



The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter

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EMILY

Film Review by Catherine Barker

A word of caution to cinema goers intending to see the new film *Emily* expecting a conventional biographical drama. This is not it. Rather it is a speculative imaginative creation of Emily's life in the years before she began to write her masterpiece *Wuthering Heights*. It is a blend of facts and fiction.



Precise details of Emily's life are sparse, and those that are known come mostly from Charlotte. The film actually depicts a rivalry between the sisters, with Charlotte demanding to know of Emily where she found the inspiration to write such a "base and ugly" book. This film provides a possible answer. Incidentally Charlotte is not portrayed in a very sympathetic light in this film, and Anne does not feature much at all in the family drama.

It is Branwell, rather than either of her sisters, in whom Emily finds a kindred spirit, and their close relationship is emphasised in several scenes. Their roaming over the moors delighting in the natural world and in each other's company clearly presages the exploits of Cathy and Heathcliff. According to this film, it is Branwell who introduces Emily to alcohol and opium.

Readers familiar with *Wuthering Heights* will enjoy recognising scenes that are replicated from the novel. There are several 'Aha' moments.

However there is no doubt that literary scholars will find faults with this film as it takes several creative liberties. For example, it is implied that Charlotte is inspired by the success of *Wuthering Heights* to write *Jane Eyre*, whereas they were both published in the same year (1847).

Visually this is a most attractive film with plenty of rain and scenes of the wild and windswept moors evoking the Yorkshire setting.

Emma Mackey conveys the rebellious spirit of Emily excellently, and the other characters who stood out for me as being very well portrayed were those of Patrick Bronte and Branwell, although the latter did not physically resemble the Branwell depicted in existing drawings.

The drama of Emily's passionate and doomed affair with the Curate William Weightman is obviously the imagined inspiration for the liaison between Cathy and Heathcliff, with Emily channelling her intense feelings of love, longing and sadness into the writing of *Wuthering Heights*.

My companion and I thoroughly enjoyed this film and I encourage ABA members to go and see it when it is distributed on general release early next year. Just bear in mind though that this is not a conventional 'biopic' as it portrays an imagined life of Emily. Nevertheless it is a creative and a not implausible interpretation of events which could well have inspired the writing of *Wuthering Heights*.

CHRISTMAS AT WUTHERING HEIGHTS

We tend to think of Wuthering Heights as a gloomy place, devoid of laughter and merriment, and indeed it was mostly so. But here is a description of a merry Christmas that took place while Mr & Mrs Earnshaw were still alive, as recalled by Nelly Dean.

CHRISTMAS EVE:

After putting my cakes in the oven, and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires, befitting Christmas eve, I prepared to sit down and amuse myself by singing carols, all alone; regardless of Joseph's affirmations that he considered the merry tunes I chose as next door to songs. He had retired to private prayer in his chamber, and Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw were engaging Missy's attention by sundry gay trifles bought for her to present to the little Lintons, as an acknowledgment of their kindness.

They had invited them to spend the morrow at Wuthering Heights, and the invitation had been accepted, on one condition: Mrs. Linton begged that her darlings might be kept carefully apart from that "naughty swearing boy".

Under these circumstances I remained solitary. I smelt the rich scent of the heating spices; and admired the shining kitchen utensils, the polished clock, decked in holly, the silver mugs ranged on a tray ready to be filled with mulled ale for supper; and above

all, the speckless purity of my particular care – the scoured and well-swept floor.

I gave due inward applause to every object, and then I remembered how old Earnshaw used to come in when all was tidied, and call me a cant lass, and slip a shilling into my hand as a Christmas-box; and from that I went on to think of his fondness for Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should suffer neglect after death had removed him: and that naturally led me to consider the poor lad's situation now, and from singing I changed my mind to crying.

It struck me soon, however, there would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of his wrongs than shedding tears over them: I got up and walked into the court to seek him. He was not far; I found him smoothing the glossy coat of the new pony in the stable, and feeding the other beasts, according to custom.

"Make haste, Heathcliff!" I said, "the kitchen is so comfortable; and Joseph is upstairs: make haste, and let me dress you smart before Miss Cathy comes out, and then you

can sit together, with the whole hearth to yourselves, and have a long chatter till bedtime.”

He proceeded with his task, and never turned his head towards me. “Come – are you coming?” I continued. “There’s a little cake for each of you, nearly enough; and you’ll need half-an-hour’s donning.”

CHRISTMAS DAY:

I urged Heathcliff to hasten now and show his amiable humour, and he willingly obeyed; but ill luck would have it that, as he opened the door leading from the kitchen on one side, Hindley opened it on the other. They met, and the master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful, or, perhaps, eager to keep his promise to Mrs. Linton, shoved him back with a sudden thrust, and angrily bade Joseph “keep the fellow out of the room – send him into the garret till dinner is over. He’ll be cramming his fingers in the tarts and stealing the fruit, if left alone with them a minute.”

“Nay, sir,” I could not avoid answering, “he’ll touch nothing, not he: and I suppose he must have his share of the dainties as well as we.”

“He shall have his share of my hand, if I catch him downstairs till dark,” cried Hindley. “Begone, you vagabond! What! you are attempting the coxcomb, are you? Wait till I get hold of those elegant locks – see if I won’t pull them a bit longer!”

“They are long enough already,” observed Master Linton, peeping from the doorway; “I wonder they don’t make his head ache. It’s like a colt’s mane over his eyes!”

