



# The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter

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**In this Edition:** *President's Message ... 2025 Year ahead ... Lost Chapter of Wuthering Heights ("Lockwood revisits Wuthering Heights") ... Tea-towel promotion ... Theatre Reviews – Jane Eyre, and Wuthering Heights*

## President's Message

*From ABA President Annette Harman*



In 2024 we enjoyed a range of Speakers' Talks and our combined Christmas Lunch with the Dickens' Society in Cello's. Our Patron, Emeritus Professor Christine Alexander continues her invaluable support and our wonderful Committee Michelle Cavanagh Vice President, Membership Secretary Catherine Barker, Treasurer Michael Links, Secretary Christine Yeats, Christopher Cooper and Graham Harman Editors and Audio Visual and Jan Roden (retired 2025) provide outstanding service covering online and in person Meetings arrangements, membership matters, financial and editorial acumen. Wendy King continues to co-manage with me, our ABA Facebook Page which has a

stronger online presence and following since 2024.

The Brontë family and their writings are a source of fascination for most of us and I think it's good that we are able to regularly meet together to share ideas and conversations at Castlereagh Boutique Hotel in 2025; from Fan Fiction, our first Speaker's talk in March to Animals and the Brontës in November, our topics are diverse and wide ranging. We meet at The Eternity Café Town Hall station for lunch and catch up after our Speakers' talks. This year I hope the ABA will be visiting The Printing Museum in Penrith and taking part in Kate Bush's Wuthering Heights Day in Woodford in July.

We are a small literary Association that has operated since 1998 and we are now facing diminishing Member numbers since the Covid-19 pandemic that will affect our publications and the spaces we are able to hire for our Meetings in 2026. Do you know any meeting spaces located near public transport in Sydney that we may be able to use in the future? For many years we did meet at Sydney Mechanics School of Arts in Pitt Street and changed to the wonderful Castlereagh because of costs and lunches were served onsite on Saturdays, lunches ceased onsite since the pandemic.

I am promoting our unique ABA tea towels to raise awareness of and funds for our Association, they are \$25 each and will provide pleasure to an everyday task. Many people have contributed so much to our Association over the years and continue to do so; if ABA tea towels are not for you, please pick up ABA leaflets and distribute them to others who might be considering what we do. We already have a lot of ABA leaflets out there, we just need a few more in circulation. Please also consider contributing to our Newsletter and Thunderer, your written words are of value and keep our ideas and conversations alive in print.

To conclude my report, with a description of pleasure, in Wuthering Heights Cathy Linton is walking with Nelly, “She bounded before me, and returned to my side, and was off again like a young greyhound; and, at first, I found plenty of entertainment in listening to the larks singing far and near; and enjoying the sweet, warm sunshine; and watching her, my pet, and my delight, with her golden ringlets flying loose behind, and her bright cheek, as soft and pure in its bloom, as a wild rose, and her eyes radiant with cloudless pleasure. She was a happy creature, and an angel in those days. It is a pity she could not stay content.” I have quoted this passage to highlight, to you, the beautiful description of Cathy by Nelly, so often, as we are meant to, we focus on the warning “It is a pity she could not stay content”; but just for a moment think about Cathy’s contentment in bounding/walking with Nelly, both entertained by nature, a delight to see and be with, radiant, happy and a messenger of pure pleasure.

I hope as you read, think about and discuss the Brontës’ writings throughout this year; you experience not only the drama of their writings, but their beauty and pleasure too.

**Annette Harman**  
President

## Save the Dates

Coming up later this year, **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025**, JASA President **Susannah Fullerton** will be speaking to the Australian Bronte Association about ***The Brontës and Animals***. Save the date now – not to be missed!

And don’t forget that it’s **Kate Bush/Wuthering Heights Day** in late July, although we can’t save the date yet because the exact date is still to be confirmed.



