

The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter



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A SCHOOLGIRL'S RECOLLECTIONS OF MONSIEUR HEGER

Charlotte's time in Brussels at the Pensionnat Heger in Rue d'Isabelle was a watershed in her life. She developed a strong passion for M. Heger, though not a physical attraction – it was his mind, his intellect that fascinated her. He was a difficult and demanding man, and that seemed to have made her passion all the stronger. The more relentless Monsieur Heger became towards her, the more exacting he became in his demands, the more she craved his good opinion. And he admired Charlotte's talents in return. He didn't show it often, but occasionally he would let some word of praise slip from his lips and Charlotte would be in her seventh heaven for days.

The relationship was only ever at the intellectual level. M. Heger was a married man and, as far as we can tell, happily enough. So while there was a deep bond between them in the classroom, he gave her little thought at other times. But with Charlotte it was different. When she returned to Haworth she had thought that the two of



The Pensionnat Heger



The Rue d'Isabelle

them would continue their meetings of minds by letter. But although Charlotte wrote many letters to him he only ever wrote one formal letter in return. For Charlotte waiting for a letter from him became an obsession. She

wrote passionately to him imploring for some "crumb from his table". It is true to say that this became an emotional and psychological crisis in her life that was only relieved by her writing two novels, *The Professor* and

Villette in which M. Heger "appears". What sort of man was he to become so important to her?

In 1859 Frederika MacDonald, an English girl of fourteen, followed in Charlotte's footsteps seventeen years earlier studied at the Pensionnat Heger. In 1914, when Charlotte's letters to M. Heger were finally published and the literary world was eager to know what manner of man he was, Miss MacDonald wrote *The Secret of Charlotte Brontë*. In it

she discusses Charlotte's relationship with her "master" and the letters. But she also gives an account of her own memories of M. Heger, from which the following is an extract.

One afternoon, because there were Catechism classes, from which, as a Protestant, I was exempted, I was sent out into the garden. 'In the garden there was a large *berceau*' wrote the author of *Villette*,



The garden at the rear of the Pensionnat Heger

'above which spread the shade of an acacia; there was a smaller, more sequestered bower, nestled in the vines which ran along a high and grey wall and gathered their tendrils in a knot of beauty; and hung their clusters in loving profusion about the favoured spot where jasmine and ivy met and married them ... this alley, which ran parallel with the very high wall on that side of the garden, was forbidden to be entered by the pupils; it was called indeed *l'Allée défendue*.'



l'Allée défendue

In my day there was no prohibition of the *Allée défendue*, although the name survived. It was only forbidden to play noisy or disturbing games there; as it was to be reserved for studious pupils, or for the mistresses who wished to read or converse there in quietude.

If I had a lesson to learn, it was to the *Allée défendue* that I took my book; and in this *allée* I had already discovered and appropriated a sheltered nook, at the furthest end of the *berceau*, where one was nearly hidden oneself in the vine's curtain, but had a delightful view of the garden. Before reaching this low bench, I had noticed, when entering the *berceau*, that a ladder stood in the centre; and that, out of view in so far as his head went, a man, in his shirt sleeves, was clipping and thinning the vines. I took it for granted he was a gardener, and paid no

attention to him; but, in a quite happy frame of mind, sat down to learn some poetry by heart. Shutting my eyes, whilst repeating the verses out aloud, I opened them to see M. Heger. He it was who had been thinning the vine; it was a favourite occupation of his (had

I read *Villette* I should have known it [chapter 12]).

It was a relief to see that he looked amiable, and even friendly. He invited me to assist him in washing a very stout but very affectionate white dog, to whom I

was told I owed this service as he was a compatriot of mine, an English dog, with an English name: a very inappropriate one, for he was sweet-tempered and white, and the name was Pepper. For this operation of washing Pepper, I was invited upstairs into

M. Heger's library, which was, in this beautifully clean and orderly house, a model of disorder; clouded as to air, and soaked as scent, with the smoke of living and the accumulated

ashes of dead cigars. But the shelves laden from floor to ceiling with books made a delightful spectacle.

Although it was, of course, as Professor of Literature that M. Heger excelled, he was in other domains – in every domain he entered – an original and effective teacher. Let me give the history of a famous Lesson in Arithmetic. For some special reason, all the classes attended this particular lesson; where the subject was the 'Different effects upon value, of multiplication and division in the several cases of fractions and integers'. Madame Heger and the Mesdemoiselles Heger, and all the governesses were there. I was a regular pupil of M. Heger's in literature, and certainly in this class, a favourite. But I was a complete dunce at arithmetic, and it was a settled

conviction in my mind that my stupidity was written against me in the book of destiny; and I admit that, as it did not seem any use for me to try to do anything in this field, I had given up trying, and when arithmetic lessons were being given I employed my thoughts elsewhere. But a lesson from M. Heger was another thing; even a lesson in arithmetic by him might be worth while. So that I really did, with all the power of brain that was in me, try to apply myself to the understanding of his lesson. But it was of no use; after about five minutes, the usual arithmetic brain-symptoms began; words ceased to mean anything at all intelligible. It was really a sort of madness; and therefore in self-defence I left the thing alone and looked out of the window, whilst the lesson lasted. It never entered my head that I was in any danger of being questioned: no one ever took any notice of me at the arithmetic lessons. It was recognised that, here, I was no good; and as I was good elsewhere, they left me alone. Yes, but M. Heger wasn't going to leave me alone. Evidently he had taken a great deal of trouble, and wanted the lesson to be a success. And it had not succeeded. He was dissatisfied with all the answers he received. He ran about on the *estrade* getting angrier and angrier. And then at last, to my horror, he called upon me; and what cut me to the soul, I saw in his face, as if to say 'Here is some one who will have understood!'