He ventured this remark without any intention to insult; but Heathcliff’s violent nature was not prepared to endure the appearance of impertinence from one whom he seemed to hate, even then, as a rival. He seized a tureen of hot apple sauce (the first thing that came under his grip) and dashed it full against the speaker’s face and neck; who instantly commenced a lament that brought Isabella and Catherine hurrying to the place.

Mr. Earnshaw snatched up the culprit directly and conveyed him to his chamber; where, doubtless, he administered a rough

remedy to cool the fit of passion, for he appeared red and breathless. I got the dishcloth, and rather spitefully scrubbed Edgar’s nose and mouth, affirming it served him right for meddling. His sister began weeping to go home, and Cathy stood by confounded, blushing for all.

“You should not have spoken to him!” she expostulated with Master Linton. “He was in a bad temper, and now you’ve spoilt your visit; and he’ll be flogged: I hate him to be flogged! I can’t eat my dinner. Why did you speak to him, Edgar?”

“I didn’t,” sobbed the youth, escaping from my hands, and finishing the remainder of the purification with his cambric pocket-handkerchief. “I promised mamma that I wouldn’t say one word to him, and I didn’t.”

“Well, don’t cry,” replied Catherine, contemptuously; “you’re not killed. Don’t make more mischief; my brother is coming: be quiet! Hush, Isabella! Has anybody hurt you?”

“There, there, children – to your seats!” cried Hindley, bustling in. “That brute of a lad has warmed me nicely. Next time, Master Edgar, take the law into your own fists – it will give you an appetite!”

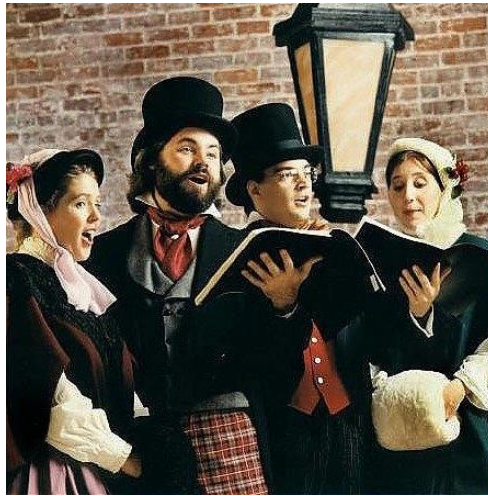
The little party recovered its equanimity at sight of the fragrant feast. They were hungry after their ride, and easily consoled, since no real harm had befallen them. Mr. Earnshaw carved bountiful platefuls, and the mistress made them merry with lively talk.

I waited behind her chair, and was pained to behold Catherine, with dry eyes and an indifferent air, commence cutting up the wing of a goose before her. “An unfeeling child,” I thought to myself; “how lightly she dismisses her old playmate’s troubles. I could not have imagined her to be so selfish.” She lifted a mouthful to her lips: then she set it down again: her cheeks flushed, and the tears gushed over them.

She slipped her fork to the floor, and hastily dived under the cloth to conceal her emotion. I did not call her unfeeling long; for I perceived she was in purgatory throughout the day, and wearying to find an opportunity

of getting by herself, or paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the master: as I discovered, on endeavouring to introduce to him a private mess of victuals.

In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that Heathcliff might be liberated then, as Isabella Linton had no partner: her entreaties were vain, and I was appointed to supply the deficiency. We got rid of all gloom in the excitement of the exercise, and our pleasure was increased by the arrival of the Gimmerton



band, mustering fifteen strong: a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets, bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers. They go the rounds of all the respectable houses, and

receive contributions every Christmas, and we esteemed it a first-rate treat to hear them. After the usual carols had been sung, we set them to songs and glees. Mrs. Earnshaw loved the music, and so they gave us plenty.

ELIZABETH GASKELL AND CHARLOTTE BRONTË

By Michelle Cavanagh

In an article written by Tanya Gold, and published in *The Guardian* in 2005, Gold wrote:

"Elizabeth Gaskell is a literary criminal, who, in 1857, perpetrated a heinous act of grave-robbing. Gaskell took Charlotte Brontë, the author of *Jane Eyre*, the dirtiest, darkest, most depraved fantasy of all time, and, like an angel murdering a succubus, trod on her. In a "biography" called *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, published just two years after the author's death, Gaskell stripped Charlotte of her genius and transformed her into a sexless, death-stalked saint."

"After I had reread *Jane Eyre*, I wanted to know what dark genius created this world. I turned to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life*, but I could not recognise the sanitised Charlotte she conjured up."



While contemporary critics had been appalled by *Jane Eyre*'s "coarseness", the public was thrilled and Charlotte was a celebrity. Gold states that Gaskell waspishly described her first sight of Charlotte in a letter:

"She is underdeveloped, thin and more than half a head shorter than I ... [with] a reddish face, large mouth and many teeth gone; altogether plain."

I don't know what Charlotte herself would have made of Gaskell's biography of her or of Gold's opinion of it but it certainly got me thinking.

Would Charlotte Brontë have been happy with the sanitised version of her life which Gaskell penned? Then again I suppose we should remember that Charlotte's father Patrick Brontë, and her husband

Arthur Bell Nicholls, would have been wary of what was being written about Charlotte and wished to protect her memory.

In a letter Charlotte wrote to her dear friend Ellen Nussey in October 1854 – four months after she and Arthur Bell Nicholls had married – she wrote:

“Arthur has been glancing over this note. He thinks I have written too freely ... Men don’t seem to understand making letters a vehicle of communication – they always seem to think us incautious. I don’t think I’ve said anything rash – however you must burn it when read. Arthur says such letters as mine never ought to be kept – they are as dangerous as lucifer matches – so be sure to follow a recommendation he has just given ‘fire them’ – ‘there will be no more’ such is his resolve. I can’t help laughing - this seems to me so funny. Arthur however says he is quite ‘serious’ and looks it. I assure you - he is bending over the desk with his eyes full of concern.”