*Emily Brontë and her dog  
Keeper as drawn by Joan Hassal*

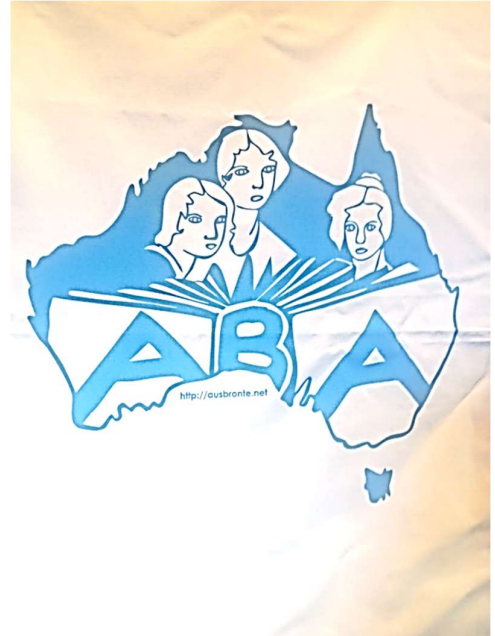
# Australian Brontë Association Tea Towel

The Australian Brontë Association tea-towel, is now available. A limited-edition, must-have literary accessory for your kitchen, available at only \$25 each!

With our ABA logo – portraits of the three Brontë sisters in a cheerful aqua blue – this item sets the ABA apart from other literary societies such as the Jane Austen Society of Australia (“JASA”) and the NSW Dickens Society. JASA tea-towels are noted for representing pithy *bon mots* from the pen of the very quotable Jane (“*The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.*”) At the NSW Dickens Society in contrast, the speaker at the most recent meeting observed that the circumlocutory David Copperfield, at 350,000 words, was “very readable, but was not neatly tea-towel-able”.

How do ABA members see the Brontë sisters through such a lens? What are your favourite Brontë quotes? Send them in to [ausbronte@gmail.com](mailto:ausbronte@gmail.com) and we will print member selections in the next edition of the Newsletter.

*“No books!” I exclaimed. “How do you contrive to live here without them?”* – **Emily Brontë**



## 2025 – First half speaker program

The Australian Brontë Association meets in Sydney five times a year. Meetings are held at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street (near Park Street) at 10:30am, though we serve morning tea from 10:00am. Those who wish to do so, have a light lunch together at a nearby cafe after the meeting (at 12.15). At each meeting, a paper on some aspect of the Brontës' life and work is presented. There is a meeting charge of \$5 (members) and \$10 (non-members).

First half 2025 meetings are as follows. The AGM is on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025, **Gillian Brent**  
**EVEN MY MOTHER READS FANFICTION**  
Fanfiction and the Brontës

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2025, **Sophie Frazer**  
**VILLETTE AND CHARLOTTE BRONTË**

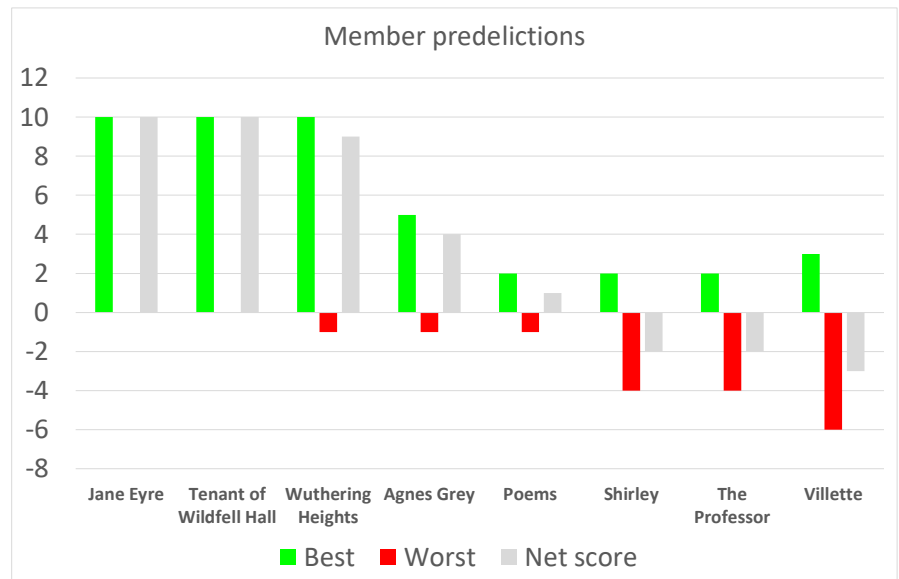
# Villette – love it or loathe it?

