The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter
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THE RENAMING OF THE THREE SISTERS

Traditionally the Three Sisters in the Blue Mountains are connected with an aboriginal legend and go by the names “Meenhi”, “Weemala” and “Gunnedoo”. But, as a result of a renaming ceremony conducted by our members in October, they have been renamed Emily, Charlotte and Anne. In doing this we wish no disrespect to aboriginal culture, and acknowledge that these rocks had a deep significance for the aboriginal people long before the three Brontë sisters were born. Nevertheless when attending a Brontë dinner a few years ago at the Three Sisters Restaurant, with views across to the village of Haworth, it occurred to me that it would be fun to pretend that our Australian landmarks might represent our three favourite writers.

On our Three Sisters Weekend, in October of this year, we assembled at the Echo Point lookout and discussed which rock should represent which sister. Though the decision wasn’t unanimous, the majority decided that Emily should be the one on the left, because it’s a little bit away from the others, Charlotte should be the one in the middle, and Anne should be the “other one”, reflecting the fact she has always been regarded as less important than her older sisters. There are, in fact, a couple of smaller rocks off to the right and these might represent the other sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, who died while still at school.

Some of the ABA members at Echo Point after the renaming ceremony

Some of the ABA members at the Three Sisters Dinner at the Avalon Restaurant, Katoomba

THE JUVENILIA OF THE BRONTËS

A talk delivered by Beryl Winter at "La Maison" Guesthouse during the ABA "Three Sisters Weekend" 24-26 October 2003

Good morning everyone. I am honoured to have been invited to speak about the juvenilia of the Brontës today, and I thank our President, Christopher Cooper, for this opportunity.

Where to begin? As is mentioned in the programme, I first became a student of the Juvenilia when I undertook a course at UNSW conducted by our patron, Christine Alexander. I believe I owe you a little of my own history, in this regard, because the course involved an overall look at the novels of the Brontës and some of their poetry.

From 1985 to 1989 I pursued a BA, part-time, with the University of New England, while working full-time. This completed, I was very tired and took a year off from study, but not from work. In 1991 I was ready for another challenge and said to Bronwyn, my daughter, "What can I do now?" Immediately came back the answer: "A course in Women's Studies".

This took me aback somewhat because I had not thought of life as separate genders. My fight for justice had, and is, for all. However, I did enrol in 1991 in Women's Studies at UNSW, the first semester being 'Women of the French Revolution', and the second the Brontës, whose novels I knew and whose use of language I had always loved. The fact that this family lived in Yorkshire evoked in my mind and heart the joy I had discovered, living for a few short years at the foot of Ilkley Moor and climbing drystone walls – the feeling of utter freedom it gave me – before we emigrated to Australia in 1928, when I was eight years old. What's the name of that song – 'I'm in London still" .. Well, I was born there, but I'm in Yorkshire still.

I completed my MA in one year part-time while still working full-time, and joined the Brontë Society until the Brontë Association developed. How fortunate for me that Christine Alexander conducted that course – I am eternally grateful to her for her knowledge and ability to impart it to her students and instil in them a thirst for more.

To truly understand the Juvenilia of the four Brontë children I believe it is important to take a look at what was happening in England during the years of their childhood.

The country was at constant war with France, until Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. This directly affected trade and the economy suffered. In particular, the woollen industry was undergoing tremendous change with the introduction of machines.

I'd like to quote from the introduction to *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* by Terry Eagleton, Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

'Haworth was close to the centre of the West Riding, and had several worsted mills and a more than century-old industry, and despite Mrs Gaskell's assertion that 'its population was not on the whole poor' the sisters would certainly have seen a good deal of destitution on their own doorstep. […] Their lifetime at Haworth coincided with some of the fiercest class struggles in English society. […] Their childhood witnessed machine breaking; their adolescence reform agitation and riots against the New Poor Law; their adulthood saw strikes and Chartism, struggles against the Corn Laws and for the Ten Hours Bill. 'During the 1830s and 1840s,' Eric Hobsbawm has reminded us, '[West Riding] was perhaps the firmest stronghold of violent radicalism and Chartism in the North'.