Well of course the thing was hopeless. I had a sort of mad notion that a miracle might happen, and that Providence might interfere, and that if by accident I repeated some words I had heard him say there might be some sense in them. It was deplorable. I saw him turn to Madame Heger with a shrug of the shoulders: and that he must have said of the whole English race abominable things, and of this English girl in particular, may be taken for granted; because Madame Heger hardly ever spoke a word when he was angry. But now she said something soothing about the English nation, and in my praise. Well, my case being settled, M. Heger began: and he did not leave off until the whole Galerie was a house of mourning. In the whole place,

the only dry eyes were mine, and here I had to exercise no self-control; for although at first I had been so angry with him for attacking these harmless girls, and attributing to them abominable heartlessness, although the place rang with their sobs, that I don't think I should have minded a slight attack of apoplexy – only I shouldn't have liked him to have died.

It was really a bewildering and almost maddening thing, because on both sides it was so absurd. First of all, what had all these weeping girls done to deserve the reproaches the Professor heaped upon them? 'They said to themselves,' he told them: "What does this old Papa-Heger matter? Let him sit up at night, let him get up early, let him spend all his days in thinking how he can serve us, make difficulties light, and dark things clear to us. We are not going to take any trouble on our side, not we! Why should we? Indeed, it amuses us to see him *navré* – for us, it is a good farce."

The wail rose up – '*Mais non, Monsieur, ce n'est pas vrai, cela ne nous amuse pas; nous sommes tristes, nous pleurons, voyez.*'

The Professor took no heed; he continued. 'They say to themselves "Ah! The old man, *le pauvre vieux*, takes an interest in us, he loves us; it pleases him to think when he is dead, and has disappeared, these little pupils whom he has tried to render intelligent, and well instructed, and adorned with gifts of the mind, will think of his lessons, and wish they had been more attentive. Foolish old thing! "not at all," they say, "as if we had any care for him or his lessons."

The wail rose up – '*Ce n'est pas gentil ce que vous dites là, Monsieur: nous avons beaucoup de respect pour vous, nous aimons vos leçons; oui, nous travaillerons bien, vous allez voir, pardonnez-nous.*'

But the story of the Lesson in Arithmetic does not finish here; and nothing would be more ungrateful were I to hide the ending: by which I was the person to benefit most. To my alarm, in the recreation hour next day, M. Heger came up to me, still with

a frowning brow and a strong look of dislike, and told me he wished to prove to himself whether I was negligent or incapable. Because if I was incapable, it was idle to waste time on me – so much the worse for



Madame Heger

my poor mother, who had deceived herself! On the other hand, if I was negligent, it was high time I should correct myself. This was what had to be seen. I followed him up to his library, not joyously like the willing assistant in the washing of Pepper, but like a trembling criminal led to execution. I felt he was going again over ‘fractions’ and the ‘integers’. I knew I shouldn’t understand them; and that he wouldn’t understand that I was ‘incapable’, that when arithmetic began my brain was sure to go!

The funny and pleasant thing about M. Heger was that he was so fond of teaching, and so truly in his element when he began it, that his temper became sweet at once; and I loved his face when it got the look upon it that came in lesson-hours; so that whereas we were hating each other when we crossed the threshold of the door, we liked each other very much when we sat down to the table; and I had an excited feeling that he was going to make me understand. It took him rather less than a quarter of an hour.

On the table before us he had a bag of macaroon biscuits, and half a Brioche cake. He presented me with a macaroon. ‘There you have one whole macaroon (integer): well, but let us be generous. Suppose I multiply my gift, by eight: now you have eight whole macaroons and are eight times richer, hein? But that’s too many; eight whole macaroons! I divide them between you and me. As the result, you have half the eight. But now for our half-Brioche; we have one piece only: and we are two people, so we multiply the pieces. But each is smaller, the more pieces, the smaller slice of cake; here are eight pieces; they are really too small for anything, we will divide this collection of pieces into two parts. Now does not this division make

you better off, hein?’ Then he folded his arms across his chest in a Napoleonic attitude, and nodding his head at me, asked, ‘*Que c’est difficile, - n’est-ce pas?*’

Of course in this, and indeed in all his personal and special methods, M. Heger followed Rousseau faithfully. But, then, where is the modern educationalist since 1762 who does not found himself upon Rousseau?

It was not, however, in rescuing one from the slough of despond, where natural defects would have left one without his aid, that M. Heger excelled – it was rather in calling out one’s best faculties; in stimulating one’s natural gifts; in lifting one above satisfaction with mediocrity; in fastening one’s attention on models of perfection; in inspiring one with a sense of reverence and love for them, that M. Heger’s peculiar talent lay.



Monsieur Heger

GREETINGS FROM JACK NELSON

Many of you may remember Jack Nelson who spoke to us a couple of times about Emily. He and his wife Kath also came to one of the Three Sisters’ Weekends. Jack has suffered ill health in recent years and Kath, when she renewed their ABA membership, gave an update on Jack. Jack is now living permanently in ‘Georgian’ House. His many falls and fractures have been belatedly diagnosed and are now being treated properly. Jack has his computer in his room and broadband, which is heavily used for his research on Brontës, Dickens and Joyce, as well as e-mails from the grandchildren. Both Jack and Kath send their best wishes to all their Brontë friends. Likewise we send them both our best wishes and send special thoughts to Jack. Fortunately, though having to lead a very confined existence, modern technology is able to take him well beyond his four walls into the timeless world of literature.

THE LITERARY COMPANION

edited by Emma Jones, a Think Book, published in London in 2004

Here are some things from the above book that Meg Hayward has passed on.