**Sophie Frazer**, our speaker for the May meeting, describes the approach she will be taking to Villette as follows:

*“Charlotte Brontë’s final, desolate novel Villette (1853) is a narrative of exile and displacement: one woman’s flight from her home in England to an indeterminate future in a foreign city. A distinctly phenomenological novelist, in Villette Brontë maps the affective crisis of displacement onto the transmogrifications of sensory life. Avowedly ambivalent about her progress in the world, protagonist Lucy Snowe disavows material success and even, at times, acts with nonchalance about her very survival. In this way Brontë emphasises both the temptations and perils of conforming to the conventional plot of female development, eschewing marriage for her heroine in preference for an enigmatic and suitably indeterminate conclusion. In this paper I will read the phenomenal character of Brontë’s narrative of oscillation between worldly success and the banality of insignificance, tracking the emotional expressiveness of the sensing body to bring out the loss inherent in Lucy’s escape from the confines of a conventional female bildung.”*

Our Patron, **Emeritus Professor Christine Alexander**, has this to say: *“Villette is now considered by many to be Charlotte’s greatest achievement, chiefly because of the astute psychological portrayal of its narrator (and heroine) Lucy Snowe.”*

That said – many readers think of it as “long and gloomy”; and in the Australian Brontë Association, Villette is the most polarising of all the Brontë’s adult works. So take some time before May 10<sup>th</sup> to re-visit the novel, and come along to Sophie’s presentation with an open mind. Here’s how ABA member’s rated the Brontës’ novels and poems, best to worst, in a 2024 survey.



## CHAPTER 35 LOCKWOOD REVISITS WUTHERING HEIGHTS

**Here is a further part of my project of providing the 'off-stage' material that Emily Brontë chose to leave out of her novel.. – Christopher Cooper**

It is now thirteen years after I last saw Wuthering Heights and I wondered what had become of the young Cathy, who must now be about 31. Is she now as haughty as she was at 17 or have the years softened her around the edges? I decided to take my wife to visit Yorkshire so that she could meet someone who made my heart flutter once. Olivia wouldn't be jealous I thought and, having finished my third novel, I felt that a break from my usual routine would be judicious.

It was one May morning, unusually warm for that time of the year, when I visited the premises of John Murray Publishers with the manuscript of *William at Waterloo*. Murray had recently relocated to Albemarle Street and as I sat in the little waiting room, with its tiny domed skylight I saw a well-dressed gentleman walk out from Mr Murray's office.

Mr Murray greeted me and ushered me into his office. "That was Henry Austen who just left," he said.

"Should I know him?"

"Probably not, but you may know of his sister, Jane. No, of course you wouldn't. She was published under the pseudonym 'a Lady'. She is the author of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. She has just engaged me, through her brother, to publish her new novel, *Emma*."

Well, of course I knew of both those novels. I greatly admire Miss Austen for her fresh approach to writing and the wonderful way she can capture her characters. Lady Catherine de Burgh, and her chaplain, had me in stitches.

"But I don't remember these being published by your good self."

"No, both those books found their way into the world through my competitor, Thomas Egerton. But the Austens have had

the sense to entrust me with her latest work. I believe that the Duke of Wales has asked to have it dedicated to him."

I knew that Murray had become one of the leading publishers of London, what with Lord Byron being one of Murray's authors – and now this 'lady' Miss Austen – and soon to be published Lockwood.

Mr Murray took my manuscript, winked his blind eye, and said he would be in touch. I went home to Bayswater, where I lived with my wife and my two children.

Now you may be surprised that being so backward in the lovemaking game I should now find myself married. Who would undertake matrimony with such as I? Well an even bigger surprise awaits you. My wife is none other than my beloved Sylvia!

But didn't I call her Olivia just now? Yes I did. She is now a prominent artist and her work hangs in the Royal Academy. She decided to paint under the name of Sylvia Cross, but in ordinary life her friends have called her Olivia for several years.

Just now I called her by the name her friends know her by in order to create suspense in my tale, but she'll always be Sylvia to me so I will now use that name. How I came to meet up with Sylvia, after many years, is a small miracle.

You see a year back, when I had occasion to visit Mr Murray in Albemarle Street, I popped into the Royal Academy, which is on The Strand, just around the corner from Albemarle street. There I saw some wonderful paintings by a certain Sylvia Cross. Of course I thought of my Sylvia – the one I'd let slip through my fingers – but as the name wasn't Christianson I put her out of my mind. Instead I thought of my sister, Felicity, to whom I'd given a silver cross when she

took orders. I remember thinking that I must visit her.