In addition, they were daughters of a clergyman who had thrust his way up from poverty; they strove as a family to maintain reasonably 'genteel' standards in a traditionally rough-and-ready environment. They were socially insecure women – members of a cruelly oppressed group whose victimised condition reflected a more widespread exploitation, and they were educated women, trapped in an almost intolerable deadlock between culture and economics – between imaginative aspiration and the cold truth of a society which could use them merely as 'higher' servants. They were isolated educated women, socially and geographically remote from a world with which they nonetheless maintained close intellectual touch, and so driven back on themselves in solitary hungering […] and as if all this were not enough, they were forced to endure in their childhood an especially brutal form of ideological oppression – Calvinism.'

A further important aspect of the early 19th century was England's involvement in the European push into India and North Africa. These ventures into wider areas than the small island inhabited by English-speaking people presented an opportunity to expand and create an Empire by colonisation. These

manœvres were frequently accompanied by violence.

The foregoing brings me to the crux of he matter – the childhood of these Brontë children. They were educated at home by their father Patrick until such time as he could afford to send the girls to the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge. Meanwhile, Patrick an Evangelical of the Anglican Church (the High Church considered its Evangelical members as 'Low Church'), gathered a range of reading matter to which the children had access and newspapers such as the *Leeds Intelligencer*, *Leeds Mercury* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, the articles from which were discussed by the whole family and carried the political and military exploits of the country. There was one other, the *John Bull*, described as High Tory and very violent; in discussions of articles from that journal the children would, no doubt, have been involved.

It should be noted here that Branwell was not sent to school, his father preferring to undertake his son's education during his formative years. Patrick Brontë's library contained the works of Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Robert Southey, William Wordsworth and others, including, of course, the Bible (or the 'evangel'). One of his collection was *The Arabian Nights*. From Margaret Smith's Introduction to *Jane Eyre* I quote the following:

'The characters in their stories were adventurers, colonists, statesmen, and in private life, heroes of passionate intrigues; their earlier escapades, magically assisted by genii in the manner of The Arabian Nights, gave place to romantic tales of love and war, inspired by the children's reading of Byron and Scott.'

And that last quote will, I trust, give you an insight into the importance of the thumbnail sketch of 19th century Britain to which you have just listened, as it affects the Juvenilia of these very gifted children.

Contrary to the view that these children were miserable and neglected, Fannie E. Ratchford, in her introduction to her book The Brontës' Web of Childhood, writes:

'… the 'Juvenilia' shows us singularly happy beings, possessed of an Aladdin's lamp through whose magic they transcended time and distance, walked with kings, and swayed the destiny of a mighty empire. […] These little books hold in their tiny script the most remarkable romance in literature and the most accurate record of evolution of genius extant in any language.'

The title of Ratchford's *The Web of Childhood* is a reference to the words in *Retrospection*, 1835 (Charlotte Brontë), as follow:

We wove a web in childhood,
A web of sunny air;
We dug a spring in infancy
Of water pure and fair …

Charlotte used a comparison from local spinning mills ('web' means spun cloth) to describe their creative collaborations.

These children enjoyed the privacy of their lives under the care of their aunt, Elizabeth Branwell, and their father Patrick, and while they did not mingle with the village children, Tabby, the lifelong and faithful servant of the Brontë household, had many stories to tell with which to feed their fertile imaginations.

So, on June 5, 1826, one year after the demise of Maria and Elizabeth Brontë, the Reverend Patrick Brontë bought for his son a set of wooden soldiers to replace a previous number which had been broken. For the girls, he had brought ninepins, a toy village and a dancing doll. But as soon as Branwell showed his toy soldiers each of the girls commandeered one, Charlotte naming hers 'the Duke of Wellington', Emily's became 'Gravey' because of his serious demeanour, Anne called hers 'Waiting Boy' and Branwell's choice from the collection was named 'Buonaparte'. So began a series of imaginary battles, Branwell directing. Tiring of these battles, the 'Young Men', as the toy soldiers were called, became fantasy publishers, authors and antiquarians, and of course other make believe characters were added to the stories.