Thankfully Ellen Nussey did not take heed of Arthur Bell Nicholls advice despite writing to him a month later that she would do so “if you pledge to no censorship in the matter communicated.”

So doubtless such concern on Arthur Bell Nicholls’ part would have been upmost in his mind when, together with Patrick Brontë he met with Elizabeth Gaskell after Charlotte’s death. And while Gaskell was no admirer of Patrick Brontë it was actually Charlotte’s father who wrote to Gaskell three months after Charlotte died asking her to document his daughter’s life.

Charlotte Brontë did not actually meet Elizabeth Gaskell until she was thirty-four years old by which time Branwell, Emily and Anne had all died in the previous two years. Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell met at Briery Close near Lake Windermere at the invitation of Sir James and Lady Kay Shuttleworth who were holidaying there. And Gaskell admitted that some of the bizarre stories she later wrote about Patrick Brontë in

her biography were told to her by Lady Kay Shuttleworth and were disputed by Patrick who denied them vigorously as having “no foundation in fact”, forcing Gaskell to make some changes in the third edition of *The Life Charlotte Brontë*.

As Gaskell described her encounters with Charlotte to friends in long, gossipy letters. “I have so much to say I don’t know where to begin ...” while Charlotte noticed Gaskell’s need to weaken and infantilise her, writing to her publisher, George Smith, “she seems determined that I shall be a sort of invalid. Why may I not be well like other people?”

At this stage Gaskell was already plotting her biography of Charlotte and, didn’t have to wait long as Charlotte died in 1855, nine months after her wedding to Arthur Bell Nicholls.

Despite the myth perpetrated by Elizabeth Gaskell that Hawthorne was an “isolated, solitary and lonely” place, by the time the Brontës moved there nothing could have been further from the truth as the Industrial Revolution had turned it into a busy manufacturing township. The majority of the villagers were quarry workers, hand loom weavers or farm labourers.

According to Tanya Gold, Gaskell portrays Charlotte as Victim Supreme, sewing “her shroud from her first chapter, when she copies out the Brontë grave tablet in Hawthorne church, listing those who died of consumption”. With the graveyard outside their front door: “It is,” said Gold, “terribly full of upright tombstones.”

Gold saw Gaskell’s idea of Charlotte, Anne and Emily as “shy of meeting even familiar faces ... never facing their kind voluntarily” as her own wish-fulfilment. Gold feels that Gaskell is bewildered by the Brontës, never accepting that they were, quite simply, talented.

Gold asserts that Gaskell used various letters to match her own agenda. In the obituary details published in the *Yorkshire Post* of Ellen Nussey’s death on 26th November 1897 it states that Ellen Nussey gave Elizabeth Gaskell one hundred of her

letters from Charlotte for her to use when writing her biography of Charlotte, a fact which Gaskell chose not to publicise.

Any hint of Charlotte as a sexual being was ignored despite the fact that Gaskell visited Monsieur and Madame Heger in the Brussels boarding school in the Rue D'Isabelle where Charlotte's letters to Monsieur Heger were shown to her, details of which Gaskell chose to ignore. Charlotte's correspondence with the (married) love of her life, Monsieur Heger of Brussels, is ignored as is her thwarted romance with George Smith. But, nevertheless, under the circumstances, it's hardly surprising to me because of the sensibilities of both Patrick Brontë and Arthur Bell Nicholls, that such events were left out of Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

From Gold's perspective Gaskell wrote the *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* as a tragedy, not a triumph. But Charlotte Brontë always wanted to be famous; she pined to be "forever known". When she was twenty years old she wrote boldly to the Poet Laureate Robert Southey, asking for his opinion of her talents to which he replied: "You evidently possess and in no inconsiderable degree what Wordsworth calls 'the faculty of verse'." Then he chides her: "There is a danger of which I would warn you. The daydreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life and it ought not to be." Thankfully for us Charlotte ignored Southey's advice. And thankfully, in her article, Tanya Gold has given me much to consider.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The year 2022 has been one which didn't go as planned; indeed, the past two years have thwarted so many plans for us all, a situation which proved not only awfully difficult, but meant that so many plans had to be changed. None more so that the Seventh International Juvenilia Literary Conference. Initially planned to take place in May 2020, three postponements meant that it eventually took place from the UNSW via Zoom, 20th to 22nd July 2022. This was followed by a Juvenilia Conference Lunch held in the Castlereagh Hotel's Adam Room, a very pleasant way to finish a successful conference.

The Seventh International Juvenilia Literary Conference organisers – Christine Alexander, Emeritus Scientia Professor in the School of the Arts and Media at UNSW, Chris Danta, Associate Professor in the School of the Arts and Media at UNSW, Donna Couto, Administration & Assistant Editor of the Juvenilia Press at UNSW, Ryan Twomey, Senior Lecturer in the English Department at Macquarie University and Pamela Nutt at the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney – all deserve accolades for all the work they put into making the

conference, with speakers from USA, UK, Europe, Japan and Australia, such a success.

The meetings for the second half of the year all proved popular beginning in July with Rachel Givney's talk *The Heart or the Pen: the Brontës Choice* which concentrated on the fact that, apart from the last nine months of her life, Charlotte was the only one of the Brontë women who married. So, by today's standards, their literary achievements came at a personal price.

