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Office of the President

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Mr. L. M. Heyward
London Office

Dear Deke:

The following are my notes concerning the film treatment "Return To Wuthering Heights" by Arthur Friedmann. I of course appreciate that in a treatment form it is impossible to deal deeply with the complex characters in the second half of the book, and some of these comments may be what the writer has in mind in any case:

1. The opening device can cause some problems. I understand that for purposes of clarifying the balance of the story, the writer has begun Part Two with Cathy's death. However, in view of the fact that most people who see this film will have seen the Goldwyn or AIP version, it may be more confusing than helpful.

It would seem to me that the logical starting point, as a pre-title sequence, should be Heathcliff's return from Penistone Crag after the death of Cathy and after his first vision of her ghost. What has transpired before should be covered either through slow exposition from Nelly during this screenplay or in a narrative form during the prologue. Following this prologue, we should then jump to the main body of the story, years later, using the titles as a time span device. I would hope that the above could be constructed so that the implied death of Heathcliff in the first version might be dispelled logically and, at the same time, artistically at the very start of the film.

2. The role of Heathcliff in Part Two actually portrays him as a rather villainous character. If it is at all possible, I think we should create as much empathy, if not sympathy for him as possible. This could be done through references to Part One of the story, as well as in the scenes played between him and Cathy's ghost. In reading the entire book, the empathy for Heathcliff carries over very well, but in dividing the book into two parts, I think it would be most necessary that his torment be portrayed as sympathetically as possible.

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3. The characters of the children should be made to be as "contemporary" as possible. Heathcliff's son, for example, should not be a completely snivelling, Fauntleroy type, but something deeper and more easily identified with today. This does not mean that his characterization should not fit into the present story context as it is now written, but should if anything be a little more subtle.

4. It would seem that if this entire outline were transformed to a full screenplay it would be much longer than needed, even shortening the opening sequence. I believe, however, it should be put on paper and then brought down to proper length after we have all had a chance to examine a full screenplay. It is also my notion that, as with "Wuthering Heights", it may be necessary to "over shoot" the film, giving us the comfort of editing later on.

There are other specific comments I could make at this time, but they only pertain to dialogue and other elements in the outline which I will better be able to judge from a screenplay.

✓ In all, I am pleased with this writer's approach and believe he has an understanding of the material and a great sympathy for the Bronte book, which is important for any screenwriter working on this property.

Best regards,



James H. Nicholson

JHN/ec