Branwell's control over this game (the Young Men's Play) was broken by a new game, 'Our Fellows', the six children selecting an imaginary large island each, in which the inhabitants were six miles high (the idea came from Æsop's Fables). The people of Emily's island were the exception, being only four miles high. Tiring of this game, Charlotte proposed that they each select a real island. Branwell chose the Isle of Man; Charlotte the Isle of Wight; Emily, the Isle of Arran; and Anne, the Isle of Guernsey. Thus the Play of the Islander, the third great play in the Brontë cycle, was born.

In 1827 the thirteen-year old Charlotte recorded with great gravity – it was so important:

'our plays were established:
Young Men, June 1826;
Our Fellows, July 1827;
The Islanders, December 1827.
These are our three great plays that are not kept secret'
[May Sinclair *The Three Brontës*]

I was able to attend, earlier this year, the launch of *Tales of the*

Islanders (vol 3) edited by Christine Alexander and the students of English 5032 at UNSW. This took place one evening at the University's bookshop, and it was truly enlightening. In Notes on the Text the following caught my attention:

'The editorial team hopes that the reader will be as fascinated as they were to see the way Charlotte wrote at thirteen years old, with her imperfect spelling and grammar contrasting so sharply with her rich use of language.'

Christine Alexander is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the Juvenilia Press, established by the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, but recently relocated to the University of New South Wales, here in Sydney.

The play of the Islanders gradually ran its course for the children, and they resorted again to the *Young Men's Play*. They were inspired, by the reading of *A Grammar of General Geography* by the Reverend J. Goldsmith, to send their young soldiers to Ashantee, a country looming large in North Africa. The ship, 'Invincible, was wrecked on the coast near the mouth of the Niger River. Although Charlotte and Branwell alternated in suggesting these adventures, Emily and Anne joined in playing them out.

The Twelve (as the wooden soldiers were named) became involved in fierce battles against the natives. Among this band of twelve was Arthur Wellesley, later to be Duke of Wellington and father of Arthur – Marquis of Douro, Duke of Zamorna, and King of Angria, and Charles Townshend, who was to become the most important of Charlotte's pseudonyms. In the introduction to *My Angria and the Angrians* (Angria being the country invented by the children to represent Africa) appear the following words:

The Chief then said, 'Who are you?'
Wellesley answered, 'We were cast up on your shores and request shelter.'
They said, 'You shall not have any.'
Wellesley, 'We will take it then!'
We prepared for battle; they did the same. It was a fierce encounter, but we conquered.

You will recall my earlier comments regarding the colonisation of various countries by Britain in the desire to form an Empire!

Having conquered and taken many prisoners, the conquering heroes crammed them into a small room in the castle and in the morning blew up the castle.

The girls used the antidote of 'making alive' the fallen prisoners and their own heroic company, being somewhat appalled by Branwell's cruelty. The heroes left the island and finally the 'Invincible' was anchored in a bay on the shores of Ashantee.

Another element now entered their fantasy world from their reading of *The Arabian Nights*. It is recorded in one of these accounts of the Juvenilia that Charlotte first read the book when she was 12 years old. (I myself read it from a local library when I was around that age and was fascinated.) Having reinvented themselves as the Chief Genius Talli, the Chief Genius Emmi, and the Chief Genius Annii, the survivors of the shipwreck began to explore and came upon a band of native blacks. They had a very fierce encounter, which they won. The remaining blacks made a peace treaty the next day; they were represented by the ninepins (which you will recall were given to the girls). The heroes immediately began to build a city on a large plain – a Hall of Justice and the Tower of All Nations completed, the Grand Inn of the Genii was commenced. Word was sent to England seeking help and describing a land of richness.

Although Charlotte's imagination stretched more to romance and happiness for their imaginary people, Branwell's liking for war and destruction brought the Twelve to death. But he hadn't reckoned on the power of the Genii who restored the Young Men to life, and, to satisfy all, the conquered land was divided into kingdoms ruled by four heroes. These kingdoms became the Great Glass Town (from a travel book about Africa) and signified in the minds of the children the glasslike harbour, in which their magic buildings were reflected. Branwell's education in the classics transformed Glasstown into Verdopolis, and with Charlotte's leaning towards French the newly named city embraced London, Paris and Babylon (the Tower of All Nations having been inspired by the Tower of Babel).