That's what put the plan of revisiting Wuthering Heights into my brain. Felicity is in a convent in Ripon and I thought that I could kill two magpies with one stone, as they say.

As I turned into the next gallery I was stunned by seeing the very painting that I'd helped Sylvia to paint! It was the picture of the bathing machines of Brighton! Well, my help was restricted to merely carrying her apparatus, but still I had a part to play. So Sylvia Cross was my Sylvia, Sylvia Christianson. My feelings for her were not just reawakened. They positively jumped out of bed! Of course she wouldn't want to know me, after the beastly way I had treated her, but I was determined to catch sight of her once more. But how?

I asked the curator of the exhibition if he knew how I could contact Miss Cross. I made out that I was a long lost friend and that she would be pleased to meet me again. Of course he had no idea.

"The only thing I can suggest, sir, is to be here on 25<sup>th</sup> of the month when the artists collect their unsold works. But she may sell all she submitted, or she may send an agent to collect it on her behalf. But the paintings will all be wrapped so unless she comes personally you won't be any the wiser. In any case the paintings can be collected any time between 10am and 4pm so it could be a long wait. Sorry I can't help you more."

I thought of buying the painting myself but realised that wouldn't help. And imagine that if she sold all the other paintings. If I bought the remaining one she wouldn't have to come in at all. I just had to trust to fate.

On 25<sup>th</sup> of May I was at the Royal Academy promptly at 5 minutes to 10. I sat, waiting. I had no idea if she had any unsold paintings to collect. I asked the person in charge who was much less helpful than the gentleman on the previous occasion.

"I couldn't say, sir," was all he could answer.

Two o'clock came and went. I was getting quite hungry, but if I had slipped out for five minutes to get something to eat, I knew that she would arrive in that time.

Three o'clock. Clearly she had sold all her paintings and wouldn't be coming. Then finally at ten minutes to four when only three parcels remained, I saw her! I went up to her and blurted out, "I'm so, so sorry. I want to apologise for my boorish behaviour all those years ago."

She looked at me with eyes of ice. "So you should be," she said and she turned away towards the counter where she had one painting to collect.

"Which painting remained unsold," I asked. "I thought they were all wonderful." "It's the one you know best – the bathing machines."

"I'll buy it! How much is it?"

"Thirty guineas."

That was an enormous sum for me. I was still a struggling author. But I was determined to have the painting even if I never saw her again."

"I'll buy it but I don't have the ready money. Can we go to my bank a little further up The Strand?"

She looked at her watch and said, "it'll be closed by now." She turned to leave. "I'll meet you her tomorrow morning with the money."

"Oh, yes. And I will be here ready for a sale and you won't be anywhere to be seen. I'm sorry I don't trust you."

I took out my gold pocket-watch that my father had given me. "Can I give you this as security? I know it's not worth 30 guineas but if I don't appear tomorrow you'll still have your painting and the watch."

She thought about it for a while. "I suppose I can't lose by that arrangement. But I'm quite sure you will get a chill in your feet and I won't ever see you again." She took the watch and walked out. As she reached the door she turned around and said, "eleven o'clock outside this door." Then she added, "and don't be late – I won't wait."

# THEATRE REVIEW: *JANE EYRE*

Adapted for stage by Ali Bendall

*Reviewed by ABA's Theatre Critic*

6 members of the Australian Brontë Association made up a theatre party to see a stage-play of “Jane Eyre” at the Genesian Theatre in Sydney on October 13, 2024. This had been advertised at the Brontë Meeting on September 14, with the season running from October 5 through November 10. Marking the end of an era, this run was the final appearance of the Genesian Theatre Company at their Kent St venue.

## Rating

Personally I'd rate this version of Jane Eyre ★★★★★ - although there's nothing like rating a play, to focus your mind on what the components of a play, are, and what was good and what was bad about it.

As a general comment, I'd have thought that staging one of Charlotte Brontë's *magna opera* was a challenging task – easier to go wrong in all kinds of ways than to go well, all the more so in front of a row of critical Brontë Association member eyes. This production was deft and assured, was internally consistent, and rang true to the book.