On the list of the 20 best loved books in the 2003 Big Read are *Jane Eyre* (number 10) and *Wuthering Heights* (number 12). Under the heading "THE REWRITE WAS BETTER" Emma Jones has cheekily renamed *Jane Eyre* as *Reader, I Carried Him*. Jones suggests that it is instructive to notice the words immediately before and after a writer's name in the Oxford English Dictionary hinting that these might throw some light on the author's personality. In the case of Brontë, the neighbouring words are "bronco" a wild or untamed horse and "brontosaurus" a thunder lizard. (If you think this is a little far fetched you should see the before and after entries for other famous writers!). A list of ONE HIT WONDERS includes *Wuthering Heights*, and a list of BOOKS TO BAWL TO includes *Jane Eyre*. All three sisters appear in the list of FEMALE AUTHORS WHO HID THEIR SEX.

WOMEN PREFER SOME PASSION BETWEEN THE COVERS

In a piece that appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* earlier this year Charlotte Higgins compares the lists of favourite books as chosen by male readers and female readers and concludes that men prefer angst while women prefer passion. No surprise there!

"The novel that means most to men is about indifference, alienation and lack of emotional response. The novel that means most to women is about deeply held feelings and a struggle to overcome circumstances and passion."

MEN'S LIST

Albert Camus: *The Outsider*
J.D. Sallinger: *The Catcher in the Rye*
Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse-Five*
Gabriel Marquez: *100 Years of Solitude*
J.R.R. Tolkien: *The Hobbit*
Joseph Heller: *Catch-22*
George Orwell: *1984*
F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*
Milan Kundera: *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*
Harper Lee: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Vladimir Nabokov: *Lolita*
J.R.R. Tolkien: *The Lord of the Rings*
Fyodor Dostoevsky: *Crime and Punishment*
Graham Greene: *Brighton Rock*
Nick Hornby: *High Fidelity*
James Joyce: *Ulysses*
Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*
Franz Kafka: *Metamorphosis*
John Steinbeck – *The Grapes of Wrath*

WOMEN'S LIST

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*
Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*
Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid's Tale*
George Eliot: *Middlemarch*
Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*
Toni Morrison: *Beloved*
Doris Lessing: *The Golden Notebook*
Joseph Heller: *Catch-22*
Marcel Proust: *Remembrances of Things Past*
Jane Austen: *Persuasion*
Mary Shelly: *Frankenstein*
Jeanette Winterson: *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*
Gabriel Marquez: *100 Years of Solitude*
George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*
Louisa May Alcott: *Little Women*
Gustave Flaubert: *Madame Bovary*
C.S. Lewis: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
Margaret Mitchell: *Gone with the Wind*
Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*
Harper Lee: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Lisa Jardine and Annie Watkins from Queen Mary College, at the University of London, interviewed 500 men and 500 women who have a professional connection with literature. They were asked to name the books that had changed their lives.

“Women readers used much-loved books to support them through difficult times and emotional turbulence. They tended to employ them as metaphysical guides to behaviour, or as support and inspiration.”

Jardine was surprised “by the firmness with which many men said that fiction didn’t speak to them”. Some men cited works of non-fiction as their “watershed” books, even though they were

explicitly asked about fiction. Many men cited books they had read as teenagers, saying that they had stopped reading fiction while young adults, only returning to it in late middle age.

Jardine suggested that the research suggested the literary world was run by the wrong people. “What I find extraordinary is the hold the male cultural establishment has over book prizes like the Booker, for instance, and in deciding what is the best. This is completely at odds with their lack of interest in fiction. On the other hand, the Orange Prize for Fiction [which honours women authors] is still regarded as ephemeral.”

QUESTIONS FROM *SPECTRUM*

(from *The Sydney Morning Herald* – answers on page 15)

Ann Lock has sent in some questions from “The Reel Deal” and “Fully Booked” that pertain to the Brontës. Because the Brontë ones are very easy for us I’ve included a couple of harder ones about other authors.

Novel titles that are women’s names:

- (a) A novel set in a Yorkshire mill community at the time of the Luddite riots.
- (b) Humbert Humbert’s account of his affair with an adolescent girl, by Vladimir Nabokov.
- (c) A teenage maidservant becomes the passion of Mr B.

Which famous literary characters have been on film or TV by the following trios of actresses or actors?

- (a) Margaret Rutherford, Joan Hickson, Geraldine McEwan
- (b) Basil Rathbone, Peter O’Toole, Peter Cushing
- (c) Katherine Hepburn, June Allyson, Winona Ryder
- (d) Laurence Olivier, Timothy Dalton, Ralph Fiennes
- (e) Joan Fontaine, Susannah York, Charlotte Gainsbourg
- (f) Alastair Sim, Albert Finney, Kelsey Grammer

THE EARLIEST FILM VERSION OF *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* IS MISSING

The earliest known film version of *Wuthering Heights* was made in 1920, a six-reeler that lasted for about 90 minutes. It starred Milton Roamer as the adult Heathcliff and Anne Trevor as the adult Cathy and was made in the Haworth area. Although widely shown throughout British cinemas no copy seems to have survived. Only a few stills and programmes remain. The Brontë Parsonage Library has launched a search. Unfortunately, if an original film is ever found it is almost certain to have decayed beyond repair. But it is just possible that it was once copied onto more stable film stock.



‘THE PASSIONS ARE PERFECTLY UNKNOWN TO HER’

by Marilyn Joice

[This appeared in the May 2006 edition of *Impressions*, the newsletter of the Northern (as in Northern England) Branch of the Jane Austen Society. She has kindly consented to allowing it to appear in our newsletter.]

‘The passions are perfectly unknown to her’. So said Charlotte Brontë of Jane Austen after reading *Emma*.