Both Charlotte and Branwell were seeking a literary outlet for their inventive minds. Although the children were able to act out their fantasy stories – they had the moors at their disposal – this was not enough, especially for Charlotte. At this point Branwell hit upon the idea of fashioning a magazine based on the format of *Blackwoods*, with which, you will recall, they were all familiar. The first such attempt was a periodical of 'four leaves, measuring about 2¼ × 1¼ inches, printed in the smallest characters conceivable [..] the finished product enclosed in a cover advertising books by John Wesley, was entitled 'Magazine 1829'. By July of that year friction between Charlotte and Branwell as to the magazine's

content ended by Branwell conceding the magazine to her control and he launching a newspaper in lieu.' (Fannie Ratchford)

The excitement of the *Young Men's Play* was beginning to wane, and Charlotte attempted one or two solo efforts: 'The Adventures of Mon. Edouard de Crack' and another 'Ernest Alembert', a fairy tale. But she needed the help the old game provided. In the August of 1830, Charlotte brought *The Young Men's Magazine* to life again, achieving six issues before the end of that year. But Glass Town was reaching its conclusion, and with financial assistance from her godmother, Charlotte went to school, Roe Head, where she spent the next two to three years. Upon her departure Branwell attempted to 'dominate the stage', as it were. However Emily began a revolution of her own. The domination of the older children and the accent upon war led to the creation, with Anne, of the *Gondal Saga*.

Charlotte's return encouraged Branwell to revive their mutual interest in bookmaking. He felt at a disadvantage because of her greater experience and relied on the 'Young Men's Play', for which he wrote a poem to celebrate the African Olympic Games, based on the resistance to the Genii by the heroic Twelve.

Charlotte introduced into the revisited Glasstown stories an element of social and political problems which were affecting life in Yorkshire at the time. Unable to persuade Emily and Anne to join in the Glasstown adventures, and not being interested in the exploration of the moors and its attractions, the four Brontës became two teams; Charlotte with Branwell and Emily with Anne. Each of the two partnerships did not intrude on the other, but respected each other's privacy.

Before entering the world of Gondal it should be noted that when Patrick saw that the children were striving to illustrate the characters and events of their imaginary worlds, he sent for a teacher to instruct them at 'two guineas a visit'.

Emily and Anne retreated into their own creation, *Gondal*, an island in the North Pacific, a country of 'mountains, moors and lakes'. This kingdom was called Angora, and it was a land 'of mists and moorland drear, And sleet and frozen gloom', but to its creators it was a place of beauty such as the southern islands could never reach. Those who peopled it were hardy, revered loyalty, despised treachery and worshipped freedom. The homes in Gondal radiated warmth of spirit. Although there was war in Gondal, it was not accompanied, as in Branwell's Glasstown, with celebration; nor did it have a genius to assist its heroes.

Nothing appears to have survived of the Gondal creation before 1834. If it had been recorded by Emily the written stories have been lost, and must be searched for among her poems and fragments written after June 1836.

However, it is recorded (*The Web of Childhood*, Fannie Ratchford) that to keep pace with the development of Angria by Charlotte and Branwell, Emily arranged for her 'Gondal Vikings to discover Gaaldine, an island in the South Pacific […] tropic prairies bright with flowers and rivers wandering free […] explore and partition it into kingdoms and provinces ruled by representatives of the great Gondal families. Apparently, only two prose records of this conquest have survived: From "A Vocabulary of Proper Names" at the conclusion of the Reverend Goldsmith's *A Grammar of General Geography*, Anne inserted in pencil the following Gondalan place names:

Alexandria – a Kingdom in Gaaldine,
Almedore – a Kingdom in Gaaldine,
Elsevaden – a Kingdom in Gaaldine,
Gaaldine – a large Island newly discovered in the South Pacific,
Gondal – a large Island in the North Pacific,
Regina – the capital of Gondal,
Ula – a Kingdom in Gaaldine, governed by 4 sovereigns,
Zelona – a Kingdom in Gaaldine,
Zedora – a large Provence in Gaaldine governed by a Viceroy.