This was followed by Brendan Somes whose talk related to the very rare first edition of the *Poems* by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, owned by David Scott Mitchell, the book collector who amassed a collection of books in Australia and after whose bequest the Mitchell Library is named.

Finally, Penny Gay gave a fantastic talk on Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* entitled *Speaking Out in 1848* relating to Anne Brontë's first-person narratives, both male and female which point the way to the brave life narratives of today's domestic violence victims. For those members not able to attend any of the meetings, some of their talks have been published in the 2022 edition of *The Thunderer*.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all the members of the Australian Brontë Association committee: Annette Harman, Vice-President; Catherine Barker, Membership Secretary; Christine Yeats, Secretary; Christopher Cooper, Editor; Michael Links, Treasurer; Jan Roden and Patrick Morris. As always, their input and help during 2022 has been greatly appreciated.

It now remains for us all to enjoy each other's company together with members of the NSW Dickens Society at our 2022 Christmas lunch on Saturday 3 December followed by five great speakers organised for our 2023 meetings which you won't want to miss.

Wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Michelle Cavanagh, ABA President

THE LOST CHAPTERS OF *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Part 4

by Christopher Cooper

Here continues my project of providing the 'off-stage' material that Emily Brontë chose to leave out of her novel. This piece answers the question: what took place at Thrushcross Grange that transformed Cathy from a playmate of Heathcliff to a refined young lady?

CHAPTER 7A CATHY LEARNS TO BE A LADY

I asked Mrs Dean, one morning as she brought me my tea, "did you ever ask Cathy what happened during those five weeks she was away at Thrushcross Grange?"

"I did take her aside and asked her for an account of that visit. I couldn't understand why there was such a change in her in that short time. Why, when she left she was not much better than a little urchin, with her face always dirty and her clothes torn and often muddy. She was a real companion for Heathcliff. When she returned she was like a princess – fine clothes, clean curls – no longer with any knots. She even walked as a lady rather than ran like an imp as she'd done previously."

"One day I asked Cathy, 'so what was it like at

Thrushcross Grange?' She told me, 'well, Nelly, at first I was angry with them for setting them dogs on us, and I cried for poor Heathcliff. Over and over I asked to be taken home. I thought I would get better more quickly in my own bed. But they must have spoken to my brother and he was happy to leave me there. Now that I was an orphan

Hindley took the role of my guardian.' Poor lass having Hindley as her guardian – I don't think he was fit to look after her."

I asked Mrs Dean how Cathy got on with Isabella and Edgar. "Did she make friends with them?"

"Cathy said to me that Isabella was nice enough. But it seems she wanted to play dolls all the time. Cathy thought that was rather childish. She said, 'I was



surprised – you would have thought she would have grown out of dolls. But Edgar used to sit by my bed and read stories to me. Then, when I was well enough to go downstairs and sit in the garden, he would talk to me about things he had read. The maid would bring out our morning tea on the very best china and Edgar would tell me about the way that ladies and gentlemen behaved down in the South.”

I had finished my tea and Mrs Dean said, leaving the room, “I’ll fetch your breakfast sir. You can have a lie-in this morning.” I called her back. “Breakfast can wait. I’m curious to know how she was transformed into a fine young lady. I suppose Mrs Linton bought those new clothes.”

“That’s right,” said Mrs Dean putting down the empty cup and sitting on the chair. “She told me that on her first morning there Mrs Linton got one of the servants to take her measurements and two weeks later a large parcel arrived with three magnificent outfits and two pairs of shoes. She said, ‘up till then I wore some of Isabella’s dresses, but her shoes didn’t fit me. So, for two weeks I had to wear the ones that I was wearing that night or go in bare feet.’ It seems that her own clothes were burned.”

“I would have thought that Mr Linton would have sent to Wuthering Heights for some of her own clothes to be brought.”

“Mr Linton did send a servant to collect some of her clothes but what few items Hindley sent back were Cathy’s oldest and most worn-out garments. Mrs Linton sent them straight back.”

As an author I was curious to know what books Edgar might have read to her, so I asked Mrs Dean.

“As I remember she mentioned *Gulliver’s Travels*. I know it because I had read it as a girl myself. Back then I missed seeing the political sense behind the story. Oh yes, she also mentioned *Robinson Crusoe*. But the ones she said she liked best were by a Mrs Radcliffe – all about castles and ghosts and rattling chains and ladies being imprisoned by wicked counts. I remember my aunt once told me about these books and urged me never to read them otherwise I might have horrid nightmares. But Cathy

seemed to be fascinated by them.”

I myself had read *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Gaston de Blondville*. I wondered at the taste of such children. “How old would Cathy have been?” I asked.

“Let me see now ... why I suppose she would have been 12.”

“Not quite old enough for her to have fallen in love with Edgar. But perhaps he supplanted Heathcliff in her little heart.”

“Oh no, Cathy clung to her love for Heathcliff. That was the cause of a tremendous argument that caused her not to speak to Edgar for a whole week!”

“What happened, exactly?”

“As far as I can gather, Edgar made the mistake of speaking badly about Heathcliff. He likened him to Count Morano in *Udolpho*. He said, ‘I bet Heathcliff will grow up to become the sort of beast that would imprison a young maiden in his castle’. That was a most unwise comparison. Cathy flew at him and knocked him to the ground. ‘How dare you talk about Heathcliff like that! I shan’t talk to you ever again!’ And she kept her vow of silence for a whole week and,



instead, condescended to play dolls with Isabella.”

“But they made up I suppose.”