When *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, under the pseudonym Currer Bell, a copy of the book was sent to George Henry Lewes, then editor of *The Edinburgh Quarterly Review*. In writing to congratulate the author, Lewes advised ‘him’ to beware of too much melodrama in his next book¹ and suggested reading Jane Austen. Charlotte Brontë took the advice and read *Pride and Prejudice*, which she damned with faint praise, describing the author as ‘shrewd and observant’. Two years later, when she read *Emma*, she was more forthright. She found in the novel ‘a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting’ but said ‘the Passions are perfectly unknown to her ... Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete and insensible woman’.² It was a criticism echoed by Elizabeth Barrett Browning who complained that Jane Austen’s characters lacked soul.³

Appreciation, and certainly enjoyment, of even great literature is, to my mind, somewhat subjective, but criticism of Jane Austen based on a perceived lack of feeling and warmth of expression is something of a mystery to me. But what are ‘the Passions’? Amongst the several definitions in the dictionary are: ‘strong feeling or agitation of the mind, especially rage; an enthusiastic interest or direction of the mind; the object of such a feeling.’ Admittedly Charlotte Brontë’s nineteenth century definition of the passions may be at variance with mine, obtained from Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, but what is the evidence both for and against such claims?

Let us first look at the two novels Charlotte Brontë is known to have read, trying to bear in mind what any reading of the

works of the Brontës would suggest: that she did not include ‘enthusiastic interest or direction of mind’ in her definition of the passions. *Pride and Prejudice* is, at least superficially, one of the lightest of Jane Austen’s novels. It sparkles with wit and humour and to some critics is nothing more than the story of five young women (six if you include Charlotte Lucas) in search of husbands. But there is a darker side to the novel. Jane Austen’s contemporaries would have been well aware that, for females of the class to which the Bennet girls, and Jane Austen herself, belonged, marriage was the only safeguard against a life either of dependency or potential poverty. Mrs Bennet and Charlotte Lucas understand this; hence the former’s frantic (even passionate, for few would deny her ‘outbursts of feeling’) pursuit of husbands for her daughters, and Charlotte’s acceptance of the odious Mr Collins, despite the passionate response of Lizzie. Charlotte shows no passion but her rationale for her action is rather poignant.

Passion in its various definitions and degrees is evident in several of the characters, but perhaps Charlotte Brontë would not admit to degrees of passion. In Lizzie it is her devotion to her sister and her determination to marry for love, while in Lady Catherine it is seen in her reaction to the supposed engagement of Elizabeth and Darcy. The lady’s defence of the family name could hardly be more passionate, nor could Elizabeth’s rebuttal of her insults. And what of Darcy? He is prepared to go against all he believes in for love of Elizabeth, potentially to put himself at odds with his family and with the society in which he moves. We may disapprove of the form of his proposal, and with the misplaced and arrogant pride that appears to motivate him to speak as he does, but we cannot deny the passion which has forced him to put everything aside for Lizzie,

even to the extent of dealing with Mr Wickham, a man he clearly despises – with a passion.

In *Emma* passion, as Charlotte Brontë might have perceived it, is not evident but it is there. Here the passions are mostly suppressed. Jane Fairfax suffers in silence but she does suffer because of her love for Frank Churchill, and we, the reader, witness her gradual decline. Even the apparently casual Frank and Emma eventually display passion, the former in his wild manner at Box Hill, reacting to a disagreement with Jane, while Emma's passionate reaction to Mr Knightley's supposed preference for Harriet is internalised. But what are we to make of the quiet and controlled Mr Knightley? He suppresses his love for Emma so well for most of the novel that it comes as a surprise to both the heroine and the reader alike, but there is real passion in his reaction to Emma's cruel remarks to Miss Bates. Here we are given some idea that he is capable of intense feeling, presaging his later proposal to Emma. This latter scene is sometimes criticised but for me there is intense feeling portrayed by both characters; embarrassment, anxiety, fear, surprise and delight.

In *Emma* Jane Austen also chooses to mock excessive passion in the characters of Mr and Mrs Elton and Harriet Smith. With the Eltons the author is harsh and we are meant to disapprove of them. The proposal scene between Emma and Mr Elton is a delight and we are left in no doubt that Mr Elton has made a fool of himself; but all our sympathies are with Emma and not the rejected suitor. Mrs Elton is one of the writer's comic masterpieces with her passion for music (which she has given up), and Maple Grove and barouche-landaus. The mockery of Harriet is more gentle; with her quickly changing attachment to Robert Martin, then Mr Elton, Mr Knightley and back to Robert Martin; with her little box of keepsakes and her deep and unquestioning devotion to Emma. But Harriet is meant to amuse us.

One wonders if Charlotte Brontë's attitude to Jane Austen would have changed

had she read the remaining novels. Perhaps not with *Northanger Abbey*, where passion in all its forms is ridiculed, nor even *Mansfield Park* where overt passion is disapproved and the quiet but passionate Fanny is the example of acceptable behaviour. But what of *Sense and Sensibility* or *Persuasion*?

Mention of *Sense and Sensibility* in this context must immediately bring to mind Marianne Dashwood. She surely displays all the passion that Charlotte Brontë finds so lacking in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. She is impulsive and given to 'outbursts of feeling'; she gives herself completely to her passionate love for Willoughby, risking her reputation and ultimately her life. She is blind to the effect of her passion. It could be argued that Jane Austen does not advocate such a complete surrender, but she does not choose to ridicule Marianne; she has many qualities that we are meant to admire. She learns of extremes of passion but she remains passionate, albeit in a more tempered manner. But Elinor too has her passionate moments, especially in Chapter 37 when she responds to Marianne's astonishment at learning of her previous knowledge of Edward's engagement, and the calm (or apparently calm) way in which she has dealt with it.

In *Persuasion* both Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth are passionate characters, though they display their passion in different ways. Anne's feelings are deep and private, and for most of the story are shared only with the reader. We are aware of the anguish of her first meeting with Wentworth on his arrival at Uppercross, of the intense emotion she feels in his presence and of her sadness as she watches the progress of his relationship with the Musgrave girls. Both Anne and Captain Wentworth reveal their passionate nature in Bath. At the concert we see Wentworth experience a range of emotions as he tries to understand the nature of Anne's relationship with Mr Elliot, until finally, unable to control his anguish, he leaves, believing he has lost her. But the supremely passionate scene takes place in the company of others as Anne

espouses the longer lasting love of women to Captain Harville, and Wentworth writes what is surely one of the most passionate love letters in English literature.

