leggatt and Parkes suggest that “an open untamed landscape, such as the moors” permits Jane to feel free and her actions are a revolt against the people who are trying to dominate her (169). The carriage has left Jane at a crossroads and here she stands between “society and nature” (Leggatt and Parkes 182). At first Jane chooses nature over society by continuing wandering the moors. She trusts nature more than she trusts mankind and believes that Mother Nature will take care of her, though when she realises that nature will not be able to fulfill all of her human needs, she finally chooses society over nature (Teachman 22).

In a similar way, after Jane’s flight from Thornfield, the first scene in the film depicts Jane out in the open landscape in the moorland. Jane wakes up on a rocky foundation in the middle of the moors. As in the novel she is surrounded by extensive nature and at first there is no sign of humanity. Jane’s description of the landscape in the novel could be used to describe the setting at this instant in the film as well with only the moors surrounding her. The setting in this scene could be interpreted to carry the same meaning as it does in the novel, where Leggatt and Parkes argue that the vast landscape is her flight to freedom and from people who want to control her (169). Later in the film there are flashbacks which depict more details of Jane’s flight from Thornfield. One of the flashbacks pictures Jane being deserted at a crossroads and confusingly she looks down at the several roads meeting there which is also very similar to the novel and can be assumed to carry the same meaning; that Jane must choose between nature and society.

In the novel Jane leaves the moorland and returns to society ending up at the Rivers’ cottage. The servant Hannah tells Jane on one occasion that “Some calls it Marsh End, and some calls it Moor House” (301). Both names could be argued good. Marsh End is a name that reflects the house being situated at the end of the marshes. However, Moor House

could be argued to capture the meaning of the location better. The house is situated next to the moors; it is right between nature and society.

After a time in bed Jane regains her strength which has been weakened from her time out in the moors and she views her new residence. As discussed previously, Jane inspects the rooms with their interiors at different locations in order to understand the person who lives there better. When arriving at Moor House she does the same. Jane describes the parlour as old fashioned, sparsely furnished and the objects in the room are old, “well worn and well saved” (304). The Rivers are not a family with much money. Hence, they cannot afford new, expensive furniture. Their economical situation is also the reason why Diana and Mary Rivers must leave Moor House to work as governesses elsewhere. Klotz states that the strict design of the drawing room, where every item is out of date and in its right place, tells Jane something of St John Rivers’ character. It is the design in the room that makes her think that he is not very kind, indulgent or sensitive (18). Jane especially remarks on some “antique portraits” hanging on the wall (304). Klotz writes that these portraits mirror St John’s “rigid ... view of the world” (18). Towards the end of Jane’s stay at Moor House, she refurnishes the cottage and replaces old furniture and objects with new ones in the attempt of creating a more pleasant and lively atmosphere in the house (Klotz 18-19). However, St John Rivers’ response to her refurnishing is a disappointment to Jane. His opinion is that Jane must have put more effort to the refurnishing than it was worth. His reaction makes Jane think that “he had spoken truth of himself when he said he was hard and cold” (347).

There are not as many scenes inside Moor House in the film as there are descriptions of the cottage in the novel. The film does not put much focus on the design and objects. However, later in the film when Jane refurnishes Moor House there is an obvious, visible change. Before her alterations, the inside of the cottage had a grey, dreary look with a serene atmosphere which could be meant to mirror St John as a stern person. When Jane later refurnishes the cottage in the film, it noticeably becomes a much more lively, warm and loving place. Jane is also determined to have fires lit in every room, which could depict Jane as a much more passionate person than St John who is much more reserved. When comparing before and after the refurnishing it could be assumed that the design of Moor House before Jane’s arrival mirrors St John’s character in the film in a similar way as the novel does.

Imagery of fire and passion dominates at Thornfield but at Moor House imagery of ice governs. Teachman writes that Gateshead and Thornfield are locations where Jane experiences passion and gives into her feelings, but Lowood and Moor House are locations

where she must learn to subdue her passionate emotions (6). Due to St John's character there is an icy atmosphere at Moor House and Jane provides the reader with numerous icy descriptions of him. One example is where Jane states that even at times when he was next to a fire place he was "too often a cold cumbrous column, gloomy and out of place" (348). Teachman declares that "St John's passion is 'ice' compared to Jane's 'fire'" (5). In addition, Solomon asserts that "The fire is in Jane's spirit" while St John "contains the icy waters that would put out fire" and "destroy passion" (216). One instance where St John is directly linked to actual ice and coldness is when Jane lives in her own little cottage in Morton and he pays a visit to her. St John "came in out of the frozen hurricane ... and stood before me: the cloak that covered his tall figure all white as a glacier" (333-334), Jane declares. Carlton-Ford points out that Brontë makes use of the images of fire to grade her characters in *Jane Eyre* on a scale from "fiery to icy" which then mirrors the character as "passionate to rational" (377). St John is a man who is very controlled and therefore gives a cold appearance.