To add further to the Gondal story, Ratchford notes:

'In the autumn of 1845, Charlotte accidentally discovered a notebook of Emily's, headed 'Gondal poems transcribed February 1844'. The poems were genuine, with a peculiar music – wild, melancholy and enervating […] particularly Gondalan […]. After much argument the girls agreed to print a volume made up of selections from all three of them. Charlotte's Angrian poems were rejected, but Emily's 21 contributions were all of Gondal and included the Keystones of the Gondal epic […] three of Anne's poems out of the eight belonging to the Gondal cycle, were included.'

Emily was fiercely against war, and many of you will have read 'No Coward Soul is Mine', written January 26, 1846. Another lengthy narrative, revision of which was started in May 1847 or 1848, are the last lines which have survived. The literary career that began in revolt against Branwell's pointless battles ended in denunciation of war in general as senseless and debasing.

No doubt you will all be familiar with the Angrian stories, which seem to be better known than the Glasstown and Verdopolis sagas.

'The original characters of the dramas were called by names which denoted the physical or imagined moral characteristics of each: e.g. Cracky, Cheeky, Monkey, Goody, Naughty, Rogue. Also, because of their wooden construction, they were given the names of General Leaf, Captain Tree, Sergeant Bud, Corporal Branch, Stumps etc. At the beginning, soldiers, literary men, artists, prophets, and rogues became a complex representative society.

In 1833 Charlotte, at seventeen, was turning out books with speed; she was an author in her own right, but the stories were juvenile for her age. She still needed to fall back on oriental magic, fairy tales, and gothic romances. To cover her embarrassment she resorted to Scott's method of suggesting antiquity, under the pretence of 'olden days' and 'past times', employing her sense of humour as a saving grace.'
(Fannie Ratchford)

Charlotte's most significant book at the time was entitled *Arthuriana*. In this collection appeared 'The Tragedy and the Essay', based on a knowledge of drama and stage history of the time, probably obtained from the library of Ponden Hall. According to this story, a young architect under the patronage of the Marquis of Douro, presents a play he had written for inspection (it would seem that Charlotte had in mind Byron as a member of the sub-committee of Drury Lane Theatre). The Marquis, impressed against his better judgement, tells the young man, Hamilton, to offer the play to Mr Price of the Theatre Royal (Stephen Price was manager of Drury Lane at that time). The description of the story, which described the acting of Mrs Siddons before the royalty and nobility of Verdopolis, is prophetic of the picture of Rachel, as Vashti, at the court of Labassecour, in *Villette*.

Meanwhile, Branwell was introducing, in his *Politics in Verdopolis*, a new heroine, Rogue's daughter, Maria Henrietta Percy (Mary Percy), whose arrival alters the aspect of Verdopolitan politics and society. She became the betrothed of Sir Robert Weaver Pelham, but the Marquis of Douro won the beautiful Mary, deserting his wife Marian, who died of consumption. Charlotte, with her gift for resuscitation, resorted to writing of Marian in retrospect, adding new character traits and new incidents in her life, until Marian, re-invented, gradually merged into Mary Percy, and through her into Paulina Mary Home of *Villette*

What has all of the foregoing to do with Angria, you are wondering? Actually, quite a lot.

The metamorphosis of Rogue into Alexander Percy, now raised to the Earldom of Northangerland, and the marriage of his daughter Mary, to the Marquis of Douro, ended, for a while, the long political antagonism between the two principal characters of the Glasstown cycle. Douro's father was the Duke of Wellington, and Charlotte felt that the Marquis of Douro should also be head of a kingdom – hence the emergence of Angria, agreed by Branwell. Following the creation of Angria, Branwell was in his element, directing the new monarch in framing a constitution, dividing the country into administrative provinces, forming a ministry and government; setting up an army; and strengthening Angria's position in the Verdopolitan Union; and laying the basis of a firm and despotic sway. The new capital was named Adrianopolis after its emperor, Adrian – Arthur Augustus Adrian Wellesley – who mainly until the end retained the name of Zamorna – the character of Byron.