It seems to me still that Charlotte Brontë's charge is not substantiated by a perusal of Jane Austen's novels. Accepted there are no displays of passion equal to that of Emily Brontë's Heathcliff and Cathy in *Wuthering Heights*, nor perhaps of Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, but passion there is, in varying degrees, in all of Jane Austen's works, albeit sometimes as the butt of ridicule. The difference lies perhaps in that variation which is evident in Jane Austen's portrayal of passion. My knowledge of the works of the Brontës is limited to the above-mentioned texts and those of Anne Brontë, but I would suggest that the passions of Marianne

Dashwood and the silent suffering of Anne Elliot are no less intense than those of Jane Eyre *et al.*

I am aware that I have not touched on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's criticism of a lack of soul in Jane Austen's characters. That is perhaps another article waiting to be written. It might start with an examination of what that claim means. I have my own idea on that and would offer Anne, Elinor, Fanny and Marianne for the initial defence.

¹ Brian Wilks, *The Illustrated Brontës of Haworth* (Tiger Books International, 1994), p 182.

² J David Grey (Ed.), *The Jane Austen Handbook* (Athlone Press, 1986), p 98

³ *Ibid.*, p 98

BRONTË WAS THREATENED OVER JANE EYRE'S SCHOOL OF SHAME

by Gershwin Wanneburg, Haworth, from the *Sun Herald* 28th May 2006

Charlotte Brontë offered to rewrite parts of *Jane Eyre* after a legal threat from the headmaster of the school on which she based the infamous Lowood School, newly discovered letters show. The letters, written by the headmaster's grandson in 1912, will be put up for sale next month by auction house Mullock Madely, says documents expert Richard Westwood-Brookes.

The book's Lowood School, presided over by the cruel Mr Brocklehurst, was a harsh place where pupils were half-starved. The letter says the description upset the headmaster, the Reverend William Carus-Wilson, who wrote to his former pupil, Brontë, and threatened her with legal action after recognising himself and his school from her descriptions.



Rev Carus Wilson

But the letters, discovered a month ago and written by Carus-Wilson's grandson Edward, show Brontë dissuaded him from pursuing his case by sending him a 1400-word sketch, expurgated of the offending passages.

"He ... wrote to Charlotte Brontë to remonstrate with her, and the result was that she wrote the sketch that I have in my possession, retracting a good deal of what she had formerly written about the school," Edward wrote.

Brontë never changed the original book and the headmaster never pursued a legal case. More than 150 years after her death, Brontë still enjoys a passionate following.

THE LETTERS OF PATRICK BRONTË

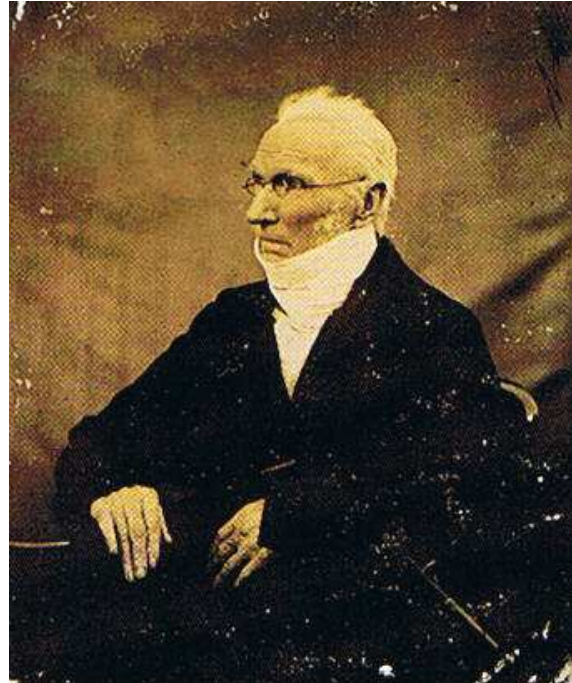
By Dudley Green, published by Nonsuch in 2005

In October 2005 the Brontë Parsonage launched Dudley Green's book *The Letters of Patrick Brontë*. Some of these letters have appeared in various biographies but many others only came to light when the author researched various public record offices.

There is the letter in which he gives a "gentle and dignified rebuke" to Mrs Gaskell after her portrayal of him as an eccentric in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. "Had I been numbered amongst the calm concentric men of the world, I should not have been as I now am, and I should in all probability never have had such children as mine have been."

Many of the letters were written to newspapers passionately espousing some cause. He showed that he supported Catholic emancipation, to some extent, was against the widespread use of the death penalty and he opposed the Poor Law Amendment Act that set up the system of workhouses. In a letter to the Leeds Mercury in 1834 he claims that "There is no nation under heaven whose

criminal laws are so indiscriminating, merciless and impolitic as ours."



BRONTË TARGET

From The Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday 30th May 2006. (Answer on page 15.)

E	G	I
U	H	W
N	R	T

How many words of four letters or more can you make from the letters shown here? In making a word each letter must be used once only. The word must contain the centre letter and there must be at least one nine-letter word in the list. All words must appear at least once in one of the seven Brontë novels. Can you find all 36 of these words.

ADVERTISEMENT

SPRING-GARDEN NOVELTY at the Royal Exhibition Rooms – W. DE LA ROCHE, Mechanician, from Paris, will exhibit every morning and evening his Musical Automats – First Part, two beautiful Automata Figures, that will perform twelve duets on the flute. Second, a Mechanical Canary Bird, which sings ten different airs. Third, a Dutch Coffee-house, vending all kinds of liquors by a mechanical process. Fourth, the Mysterious Column that will astonish every beholder. Fifth, a variety of Automatic Figures, which will answer different questions. The Public are respectfully informed that the above Automats perform at the will of any person present. Admission in the day 6s.; in the evening, at eight o'clock, 2s.