“Oh yes. Edgar pleaded with her to talk to him. She didn’t even look at him when he spoke to her. But one day he said something that softened her. He said that he supposed that Heathcliff would one day become a Count and have a huge castle where he could imprison people if he chose to – ‘not that he ever would’. The ice had started to melt and within a few days it had thawed completely. She made Edgar promise to help Heathcliff to advance himself so that he could make his fortune and become a nobleman in some foreign land. Edgar had the sense to agree, thinking the possibility of Heathcliff rising to become a gentleman was so remote as to not even be worth considering.”

“So they went back to the books. I wonder if they ever read *The Castle of Otranto*.”

“I couldn’t say – she never did mention it. But as Cathy became stronger they did less reading and started riding. Cathy was wonderful on horseback. She would ask Edgar to ride over near the Heights, but not



close enough for them to be seen. I suspect that she wanted to catch a glimpse of Heathcliff working in the fields. One morning they came upon Joseph and he thought them strangers and warned them off. To think that he failed to recognise young Cathy, so changed she was.”

“They crept up to the house, hoping not to be seen, and what sort of mischief do you think that they got up to there. They went into the barn and climbed the ladder to the loft

where Joseph slept. I think it must have been Cathy’s idea. They put a small branch of brambleberry between the sheets, right at the bottom end. I didn’t see them do it, but I remember the shouts coming from the barn that night when Joseph retired to bed. But let me tell you about the dance party that the Linton’s held in Cathy’s honour two days before she was due to return to the Heights.”

I sat up straight with great interest. Back home I had been to one or two dance parties that my father’s friends had organised when I had visited them.



“At the time the young Lintons had three young cousins visiting them from Hampshire, accompanied by their grandfather. They had known Thomas, James and Sarah when the Lintons had lived in Winchester, before moving North to Thrushcross Grange. But this was the first time that these cousins had visited Yorkshire. This was a special visit because a few weeks later that family were going to migrate to America. Their grandfather played the fiddle so they were well-provided for. The rest of them, they had just enough for four couples. There was Mr and Mrs Linton, Edward and Sarah, Isabella and James, while Cathy was partner to Thomas. I think Cathy said that they did some sort of dance called the Sir Roger something. I’ve never been to a dance myself but I believe the dancers stand in two rows and then go up and down and turn around and bow and curtsy.”

“I know that dance,” I said. “It’s the Roger de Coverley. It’s best with eight couples but you can make do with four.”

“Well, Cathy loved it, and when she came back home she couldn’t stop herself

spinning around and bowing and curtsying to the geese. It was so funny to see her going around the old dog in what she called a dozy doze.”

“Ah yes,” I gently corrected her. “That’s a dos-à-dos.”

“Probably. The poor dog couldn’t understand what was going on and he started to howl.”

“So that day when she returned home – do you think that she had begun to grow apart from Heathcliff?”

“Not a bit of it. She was a little shocked I suppose. She had forgotten how dirty and unkempt he could be. But she was determined to do whatever she could to aid him in making something of himself. Even back then I suspect she had formed her plan to marry Edgar simply to be able to provide for Heathcliff.”

THOMAS BEWICK

As Brontë lovers the reason why we are so interested in Thomas Bewick is because the Brontës were influenced by him in their art, and especially because of the reference to his *History of British Birds* at the beginning of *Jane Eyre*.

His name was a household word in the first part of the nineteenth century, yet he and his work is very little known today.

His life overlapped those of the Brontë sisters, but only just. When he died in 1828, Charlotte was 12.

He was born in 1753 at Cherryburn. This was a small farm on the south bank of the river Tyne, 12 miles west of Newcastle. His father rented both the farm and a small colliery and delivered coal to the neighbourhood.

A small part of his training was in cutting blocks for woodcuts. Beilby hated doing this, and besides he wasn’t very good at it and it wasn’t long before he was more proficient than his master in that aspect of the trade.

At the time most woodcuts were used to make cheap picture books for children, and the woodcuts were quite crude. At 15 he carved the diagrams for Charles Hutton’s book on Mensuration.

At 21 his apprenticeship ended and he returned to Cherryburn for 2 years where he worked freelance. In 1776 he received a prize

from the *Society for the Encouragement of the Arts* and in the summer he went on a walking tour of Scotland. He found the Scots in remote places extremely friendly and hospitable, in stark contrast to his views on the Londoners.

When he finished his Scottish adventure he decided to seek his fortunes in London. He hated his time there and had a very poor opinion of the inhabitants. After nine months he returned to Newcastle.

Bewick hadn’t wanted to set up there in competition with Beilby, so when Beilby offered him a partnership Bewick was delighted. Although he is remembered for his woodcuts Bewick spent the majority of his time engraving on glass or metal.

In the early years, when he wasn’t engraving objects, he worked on illustrating books of fables. In 1783 he began work on the book that would make him famous – *A General History of Quadrapeds*.

He married in 1786 and subsequently had three girls and one boy. Like Patrick Brontë’s family none of the children married, so there are no direct descendents.

It wasn’t until 1790 that *A General History of Quadrapeds* was published. In 1791 he conceived the idea of a similar book about British birds. Because he preferred to draw from life he spent two months at the Wycliffe museum making sketches of the



vast collection of stuffed birds. But when he came to carve the blocks he noticed: the very great difference between preserved Specimens & those from nature, no regard having been paid at that time to place the former in their proper attitudes, nor to place the different series of the feathers, so as to fall properly upon each other.

In short, the taxidermists of the day were not very skilled in arranging their specimens as they were in life. They were stiff and looked stuffed.

So Bewick started to collect newly shot specimens. At first these came from friends, but soon word got around and hunters were sending specimens to him by the cartload. Some were very useful, but others were too decomposed by the time they reached him that they were of no use.