The film version does not seem to depict the icy atmosphere at Moor House in the same evident way as the novel does it. However, during Jane's time with the Rivers the film makes a number of flashbacks to her time at Thornfield. The scenes in these flashbacks depict Jane lying in a bed embraced by Mr Rochester. The setting in the room creates a warm and loving atmosphere. The film switches from the scene at Thornfield and back to where a miserable Jane lies on her bed at Moor House in a room which looks somber and solitary. The effect of these contrasting scenes could be argued to reflect Jane's solitude and her longing for Mr Rochester. It also depicts the difference between a fiery and passionate Thornfield and an icy and rigid Moor House in an apparent way. The contrasting scenes could also be linked to the analysis made by Teachman who claims that Thornfield is as a place where Jane learns to indulge in her passionate feelings and Moor House as a place where she must learn to subdue them (6). When the film visualizes Jane on her bed at Moor House it depicts a miserable woman who is desperately trying to subdue her emotions for Mr Rochester.

Towards the end of Jane's time at Moor House, the novel describes how Jane experiences a supernatural event. St John has proposed to Jane and she describes how moonlight brightens up the entire room (371). Teachman states that this is "[t]he final image of moonlight associated with extremes of emotion" (22). Jane has almost agreed to marry St John when she suddenly hears Mr Rochester cry out to her with an uncanny, afflicted voice (371). According to Teachman, moonlight was once believed to stand in relation to "the

emotional depths of the soul". Therefore this instance implies that the feelings Jane has for Mr Rochester are on a supernatural level (22).

Also in the film Jane hears Mr Rochester crying out to her but the event takes place in a very different setting. Jane is taking a walk outside in natural environment and sits down at a roaring and whirling brook. The sound of thunder rumbles in the background which also could be linked back to Mr Rochester's proposal which is followed by thunder and lightning both in the novel and the film. Thunder and lightning are associated to "Jane's excess of emotion when Mr. Rochester proposes marriage" (Teachman 21). So the choice of setting the scene out in nature with the sound of thunder in the background could be assumed to bring forth Jane's ardent feelings for Mr Rochester. When Jane hears Mr Rochester cry out to her she hastens away to return to him.

## **Ferndean**

The final location Jane inhabits is Ferndean where she is reunited with Mr Rochester. On her way to the manor house, Jane describes the surroundings in a way that could be compared to a fairytale. In order to reach the manor she has to go through a forest "so thick and dark", and on a small path which seems to have no ending with branches bending down over it (381). She continues her walk until the thick forest finally opens up slightly and she sees a house with "its decaying walls" and she describes how she stands "amidst a space of enclosed ground" (381). Leggatt and Parkes entitle Ferndean "a romantic retreat" and further argue that since the house is situated and hidden in the middle of the woods, Jane's wishes for living closer to nature and "to lead a romantic life" come true (184). What Leggatt and Parkes seem to suggest is that since Ferndean is situated in the middle of nature Jane and Mr Rochester can give in to the passionate feelings they have for each other.

Both the exterior and the interior of Ferndean can reveal information about its owner. When Jane views the exterior of the house, she comments on "its decaying walls" (381). However, it is not only the outside of the manor house that is decaying. When Jane enters inside she also inspects its interiors. Klotz makes a comparison between Mr Rochester's current housing and his previous inhabitation. At Thornfield, Jane describes the interior in a detailed way which helps her understand Mr Rochester's character a little better. In contrast, Jane does not give a very thorough account of the inside of Ferndean. However,

“what is described points to Rochester’s solitary and miserable condition” (Klotz 19). When Jane walks into the parlour, she describes how Mr Rochester is sitting in the dim room before a weak fire, leaning his head “against the high, old-fashioned mantelpiece” (383). The room mirrors his wretched state (Klotz 19). It is not only the exterior of the manor house that is decaying. As the walls of Ferndean are decaying so is Mr Rochester.

The state of the fire in the parlour is interesting. Jane notices how “a neglected handful of fire burnt low in the grate” (383). Carlton-Ford asserts that the image of the weak fire is an indication to Mr Rochester’s miserable state of mind (379). Rochester has been scorched by the fire burning down Thornfield, resulting in him suffering from physical as well as emotional injuries and he is not the same passionate man as before (Teachman 5-6). However, now having Jane back with him, Mr Rochester appreciates that Jane takes care of the house (Klotz 19). Klotz points out the contrast between St John and Mr Rochester. When Jane refurnished Moor House there was no sign of appreciation from St John. In contrast, now when she takes care of her and Mr Rochester’s new common inhabitation, she adds lustre to Ferndean and he is truly grateful for it (19-20). “I had wakened the glow: his features beamed”, are Jane’s words when describing the couple’s situation towards the end of their story (389).