From The Times, London Thursday June 22nd 1815.

'Do you think I am an automaton? – a machine without feelings?' – Jane Eyre

THE BRONTËS AND THE HALL GREEN BAPTISTS

From Hall Green Story: A History of Haworth Strict Baptist Church 1824-1996

by Marjorie H Day

Haworth had known a stirring revival in the eighteenth century. There were giants in the earth in those days, and among them was William Grimshaw, who ministered at Haworth Church from 1742 until his death in 1763. During these years the village experienced the powerful preaching of John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and other notables of the Evangelical Revival. The countess of Huntingdon also, friend of Mr. Grimshaw, visited Haworth during these great preachings, when sometimes the congregation numbered thousands.

In 1781 half a dozen dissenters started holding services in Leach's barn at the bottom of Brow Road in Haworth. The numbers increased and after 40 years they had outgrown the barn. So in 1824 they acquired some land from Edward Ferrand, Lord of the Manor of Haworth and built the Hall Green Baptist Chapel, across the road from the Haworth Old Hall near the bottom of Main St. The chapel cost £1700 to build and the schoolroom upwards of £200. One of the signatories on the trust deed was the Rev. Patrick Brontë of Haworth Church.

It is astonishing, in these days, to read that in those far-off years, with a seating capacity in the chapel of 400 not a 'sitting' was to be had. Up to comparatively recent times pews were rented, and many people whose attendance at chapel had become a rare event were never the less anxious to keep up their sittings, and paid pew rents once a year. It must be remembered that in addition to Hall Green there was the West Lane Baptist Church, near what is now the car park outside the Parsonage. Then, of course, there was the parish church of St Michael and All Angels and the Methodist church beyond that. The relatively small town of Haworth offered quite a variety of places of worship.

The Hall Green Sunday School was also very well attended, there being 281

scholars and 107 teachers on the register at one period. People attended the school and chapel from far and near, and for most folk the only means of getting to the services was on foot. One family walked from Hewenden, which is halfway to Bradford. Others walked from Oakworth, Oxenhope, Ingrow, Stanbury, Queensbury, and from distant farms on the moors surrounding Haworth. No wonder there are entries in the school book like: "John Pickles, no clothes to come in; Widdop brothers, no boots."



Hall Green Baptist Church

By early summer of 1826 it would seem that the Hall Green School was proving popular if the quantities of books are anything to go by, Bibles, Testaments, spelling books and record books being frequently sent for. In 1828 the School Committee met to discuss the formation of a Union of various schools in the neighbourhood, and decided to request the Reverend Patrick Brontë to call a meeting for that purpose, each school in the area to send two delegates. There is no record of this meeting but a Sunday School Union was formed at Keighley in 1853 and Hall Green Baptist Sunday School joined it and helped in the expenses of its formation.

By 1834, as more and more people had learned to read, there was a continuing thirst for knowledge and for reading material, and a library was established. From time to time, monies were allocated out of school funds to buy more books, and a system of rewarding the children by lending them books was started. By 1840 it appears that the users of the library had read everything and the pastor, Mr Saunders was asked to compare the Cullingworth Baptist library books with those of Hall Green, and to take a valuation of each, "If found to be somewhat alike, a complete exchange is to be made."

One young reader was Sarah Ann Murgatroyd, who was acquiring her three Rs at the Church Day School during the 1840s. The children were used to seeing Charlotte Brontë come into the school to inspect their work. She was extremely short sighted and had to hold their needlework quite close to her eyes in order to see the stiches. It was during these years that the Brontë sisters were tasting the success of having their books published.

Sarah Ann, a useful member of the Hall Green choir as a young woman, because she could 'sing very high', became much sought after in her extreme old age in the 1920s for her Brontë memories by people interested in the phenomenon of the powerful novels coming out of a country parsonage. Nobody then could have visualised Haworth becoming the second literary shrine in England that it is now said to be. There was, back in the 20s, a slow trickle of visitors to Haworth; this became in the 30s a stream, which increased in size over the years, as books, radio and television plays and documentaries followed each other in quick succession, until a flood of well over 100,000 visitors a year go to the Parsonage Museum.

It must have been a great sight in Hall Green Chapel at Sunday School Anniversaries in the old days, with more than 250 children sitting tier upon tier around the pulpit from the floor of the chapel to the choir seats. A temporary structure of wood was erected every year, to accommodate the

children, who were trained in a programme of singing and reciting.

For the 1827 anniversary John Earnshaw [Emily would have been familiar with the name] was paid fifteen shillings as a "small remuneration for his services" of giving "the necessary instructions to the children in the singing" and Archibald Leighton received 3s., George Bland 2s. and Robert Hartley 5s. for erecting and dismantling the platform. It seems odd to us in these days that people who did jobs for the chapel and school should be paid, but wages were very low, and most of the people lived very frugally at best. So it was thought good, evidently, to give out a little 'encouragement money' to willing helpers.

From the earliest times tea was provided for the anniversary singers, a practice which has gone on until fairly recent times. A minute in the record book says: "Tea tickets are to be given out by Mr Winterbottom to the singers. He shall take the tickets at the door and turn them back that has none."

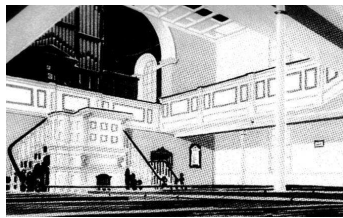
Life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was hard. Life was a struggle, but it was not all grim. There were occasions of joy and laughter and fun. Ordinary people got their pleasure from simple things. Most families were connected with a place of worship, around which their social as well as their religious life revolved. Whitsuntide was one of the highlights of the Sunday School year, and places of worship had processions, teas and games. Indeed, in some of the Lancashire towns and cities today, beautifully dressed processions are still a spectacular feature of Whitsuntide.