Many specimens were live ones that he encountered on his walks, as he crept upon them. One bird he came across injured, so that it couldn't fly, and he set it up near a window, where he fed it ants while he sketched it.

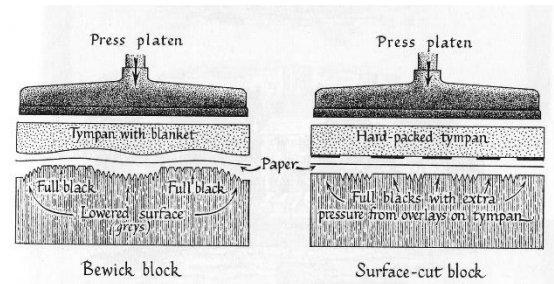
The first volume, *Land Birds*, was published in 1797. Although it was very successful Beilby decided to dissolve the partnership and concentrated on manufacturing watches and clocks.

Both *Quadapeds* and *Land Birds* went into several editions and in 1804, the second volume of *A History of British Birds: Water Birds* was published. Over the next few years Bewick illustrated many other books, the most famous of which was *Aesop's Fables*.

In his later years he wrote his memoirs addressed to his daughter Jane. It gives a wonderful description of rural life in northern England in Georgian times. He also discusses the engraving techniques that he developed, and in later chapters branches out giving his ideas on religion, politics and education. He died at the age of 75 in 1828.

There's a fundamental difference between engraving on wood and engraving on copper or steel. With copperplate the picture is etched into the surface by means of a tool, or through the use of acid. The plate is inked and the surface is wiped clean so that the engraved lines become black and the

untouched areas remain white. To achieve



this the paper has to be slightly moistened and great pressure must be applied. This forces the paper into the etched lines to pick up the ink.

With woodcuts the ink is applied to the surface so that the un-etched areas become black and the etched lines remain white. The block is usually placed in the matrix together with the text, so that text and picture can be printed together in the normal way.

One technique to display texture is to cross hatch. With copper engraving this is very easy. You just engrave a series of parallel lines in one direction and then another series in another direction.

With woodcuts this isn't so easy because the hatched lines have to remain at full height, and so the many diamond gaps between them have to be gouged out with a tool. One way round this is to print twice, with one direction of lines being superimposed upon another. But Bewick discovered that texture doesn't need cross-hatching. He achieved a similar result by just one set of parallel lines, usually curved. He developed a special tool which scratched several parallel lines at the same time.

Another technique that Bewick developed was to engrave at different levels. Lines that were to be fainter were engraved deeper, with whites being the deepest of all. By using a soft tympan, a sort of cushion that goes between the press and the paper, the parts of the paper that were to be lighter were pushed down and picked up a little of the ink, but less than those areas that were to be black.

In early woodcuts the timber was engraved along the grain, but it was found to be better if the end-grain was used. This is what Bewick did. He used box-wood, cut

across the grain, polished the end with a scraper.

Boxwood grows very slowly so that the annual growth lines are very close together. This makes for a very dense wood that can accommodate cuts very close together, allowing for extremely fine detail to be reproduced.

The downside is that the cross section of a box-wood branch is rarely be more than 10 centimetres across so that a completed block was smaller than that, in some cases very much smaller.

Older woodcuts that go along the grain could occupy a whole page but Bewick's were very much smaller. But this was ideal for the book on birds because the books were produced small enough that a naturalist could stuff it into his greatcoat as he went out observing.

Now you might think that woodcuts would be less durable than copper or steel engraving, but that is not the case at all. A woodcut can print a million copies with no noticeable wear, while a copper plate, because of the constant polishing the surface, and because of the chemicals in the ink, can show signs of wear after only a few hundred copies.

As well as the illustrations of birds, nearly every page of *A History of British Birds* has a vignette, or small picture, displaying some aspect of country life. These are delightful. They are called tail-pieces, essentially a way of filling up what would otherwise be empty space, because each bird had to start on a new page. But Bewick liked to call them "tale-pieces" because, as he said, each one tells a story.

These were the pictures that young Jane Eyre found so interesting. Some of the

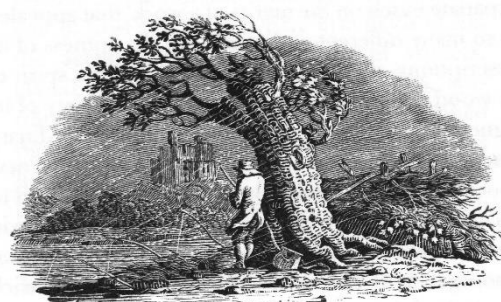


common themes are tombstones, fishing, ships, little boys playing in the countryside. He showed his mischievous sense of humour by showing little boys, or farm animals, creating havoc.

A fishing rod and the long, graceful line curving into the water can be depicted by

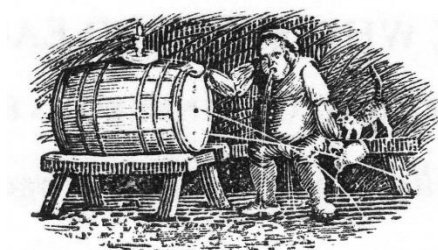


a simple line across the picture. Although Bewick was capable of showing very fine detail by meticulous engraving he seemed to take great delight in finishing off a picture with one or more slashes across the surface.



To transform a scene on a fine day to one in rain, all he had to do was to scratch a series of oblique lines across the scene and these would come out as white parallel lines, representing the rain.