## Stage adaptation.

This stage adaptation of Jane Eyre was directed and – using much of Charlotte Brontë's original text – written, by **Ali Bendall**. Jane Eyre is a long novel, and at nearly 3 hours (including 20 mins for interval) this was a longish play. In my view the adaptation was successful. If you wanted to read Jane Eyre, but didn't want to read 450 closely written pages, this play would be a good solution to that problem. The narrative flowed, and no plot-holes or

awkwardnesses were introduced by having to cut out about 150,000 words. The use of



Jane Eyre both as actress and as narrator worked well (that, is also hard to do) and I thought was true to the first-person voice of the original novel. The balance of drama / humour / romance / whimsy / tragedy / bildungsroman also went well.

One snippet that caught me off-balance was the iconic: “Reader, I married him”, spoken directly to the audience. Call me literal but, like, the audience then being addressed was *watching* and *listening*. Not, *reading*. Theatre. Novel. Different. A second false note was when the “seven or eight year old” Adèle (delightfully played by **Julia Grace**)

made her first entrance and towered over Jane Eyre. And I also felt that the portrayal of St John Rivers was a little harsh – I had to go back to the actual novel and re-read Jane Eyre’s conclusion, which is a description of St John Rivers: “the high master-spirit, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth—who stand without fault before the throne of God, who share the last mighty victories of the Lamb, who are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

## Set

The set design (**Tom Fahy**) and staging totally worked or at least, it worked for me. As with the casting/acting (discussed below) that’s because the Company had an old, vaguely Gothic, character-filled venue that supported the needs of the play, and they then worked hard to make the most of the natural advantages (trapdoors, secret windows etc). The effect created was what you might call “basic authentic Yorkshire” – which worked equally successfully as Lowood School, country estates (Gateshead, Thornfield) or Moor House. Two sets of staircases, a balcony, an inner room etc allowed for parallel narratives, for example simultaneous portrayal of Thornfield and Paris, all adding interest to the production. And instead of heavy-handedly and over-literally trying to “illustrate” a particular location via obtrusive scene changes, everything just flowed – all the more important, with a long play/novel. **Cian Byrne** (lighting) was key, not only to the practicalities of that, but also to adding nuance and atmosphere – for example, with red lighting to create, in a moment, the “red room” at Gateshead, or a Bertha Mason pyrotechnic at Thornfield.

## Cast and acting

I thought that the acting was good across the board. **Kyra Belford-Thomas** delivered a bravura performance as Jane Eyre, successfully dramatizing the multi-faceted



character of the heroine, and doing so consistently and authentically over the 6 scenes of the play. (Embarrassingly – for someone who has read Jane Eyre twice and who has been all over Haworth and much of the rest of Yorkshire – it had never actually occurred to me that the characters would have spoken with a Yorkshire accent. I have only ever read the book in my own natural voice. Sustained Yorkshire accents must be hard to do, on stage. I’ve sat through many a play where the actors dive determinedly into Act 1 in confident South African or New Zealand accents as the case may be, only for broad Australian vowels to insistently re-surface well before interval. No such slip-ups in this production, or not that I noticed – great job by accent coach, **Benjamin Purser**.) **Rhiannon Jean** showcased impressive versatility to successfully and successively portray both society lady Blanche Ingram and force-of-nature Bertha Mason – even to the extent of making me

reflect on the duality of that; and in general I thought that the casting (by **Roger Gimblett, Mark Bull** and **Emily Saint Smith**) was for the most part spot on. **Neilson Brown** (Mr Brocklehurst/St John Rivers – another interesting duality) Jenny Jacobs (Ms Scatcherd/Mrs Fairfax) **Paul Murphy** (Mr Lloyd / Mason) and **Roslyn Hicks** (Aunt Reed / Grace Poole) all brought their characters to life by effective acting, but also by being right for those parts. Which brings me to Edward Rochester himself (played by **Vincent Andriano**).

There was absolutely nothing wrong with the acting, but I'd always imagined Rochester being shorter, squarer and looking less like an Italian count. I had to go back to the novel – it's Chapter XII – to see how he was actually described. Let's see ... "middle height and considerable breadth of chest". Yep – that's what I thought. "Short and square". And we're told (in the novel) that Rochester is *not*, "handsome, heroic-looking". Hmmm.