In the time of the Brontës the children of Hall Green were "each to have a cake and beer given them", but not before they had listened to a few addresses and done a very long walk "in the best order possible". Doubtless, the 'band of music' marching along at the front of the procession helped to keep them going in good order. Mary Wright had been asked to brew 7 or 8 gallons of beer from 2½ strikes of malt and 8ozs of hop, bought off Tobias Lambert, and Mary

Hudson and Betty Hartley had been requested to bake 360 cakes at 2d each. They were breadbuns, not cakes, and were round, deep, substantial, dark with fruit and tastily spiced, with a brown polished top. They were eaten without butter, but sometimes cheese was provided. In later years oranges, nuts and sweets were distributed as extra treats for the little ones.

As well as the children's treat, there was also a public tea laid on, and for this you bought a ticket costing 4d. to Hall Greeners, 6d. for those not connected with the chapel. About 150 adults sat down for tea. The minute book lists recipes and quantities for every eating occasion they had. A typical baking was 4 stones of flour to be baked as follows:

- 12lb plain loaves
- 10lb spice loaves
- 10lb plain crackneys
- 10lb currant crackneys
- 8lb plain sad cakes
- 9lb currant sad cakes
- 6lb buns
- 6lb tarts



The Pulpit of Hall Green

For the 1853 treat it was decided "that the Rev. M. Saunders engage to prepare lemon ale for drink for the children". But before many years had gone by the selection of drinks was out, and it was tea all round, adults and children.

There must have been some disorderly 'gate-crashing' at the 1846 celebrations, with some of the Hall Green children missing out on their buns. So it was decided that in future children must wait for their names to be called before being given their cake and the door would be policed to prevent children not entitled from entering.

Sometimes two Sunday School contingents would have a joint picnic. In 1841 the Hall contingent arranged to meet the Horkinstone school on the Hebden Road. Each group set out and marched to the arranged meeting spot where there would be singing, prayer and long addresses. In 1854 the Hall Green scholars joined with those

from the West Lane Baptist chapel and marched to Oxenhope where they met the Hawksbridge and Horkin scholars and teachers. Everyone then walked back through Haworth, and took tea at Hall Green.

Being a Baptist Church, Hall Green had its baptistery large enough for baptism by immersion. In 1851 Sabbath baptisms were replaced by special baptismal services at other times. In February of that year five people were "welcomely received" at a baptism at 7am. With the water having stood overnight and the boiler not being lit till the next morning they almost had to be immersed through a thin layer of ice. Until the 1980s there was no such thing as slightly warmed water for baptisms. But during the years when he was deacon Ina Murgatroyd made it his business to tip into the pool several buckets of hot water.

Unofficial, somewhat secret, it was never mentioned. Perhaps some die-hard deacons would have objected!

One Saturday night, after sitting in the vestry receiving pew rents, Joseph

Whitaker, senior deacon, had gone to his nearby home leaving the rent book behind, so, handing the keys to his daughter Ann, he asked her to run and fetch it. There was to be a baptism the following morning, and the pool was filled ready for the service. Ann, with the vehemence of a high spirited 15 year old, had been declaring that she would never be baptised. She opened the choir vestry door and crept inside and, beginning to be a bit nervous in the spooky darkness, hurried a little and fell into the baptistery. She scrambled out as best she could with her long dripping skirts, and ran home sobbing with shock and fury. Her father just looked at her and said "Where is the book?" and walked out to get it himself. Years later she was baptised in the usual way.

In the early years of Hall Green the chapel was partially destroyed by fire and there was much rebuilding to be done, including re-roofing. For several weeks the weather was warm and dry, and the farmers

badly needed rain, but all Haworth knew that it would not rain before Hall Green got its roof on again; there had been a special prayer about it. Sure enough, as the last bit of roof was completed, down came the rain in non-stop torrents.

The Hall Green Story records several colourful characters. There is the stalwart example of an “all-weather Christian” William Kilmister. In old age and in all weathers he would set out on his long slow walk to the chapel and a neighbour remarked “There he goes, preaching with his feet”. Minnie Tidswell, ageing and crippled, her arthritic feet advancing her by only three inches with every step; she would leave home an hour before service-time, well wrapped against inclement weather, stout stick in one hand, umbrella and a bag containing a fried egg sandwich in the other.

William Binns was a deacon and he found Sunday such a blessed day that he always rose at 4:30am “to make it last as long as possible”. His wife Paulyna was

responsible for the large bakings for the chapel teas. In her latter years she was chiefly noted to the children for her fondness of an old clay pipe. Now and then one came across old ladies who smoked pipes. They said they did it ‘for the wind’.

Many people walked long distances to attend Sunday services and they came for the day, bringing their bread and cheese and pickles to eat in the school-room between services. They would then go into the chapel and enjoy a sing before afternoon school. On one occasion the unmusical pastor heard, played on the organ, a lilty tune out of the Messiah. He rushed up the choir stairs, shut and locked the organ doors and pocketed the key saying “There will be no dancing music in this chapel while I am the pastor”. And so it came about that Joseph Murgatroyd and some other lovers of music left the chapel and went up to Church to sing in Mr Brontë’s choir for some time. In time the pastor left, the wound was healed, and the musicians went back to Hall Green.

NEWS FROM HAWORTH

The 2006 AGM Weekend of the Brontë Society, with which we are affiliated, took place on the weekend of 2nd to 6th June. On the Friday evening there was a performance of Douglas Verrall’s play *Charlotte, Emily and Anne*, starring Anna Calder-Marshall. After the performance Anna spoke about her role as Cathy in the 1970 film version of *Wuthering Heights*.