The flow of liquid could also be achieved very simply in this way and quite a number of his pictures show this. There are several vignettes that show men, or little boys, relieving themselves against a wall. One or two show a vomit, or a beer barrel having sprung a leak.



BRONTË STUDIES

Vol 47 Number 3, July 2022

This issue of Brontë Studies contains the following articles.

***Redoubtable Researchers: An Appreciation*
by Amber Adams (the past editor of *Brontë Studies*)**

This is an appreciation of the untiring contributions made to Brontë Studies by some of the retiring members of the Editorial Board. They are:

Christine Alexander, who has worked extensively on the Brontë Juvenilia, and written many papers on the subject in *Brontë Studies*.

Bob Duckett, who has written numerous book reviews and bibliographies, plus several articles, including *The Library at Ponden Hall*. The Brontës knew the Heaton family and would have access to their extensive library.

Edward Chitham has written several Brontë-related books as well as many articles in *Brontë Studies*. A particularly interesting one dealt with Emily's time at Law Hill. He suggests that Charlotte may have been concerned that Emily may have been influenced by the lesbian affairs of Anne Lister who lived near the school.

Patsy Stoneman has published widely on the Brontë and Mrs Gaskell. Her books include *Jane Eyre on Stage*.

“The Last Sketch” by William Makepeace Thackeray

This was Thackeray's introduction to Charlotte's fragment Emma, published in 1860.

Weeping and Wailing in *Wuthering Heights* by Graeme Tytler

Readers of *Wuthering Heights* might not notice the use of crying, or the shedding of tears, as a means of throwing light, not only on the characters subject to emotional reactions, but also on those who hold specific attitudes to weeping in general.

The descendents of my grandfather William Brontë, alone perpetuate the name: John Brontë of County Down and New Zealand by Monica Wallace

John Brown was a grandson of Patrick's eldest brother.

An Appraisal of Catherine and Heathcliff's Love Relationship by Graeme Tytler

While there is no doubt about Heathcliff's obsession with Catherine from an early age, it is not so certain that Catherine's love for Heathcliff is of a similarly amorous nature.

JANE AUSTEN'S THOUGHTS ON CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Well, in fact, Jane had little opportunity to think anything of Charlotte since she died when Charlotte was a little over a year old. However, Charlotte's thoughts on Jane Austen are well known. But, just supposed that Jane had lived to a ripe old age. In this fantasy I suppose just that and so imagine what Jane might have thought of Charlotte if she had had the opportunity. Here is an imaginary letter from the 72 year-old Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra.

Nice – 14th June 1848

My Dearest Cassandra,

I am very much obliged to you for writing to me. My back has been giving me some trouble and your letter lifted my spirits. The weather has been wonderfully warm and I enjoy sitting out on the balcony looking out at all the little boats. I do not think I could ever return to England again as I am not as portable an Invalid as I once was. Cassandra, you really must come again soon – for a longer visit this time. We have so much to catch up on that cannot be conveyed by letter. As you know my health has been extremely fragile ever since my illness in 1817. But God graciously spared me then and I pray that he will continue to do so.

I have few regrets that my poor health has not permitted me to engage in sustained writing, but my little family of six books continue to give me great pleasure. I am thankful to the present Mr John Murray for continuing to send me parcels of books. Two that he sent recently I found very interesting. They are the ones you were telling me of – by those two unknown writers, Currer and Ellis Bell, though I don't think these can be their real names.

I'm convinced that Currer Bell must be a woman, don't you agree? She always takes the woman's part – no man would write of a woman having power over a man. Though I have many reservations about "Jane Eyre" I rather think this young lady C.B. shows great promise. I blush to observe that her book is in no small part influenced by one or two of my own children and I'm tempted to write to her to offer her some advice.

In making the heroine one of the servant class she was no doubt thinking of my Fanny Price. Both she and her Jane were poor but both had uncles of means. However I think she made her Jane much too forward. The way she speaks to Mr Rochester you

would think they were equals. Well, I suppose that by the end of the third volume, having inherited her uncle's fortune, she becomes a more suitable match for Mr Rochester.

Mr Rochester was worth £30,000, which he got from his first marriage, and by the time he marries Jane she had inherited £20,000 from her uncle. That makes £50,000 between them which, invested in the funds at 5%, would yield them a comfortable income. Not quite what Mr Darcy would be able to survive on but comfortable none the less.

I found Miss Bell's St John Rivers quite amusing. It is clear to me that she had my Mr Collins in mind. Nothing is so amusing as extravagant earnestness, particularly an extravagance of religious zeal. Religion is a valuable seasoning for the dish of life, but too much spoils its flavour and nothing is more amusing than seeing a clergyman make a fool of himself with too

much fervour. (Of course in Mr Collins' case it was a case of his worship of his patron Lady Catherine rather than the usual kind.)

I'm sure that Miss Bell has trimmed and cut my



Mr Collins and so fashioned her St John Rivers. Don't you feel that St John's proposal to J.E. reminds you of Mr Collins' proposal to Elizabeth Bennett? Neither man can imagine that there is the faintest possibility of a refusal and Jane has as hard a time as E. B. in convincing her proposer that what he has to offer is not what her heart desires. I'm sure if Jane Eyre had a father he would have said something similar to Mr Bennett – but how could he threaten her with the loss of a parent if she was already an orphan?

Where I feel this Miss Bell fails badly is in the way she allows Jane to tell the reader her innermost thoughts. This "first-person" style of writing is not to be encouraged. Nevertheless I can understand why Miss Bell adopts this style. She is too inexperienced to reveal Jane's inner feelings by what she says

and does. That would have required great delicacy and careful brush strokes. Instead she takes the easy road of explaining to the reader what would have been obvious enough if Miss Bell had been a more accomplished author. It's a mercy that she is not a painter for I fear that she would merely paint the crude outlines of the objects and write the words "this is a lady", "this is a dog" and "this is a tree" on the canvas!