As in the novel the first scene at Ferndean in the film version begins out in the woods. The film seems to capture the same spirit of the setting on the screen as it is presented in the novel and it shoots Jane walking through a mystique fairytale forest. The scene opens up with the camera filming down a far stretched path as if the viewer was walking slowly on it. Also similar to the novel, there are trees on each side of the path with branches bending over it, and there is a surrounding mist which adds a feeling of suspense to the scene. The angle of the camera then changes and it shoots from inside the forest out towards the path where Jane is walking. This effect gives the impression of the trees growing thick. Again the camera switches angle, now filming Jane from the front walking towards the camera which shows that there are only trees behind her as well. The way the director has chosen to film this scene when Jane is walking towards the manor house certainly demonstrates that she is all surrounded by nature with no sign of inhabitation. When finally reaching the house, she sees a dreary residence also completely surrounded by the woods. The film version manages to emphasize the meaning of Jane being out here in nature at their romantic residence where she and Mr Rochester can show their natural, affectionate emotions to each other and live a passionate life together.

The first scene inside the house is filmed inside the parlour. As in the novel Mr Rochester is sitting in a dim room. However, he is not in the presence of any illumination. There is no fire glowing in the hearth, nor is there any candle burning. The room is dark and gloomy and the somber impression of the room mirrors Mr Rochester's emotional state. Sitting in the dark shadows, he cries out that even though he is blind he wishes to have his candles lit. Jane enters the room with a tray in her hands which along with water contains a candle. She brings in light and warmth to Ferndean. Further, also Solomon's interpretation of water could be applied here. He argues that water dampens the strongest feelings of passion (216). Even if Jane brings love and warmth to Mr Rochester, she still represses her most fiery emotions. In addition, the next scene contains even more warmth and light. They still are in the parlour and Jane is sitting on Mr Rochester's knee. The two look extremely happy to once again being together. The room is filled with candles and there is a radiant fire burning in the hearth. Together with the previous scene where Jane carries in the candle to Mr Rochester, the following scene which is abundantly filled with light and warmth could be a representation of how Jane reawakens Mr Rochester's damaged flame.

The final scene at Ferndean in the film version is interesting especially when considering the end. The scene begins with the two being outside in nature by a river and Jane is describing the surroundings to Mr Rochester and the scene has a rather intimate, affectionate ending. Jane has brought Mr Rochester back to life; from a gloomy existence to a passionate life. The scene ends with the camera shooting only the surface of the water at the river. This ending becomes interesting if applying Solomon's representation of fire and water to the story. Solomon argues that "The fiery passion of Jane, and, later, Rochester, must be quenched by the cold waters of self-control" and he continues by stating that "[i]f their bodies burn, their minds must dampen the fires" (216). It could be argued that this scene indicates that even though the surrounding nature allows them to be passionate, the cool water is near and restrains their most fiery passion.

## Conclusion

When considering film adaptations of novels, researchers seem to agree that the focus should not be on whether the film is faithful to its novel or not. Since authors and film makers use far different methods to tell their stories, the focus should instead be on how the film maker has translated the written work in order to adjust it to the screen in the best way possible. Even though viewers often get disappointed by the alterations of the film maker, these are necessary when adapting the novel to the medium of film. If a viewer of a film adaptation would avoid focusing on the issue of faithfulness and instead regarding it as its own work of art, the experience could result in a higher appreciation for the film version.

Evidently, the setting in *Jane Eyre* is significant to the reading experience. Studying the different locations more closely is helpful when interpreting the novel. When Charlotte Brontë sets the scenes she frequently uses the imagery of fire and ice to indicate character's feelings and moods and most specifically they mirror the internal state of the protagonist. Even though the imagery of fire and ice is the most prominent in *Jane Eyre* the design and interiors of the different locations Jane inhabits are also significant. For instance, the setting at Thornfield Hall adds to the Gothic atmosphere in the novel. Furthermore, when Jane describes her view of rooms she does not only provide the reader with information about herself but about other characters as well.

When comparing the setting in the BBC version to *Jane Eyre* it becomes evident that the director White and the screenwriter Welch have thought of the importance of setting while presenting the story. Inevitably they have also made alterations in order to suit the medium of film. However, White and Welch manage to capture the spirit of the places Jane inhabits. It is noticeable that the significance of the imagery of fire and ice and their interplay has been taken into consideration when this is shown in an obvious way, especially at Lowood and Thornfield. Similar to the novel, the film version also mediates characters' feelings with the help of its setting. The film also puts much focus on the Gothic theme and this theme is even more prominent here than in the novel since it is visualized in a very noticeable manner. Numerous choices of settings by White and Welch emphasize the eeriness of the story which is initiated already in the beginning in the Red Room at Gateshead Hall. Yet, Thornfield Hall is the foremost center of the Gothic atmosphere because of the mystery of Bertha.

In conclusion, it is helpful not to concentrate on the differences between *Jane Eyre* and its BBC adaptation when comparing the two and instead to focus on how the adaptor has interpreted the story and then adjusted it to the screen. As stated, it is evident that the director and screenwriter have made use of the setting to add a deeper understanding of the story.

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