On the Saturday Dudley Green, author of *The Letters of the Reverend Patrick Brontë*, gave the annual lecture on the subject of Patrick Brontë under the title of “Always ... at my post”. In the afternoon there was the annual service of thanksgiving and remembrance for the lives of the Brontës. This year commemorated the 100th anniversary of the death of Arthur Bell Nicholls.

On the Sunday there was a private viewing of the Matt Lamb exhibition in the Haworth Parish Church Schoolroom followed by walks to the Brontë falls and to Oxenhope.

In the evening the members were entertained by the Lighcliffe and Clifton Brass Band.

On the Monday there was a coach excursion to the Manchester area to visit Plymouth Grove, the home of Elizabeth Gaskell and to Gawthorpe Hall at Padiham. On the Tuesday there was an excursion to the village of Kirk Smeaton, set in the picturesque valley of the River Went. This is where Arthur Bell Nicholls retreated when, in 1853, Charlotte rejected his proposal of marriage.

Last year, the 150th anniversary of the death of Charlotte Brontë was commemorated by many events in Haworth and other places. There was an exhibition in Charlotte’s bedroom. The Post Office issued commemorative stamps and the BBC commissioned a series of short stories which were recorded in Haworth. The Brontë Society also organised the laying of wreaths at both Haworth Church and Westminster Abbey.

KILLING TIME

by Natalie Muller (from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 25th 2006)

We all know the stories of great literary deaths. Virginia Woolf walking into the river. Alexander Pushkin killed in a duel. Such stories contribute to the popular view that writers are, as was said of Byron, mad, bad and dangerous to know.

Given that most of us are sane, if a touch introspective, that is a tad unfair. But the literary extinctions that touch us all are the deaths of characters.

Genre fiction is of course littered with the dead and we all expect this certain slaughter. But there are some characters whose deaths affect the reader so much as to make them unforgettable. In death they become iconic and cultural images.

Think of the five pairs of great lovers in literature who live to the end of their story. It's not easy, is it? Authors know, rather cynically perhaps, that death can bestow immortality. The death of great lovers leaves the reader forever pondering the if onlys.

Possibly the most intriguing of lovers are Heathcliff and Catherine from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

This selfish wolfish pair manage between them, with their perversity and violence, to destroy the Earnshaw and Linton families. They are feral creatures who should not be permitted into the homes of decent people. Yet they have gained such a reputation as romantic and idealised lovers, because they die.

We excuse their horrific behaviour because they are separated, first by other people and then by death. We like to believe the union they sought in life is achieved in death, that they become benevolent ghosts who walk the moors together.

[Natalie Miller goes on to describe other examples of romantic characters being killed and enumerates several reasons why an author will kill off a character ending with the reason "to preserve her sanity".]

Writing is a deeply introspective and mentally exhausting activity. Spending so much time with your own thoughts can be isolating, as can sharing your mind with characters that have no existence outside your imagination.

Killing a character that you have spent months or years perfecting and writing into existence can represent an end to the relationship and provide a clear distinction between you as the creator and them as the imagined character.

In Greek Mythology, Cronus ate his children because he feared they would destroy him. As authors, we devour our children so they won't destroy us.

Natalie Muller should know – she manages to kill off 11 characters in her first novel *If It Be Not Now* (Athena Press)

ANSWERS FROM SPECTRUM (see p 6)

Novel Titles: (a) Shirley, (b) Lolita, (c) Pamela.

Film/TV roles: (a) Miss Marple, (b) Sherlock Holmes, (c) Jo March (Little Women), (d) Heathcliff, (e) Jane Eyre, (f) Ebenezer Scrooge

SOLUTION TO TARGET (see page 10)
EIGHT, GIRTH, HEIR, HEWN, HINGE,
HINT, HIRE, HUGE, HUNG, HUNGER,
HUNT, HUNTER, HURT, HURTING,
NIGH, NIGHT, RIGHT, THEIR, THEN,
THIN, THINE, THING, THREW, WEIGH,
WEIGHT, WHEN, WHET, WHINE, WHIT,
WHITE, WHITER, WITH, WITH,
WITHER, WRITHE, WUTHERING
As it appeared in the Herald the words were not limited to those from the Brontë canon but could be any contained in *Chambers 21st Century Dictionary* but this gave only six more words: NEIGH, THUG, WHINGE, WHIR, WHITEN and WRIGHT.

JANE EYRE AT WERRINGTON IN JULY



Jane on her wedding day

In July the **Henry Lawson Theatre** will be performing *Jane Eyre*, adapted for stage by Constance Cox. The director, Anthony Stirling-Edgar, has directed at the Genesian Theatre. The dates in July are Friday 14th, Saturday 15th, Friday 21st, Saturday 22nd, Friday 28th and Saturday 29th. Performances

begin at 8pm. The cost is \$15 (seniors \$10). The Henry Lawson Theatre is at the Henry Lawson Club on Henry Lawson Drive, off Dunheved Rd in Werrington. If you wish to recover after the long drive you can get there early and have an inexpensive meal at the theatre before the play. Bookings can be

want to know more about the play you can ring Susie Miller, an enthusiastic member of the cast (and with links to the ABA) on 4577-2553.



Susie as Lady Ingram

OUR NEXT MEETING

**Saturday SEPTEMBER 2nd
at 10:30am**

**At the Sydney Mechanics' School
of Arts, 280 Pitt St Sydney**

**Robyn Williams:
The Horror, the
Horror**

Robyn will explore the Gothic elements in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. In contrast to the mid-nineteenth century novels of social realism, Charlotte and Emily Brontë mix the Gothic and the Romantic with an originality that is haunting, disturbing and elusive.



**ADVANCE NOTICE OF OUR
CHRISTMAS LUNCH**

Saturday 9th December at 12 noon

Rag & Famish Hotel, 199 Miller St North Sydney, not far from North Sydney station. The hotel was first opened in 1866. Cost will be about \$40. Further details and a booking form will be sent to members closer to the time.