I also object to the way she feels obliged to place extraordinary incidents in her novel after the fashion of those old-fashioned Gothic "stunners". (Yes, Cassandra, she uses this strange and rather ugly word – it must be some North Country dialect.) Perhaps these ghostly apparitions in the middle of the night are something that appeals to the manufacturing class in the North.

Maybe she thought that since I included such nocturnal thrills in "Northanger Abbey" then so could she, but she really misses the point. In her novel there was no awakening to the fact that such things don't really happen in civilized England. Well, maybe they do in the wilds of Yorkshire.

Now where are all the balls in Thornfield Hall? Mrs Fairfax tells us how she glimpsed Blanche Ingram once at a Christmas ball but while Jane is in residence the best that Rochester can manage is a party with some fortune telling thrown in for entertainment. I do believe that Miss Bell has probably never attended a ball in her life and she is more at home with stone balls on gates and India rubber ones. But one must make allowances for her being brought up in such a remote part of the moors. I'm sure that if she entered society it would have made a world of difference to her writing.

The other book goes by the highly unchristian name of "Wuthering Heights". Dr Johnson has never heard of the word

"wuthering" and nor, I'm sure, have I. It must be one of those horrible words used by illiterate farmers or shepherds. And if the name of the book is unchristian then so is the book itself! You were telling me there have been rumours that Currer Bell and Ellis Bell are one and the same. Nothing could be further from the truth. For as start Currer, as I have said, is clearly a woman but Ellis is most definitely a man – and a rather savage one at that. I can't imagine that he could even be her brother. She's a little rough in parts but Ellis seems to be a complete heathen. I am wondering whether Mr Bell once found a grubby little gypsy boy in Liverpool and brought him home and gave him the name Ellis. Could it be that Ellis is partly telling his own story?

I'll wager that this little Ellis was such a rough little creature that he had to be locked up by Mr Bell to protect his own children. For on every page of this novel somebody is being locked up, or breaking out or breaking in. This Ellis seems preoccupied with escape. Even windows serve as a mode of egress more often than they are looked through.

And the final "stunner", to use his sister's horrible word, is when Heathcliff instructs the sexton to break open Catherine's coffin when he is laid next to her. The poor girl can't find peace even in the grave, but she must be a-mingling with Heathcliff's remains.

I know that you and I wrote some pretty horrendous little books when we were young but we never intended for anyone else to read them. Yet here is a grown man peddling his adolescent scriblings and a publisher prepared to publish them. Who is this Newby?

Well, enough about what I've been reading. Let me ask you a few questions about our friends.

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Program for 2023

Saturday 11 March 2023, Elise Edmonds

KILL OR CURE?: A TASTE OF MEDICINE

Based on an exhibition running at the State Library of NSW until 22 January 2023 which showcase some of the library's oldest and rarest books Elise Edmonds will discuss some of the deadly diseases and dangerous therapies from the 15th to the 19th centuries and the understanding of medicine which would have affected the Brontës during their lifetimes. From the influence of the stars and the phases of the moon, to healing chants and prayers, to the knife-wielding barber-surgeon and game-changing scientific experiments, *Kill or Cure?* takes you behind the curtain of western medicine's macabre history.

Saturday 13 May 2023, Helen Groth

WRITING, LISTENING, RIOTING: THE CASE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S SHIRLEY (1849)

This talk will begin with a close reading of the moment in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* when the narrator, after describing 'a West-Riding-clothing-district-of-Yorkshire rioters 'yell', directly addresses the reader and asks: 'You never heard that sound, perhaps, reader?' A question that opens up a space to consider, as I hope to do, how Brontë tests the acoustic limits of the novel form in this moment. A specific focus, that will hopefully answer another more general question – what can we learn about Charlotte Brontë's writing by revisiting this complex politically charged scene in one of her lesser known novels?

Saturday 15 July 2023: Christopher Cooper

WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND FRANKENSTEIN

It's not known whether Emily Brontë ever read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, but almost certainly she knew of it. *Frankenstein* was published in 1816, the year Emily was born. The first popular edition came out in 1831 when Emily was 13. Certainly Emily would have read newspaper reports of the stage adaptations in the years that lead up to her writing *Wuthering Heights*. It is highly likely that, although Emily's novel was a 'groundbreaker', she was inspired by Mary Shelley. Christopher will bring out the similarities – and most importantly the differences – between these two novels.

Saturday 9 September 2023: Lee O'Brien

“STRANGE POWER ... STRANGE PROOFS”: CHASING CERTAINTY IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Wuthering Heights is as puzzling in its authorial impersonality as it is rich and compelling in terms of its characters. The violence in the novel shocked many Victorian readers and raises questions about the limits of conventional assumptions regarding what women were supposed to know. Like Mary Shelley's creature in *Frankenstein*, Heathcliff is a monster who never really left the public imagination once he made it into print. Abusive, dangerous, certainly criminal (with, ironically, a lawyer's help) and even possibly a murderer, where does he come from? One place to look lies outside the world of the Victorian novel: the violent world of the folk ballads, the tales of reckless men and women and fatal acts that Brontë grew up hearing, and that formed a living oral history Emily Brontë deployed with fierce intelligence and skill.

Saturday 11 November 2023, TBA

Saturday 2 December 2022, Christmas Lunch jointly with the NSW Dickens Society (further details later)