## Reflection

So – why do we need a Jane Eyre stage version of Jane Eyre the novel? It's an entertainment. It's a dramatization. It's a substitute for reading the whole book, for busy people. It reminds you that they speak with a Yorkshire accent. I get all that. More than that, though: "To select, is to construct". By leaving out 80% of the book, or whatever Ali Bendall had to do to it, you are creating quite a different work of art. There were lines in the play that I found interesting, not because they are not in the book or because I had not, in some sense, heard them before, but because I had missed them, in all the surrounding verbiage, previously; and, correspondingly, those lines were "magnified", in some way, by the

adaptor choosing to let them survive the ferocious abbreviation process.

You can never please the critics though. If the play had strayed from the original text, no doubt I would have delightedly seized upon the "errors" and have had a whinge about that. (I wasn't happy that the Program described Currer Bell as a "male" pseudonym, for example – when the whole point of Currer, Ellis and Acton was their ambiguity and plausible deniability). But that said, I'm still left – vaguely, and inconsistently – unsatisfied. A truly great adaptation is a whole new work of art that transports you to pastures new. That can be by pushing the "to select is to construct" maxim to much greater extremes than this production did, and by dramatizing quite obscure sections of the novel that may well bloom unexpectedly, if awarded centre-stage. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. More radically, it may be by annoying most of the audience and marrying Jane to St John Rivers, or for that matter to Richard Mason, and exploring how that goes. Or it may be *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

*The Genesian Theatre Company is moving to a new home in Rozelle, and I'm sure they'd appreciate some financial support to help with that, if any Brontë members feel so inclined. You can donate at:*

<https://www.genesiantheatre.com.au/>

# THEATRE REVIEW: *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Adapted for stage by Emma Rice. Roslyn Packer Theatre,  
Sydney, January – February, 2025

*Reviewed by ABA's Theatre Critic*

## What is it?

At least 10 members of ABA attended this stage production that, if nothing else, followed the plot of *Wuthering Heights*, closely. And that includes giving due weight to the second half of the book, which is more than the typical film adaptation, does. But there the similarities end. It's not "*Wuthering Heights*"; it doesn't attempt to be *Wuthering Heights*; and that's a strength, in my view, rather than any drawback. (Australian Brontë Association members may remember the comment of one recent speaker, who suggested that "*Wuthering Heights* does not lend itself, to film adaptations").



From the opening moments in Scene I when Mr Lockwood (**Sam Archer**) makes his peripatetic progress through the snowstorm to *Wuthering Heights* you realise – from the action – that this will be true to the novel; and it's equally immediately obvious – from the comedic "ham" over-acting – that this play will be knowingly self-conscious and will not be taking anything, too seriously. It's not a "stage adaptation", or a "drama" or a "romance", or a "comedy" – and it's not even a "musical", in the sense of having a succession of recognisable songs. It's an "*entertainment, built on a view of Wuthering Heights, through 21<sup>st</sup> Century eyes*".

Following necessarily from such a premise, the production channels a modern person's engagement with *Wuthering Heights*, and there are many explicit references to the predicament of such a person. We are only a few minutes in, for example, when – with much eye-rolling and shoulder-shrugging – the cast jump straight ahead through the fourth wall and articulate to the audience the facts that "everybody is related to everybody else", and "this is really complicated". Cue a procession of characters bearing chalk-board slates with names on, which identify the characters in a Brodie's Notes style cheat-sheet. These chalk-boards will go on to double as gravestones, throughout the production, as the characters successively and relentlessly die.

All of that comes to a laugh-a-line head in Act IV, when the cast and the chorus sing the following exchange at each other:

**Bewildered cast:** “What the hell is happening?”

**Chorus (deadpan):** “Three years have slipped by”

**Cast (indignant):** “You should have said!”

As *Wuthering Heights* readers, I’m sure we’ve all had those moments.

### What did I like about it?

I liked the fact that this was a self-conscious portrayal of deciphering what *Wuthering Heights* is all about – I can always use some help, with that. And one of the attractions of watching film/stage adaptations is that it makes you think, about what is/is not in the book. (Is there a “Robert” in the book? Yes – he’s a servant at Thrushcross Grange. Are there “constant references to the Roman Emperor Nero” in the book? – no. The playwright has gone right off-reservation with that one. Are there “half a dozen nephews” in the line of succession between the Linton siblings in the book? – yes there are. But I had to check! Is there a whole racial sub-plot in the novel about “smudges”? No ... and I did not have to check).

