



**NIGHTMARES & DAYDREAMS: A CENTENARY
CELEBRATION OF SCREENWRITER NIGEL KNEALE**

Wuthering Heights

Having both worked on Emily Brontë's gothic romance for a (lost) 1953 BBC production, Kneale and Cartier revisited the novel for their last collaboration together. Dennis Potter, then television critic on *The Daily Herald*, wrote that the play 'was like a thunderstorm on the flat, dreary plains of the week's television'.

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Nigel Kneale was first tasked with dramatising Emily Brontë's gothic romance *Wuthering Heights* for television as a BBC staff writer in 1953. The swiftly completed adaptation proved a success when staged live by producer Rudolph Cartier (BBC, tx. 6.12.1953). In 1962 the play was resurrected for a new production, again by Cartier.

Kneale wrote in 1953 that his task was to 'catch and preserve in clear television terms something of the spirit of that grim, alarming, fascinating and finally overpowering masterpiece.' In doing so, he strips the novel down to the very basics of its story, focussing on the stormy love between Catherine and Heathcliff. Kneale telescopes the early events of the novel and cuts the whole of the second half following Catherine's death, removing entirely the major characters Hareton Earnshaw, Linton Heathcliffe and Catherine's own daughter Cathy.

Rudolph Cartier's production moves at a rapid pace, concentrating very much on the human interaction at the expense of his trademark spectacle. The play is entirely studio-bound, taking advantage of its limited *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange* settings. On the one occasion that we see the moorland which so characterises the novel, it is realised as a small studio set. The set alone does not convince, but in conjunction with sound and wind effects, and the dialogue's constant Romantic allusions to the uncontrolled physicality of the landscape ('a real, terrible, physical heaven', Catherine calls it), a wild and remote location is effectively evoked. Cartier also elicits strong performances from his leads, with Claire Bloom's Catherine seeming often on the very edge of sanity and Keith Mitchell's Heathcliff turning convincingly from the slighted victim of Hindley to the vengeful bully of all those around him.

Dennis Potter, then television critic on the *Daily Herald*, wrote that the play 'was like a thunderstorm on the flat, dreary plains of the week's television... The howl of the wind against the windows, the muted pain of Claire Bloom as the wretched Cathy, and the hunted misery of Keith Mitchell as Heathcliff, made this a more than adequate offering of a great work.'

The liberties Kneale takes in reducing *Wuthering Heights* for the small screen mean that it will never please Brontë purists, but it does offer more casual viewers the effective concentration of its 'spirit' that Kneale intended. While this production may not be the definitive adaptation of Brontë's novel, it remains a surprisingly satisfying one.

Oliver Wake, BFI Screenonline, screenonline.org.uk

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Director: Rudolph Cartier *
Production Company: BBC
Producer: Rudolph Cartier
Screenplay: Nigel Kneale *
Based on the novel by: Emily Brontë
Photography: A. Arthur Englander
Editor: Peter Cantor
Designer: Clifford Hatts

Cast:

Claire Bloom (*Cathy*)
Keith Michell (*Heathcliff*)
Ronald Howard (*Lockwood*)
Frank Crawshaw (*Joseph*)
June Thorburn (*Isabella*)
Jean Anderson (*Ellen*)
Horace Sequeira (*Old Earnshaw*)
Patrick Troughton (*Hindley*)
David McCallum (*Edgar*)
Kenneth Edwards (*Dr Kenneth*)
Peter Augustine (*Mr Green*)
Desmond Cullum-Jones (*servant*)

BBC1 tx 11.5.1962

UK 1962

95 mins

* Uncredited

NIGHTMARES & DAYDREAMS**A CENTENARY CELEBRATION OF SCREENWRITER NIGEL KNEALE****The Abominable Snowman**

Mon 28 Mar 20:50; Sat 23 Apr 14:50

Wuthering Heights

Sat 2 Apr 15:10

Missing Believed Wiped: Out of the Unknown: The Chopper

Sun 3 Apr 18:00

Nineteen Eighty-Four + Panel Discussion: Nineteen Eighty-Four and the legacy of Nigel Kneale

Mon 4 Apr 18:30

Seniors Free Matinee: Quatermass and the Pit + discussion

Mon 11 Apr 14:00

The Year of the Sex Olympics

Tue 12 Apr 18:10

First Men in the Moon

Fri 15 Apr 14:30; Wed 27 Apr 20:50

The Woman in Black

Sun 24 Apr 14:40

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