Still on the positives – I thought the dogs were well handled, with canine teeth in canine skulls, attached to the end of scythes, entering menacingly on cue when required, both at the Heights and at the Grange. And I had no problems with the omission of characters such as Nelly Dean and Joseph – the “Russian doll” structure of the narrative was well brought out by the script, and by Sam Archer as Mr Lockwood.

### What reservations did I have?

*Wuthering Heights* the novel – notwithstanding its partisan title – is a story of two houses: *Wuthering Heights* and

*Thrushcross Grange*. These were both represented on stage by a wooden partition on wheels, replete with the profusion of doors and windows that are such a feature of the novel. Shifts from “exterior” to “interior” were then achieved by swivelling the “house” around, which is fine; however, that meant that both houses were made of timber – whereas I had always assumed that *Wuthering Heights* was an ancient pile, of stone; and it forewent an opportunity to sharpen the contrasts between one house, and the other.



Within that *mise en scène* the smashed window in Chapter 3 of the book, ““Let me in—let me in!” – which for me, is the most memorable part of the whole novel – did not happen. And I was not entirely sure how the moors, represented by a chorus, fitted in. All up, I did find the whole production confusing. Which is a little galling, given that the cast were calling out Emily Brontë, for portraying overly-complicated family relationship structures, and for inadequately flagging the passage of three years. Which brings me to

### Casting

The cast were a motley crew. That’s partly an authentic reflection of a modern, anomic, multi-cultural milieu, so let’s not be too critical. But still – I didn’t think that they worked together well. It was polyglot, and tutti-frutti, and for me, it didn’t gel. Cathy (**Stephanie Hockley**) and Heathcliff (**John Leader**) were an odd couple for starters; and

there was no sign of any chemistry between them, which is a bit of an omission, given that that is the whole point.

Watching novel adaptations on screen and stage forces you to realise, more than you are usually explicitly conscious of, how you imagined what key characters looked like. Edgar (**Sam Archer**), Lockwood and Heathcliff were all played by tall, thin, asthenic actors, which dissed my conceptions of Edgar and Lockwood as being of medium height, and being “stocky” even if only in an “inclined to *embonpoint*” sense. It also dissed my prior conception of Heathcliff as being tall, indeed, but very solid, muscular and adamant with it. Similar dissonances – between how characters were portrayed, and how I had imagined them – were present in Isabella (**Rebecca Collingwood**) and the Cathy’s. Isabella and the first Cathy were both on the diminutive side – whereas I’d always imagined Isabella as tall and refined, and Cathy as tall and free-spirited. Meanwhile the second Cathy (**Robyn Sinclair**) – who I had always imagined as a weaker, more refined, and better educated version of the first Cathy – was portrayed as strapping and muscular.

The voices and accents in this production, then proceeded to disorient me even further – although whether that was by accident; with theatrical purpose; or by genuine obliviousness on the part of the producer,

was hard to divine. Heathcliff’s lines were delivered in a soft, loquacious drawl, for example – whereas I had always imagined Heathcliff as being the strong, silent type, barking out clipped, declarative instructions when he felt so inclined. Perhaps Heathcliff’s voice was brought so far up-to-date to make a point about how removed from 19<sup>th</sup> Century rural folk, 21<sup>st</sup> Century urbanites, are. Meanwhile (I had thought this was set in Yorkshire?) the elder Cathy’s characteristic and insistent Liverpool accent threw me, as did the younger Cathy’s recurrent relapse into a southerner’s refined urban voice.

The pick of the cast for me was **T J Holmes**, playing Dr Kenneth – in black silk topper, black frock coat, and regularly criss-crossing the stage in an extremely personable gait that was half-whisk and half-strut. Dr Kenneth plays a much more prominent role in this production than he does in the book, and is skilfully deployed by the playwright as a clarifying marker for all the births and all the deaths. I thought Holmes’ balance of comic and serious, was exactly what the production called for.

### Rating

I rated this production 7/10. That’s because it was quite good; it was better than 3-star; but I couldn’t quite come to giving it a 4 out of 5.