It is very easy to become confused when delving into the Angria stories. Charlotte was 18 when she wrote *My Angria and the Angrians*. She herself had been struggling to break away from the imaginary world to which she had become addicted, to cast off the style and subject matter of the Juvenilia and turn her talents to practical – or publishable – account. This was to bear fruit in the remarkable *Jane Eyre*.

'Angria', Christine Alexander writes, 'had become a furtive substitute for reality, an obsession about which Charlotte began to fee guilty.' (Alexander 1980) The security she had once found in the 'self-referential world of imagination' (Alexander 1991) was now lot in her sense of confusion and loss of control.' (Introduction to *My Angria and the Angrians*, by Charlotte Brontë, edited by Juliet McMaster and Leslie Robertson, Juvenilia Press, Canada 1997).

From my personal viewpoint I believe that Charlotte's brilliant mind and compassionate love for her siblings concealed her lack of confidence in herself. In her need to prove her creative ability by submitting her work for publication, she fought endlessly to put behind her the imaginary world that she and Branwell had begun. I find it very sad that she felt guilty that such childish pursuits were still revisited through the years. Had it not been for the creation of those imaginary kingdoms, in particular, Angria, which was constantly revisited, the world might never have read the gems of literature that Charlotte

produced – works that exposed the very real problems suffered by the ordinary people of that turbulent time and the effect that it had on women in particular. She had no need to feel guilty! So much of her youthful creativity is still to be found in her novels. Emily also, drew upon the Gondal stories and poems in *Wuthering Heights*. Whereas Charlotte returned to the comfort of Angria, Emily found it in the moors.

Finally we come to the fascinating story of *Stancliffes Hotel*. Those of you who attended the Brontë Association meeting earlier in the year will recall Christine Alexander's address regarding this novelette. She was quite rightly incensed by the claim by *The Times* (London) stating, in one of its supplements published on 14 March 2003, the 'discovery' of a new 'unknown' story. Included in this statement were interviews with Dr Heather Glen, who is reported as having said: 'Stancliffe's Hotel had not been published before because there's been a mystique about it because it alludes to this fictional country'. Christine Alexander was to tell us that she 'had published Stancliffe's Hotel as part of a Cambridge PhD as long ago as 1970, and that it is on public access in the Cambridge University Library. It is also due to appear in my final volume of An Edition of the Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë which will be published by Blackwell's, Oxford, next year. [...] Stancliffe's Hotel is also discussed in detail in my British Academy prize-winning book The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë (Oxford: Blackwells, 1983), with a photograph of the first page of this manuscript, to which I gave the title Stancliffe's Hotel. The Times made no acknowledgement of my work on this story.'

In chapter 3 of *Stancliffe's Hotel* it is revealed that the hotel is the 'head hotel in Zamorna'. So it is clear that Charlotte was still clinging to her Angria at the advanced age of 23. During the years between 18 and 23 Charlotte penned other stories, one of which was entitled *Caroline Vernon*, which 'presented the life histories of two Angrian characters who reappear in Jane Eyre as Rochester's ward Adèle and her mother Céline Varens, his one-time mistress. In the Angrian days these two shared one entire novel (Caroline Vernon), and numerous pages in other stories. In Jane Eyre they serve as mere plot agents.' (Ratchford).

The Mad Woman in the Attic, Bertha Mason, in *Jane Eyre* (according to Ratchford) 'grew out of a character sketch of Charlotte's Zenobia Ellrington, whose unrequited love for the Marquis of Douro, Duke of Zamorna, resulted in madness'.

In conclusion, I am very appreciative of the assistance cheerfully given me by the staff of various Sydney libraries. It is extremely difficult to locate information about the works of the Brontës, in particular the Juvenilia, which only serves to accentuate Christine Alexander's statement about the sidelining of academics in the arts, working in Australia.

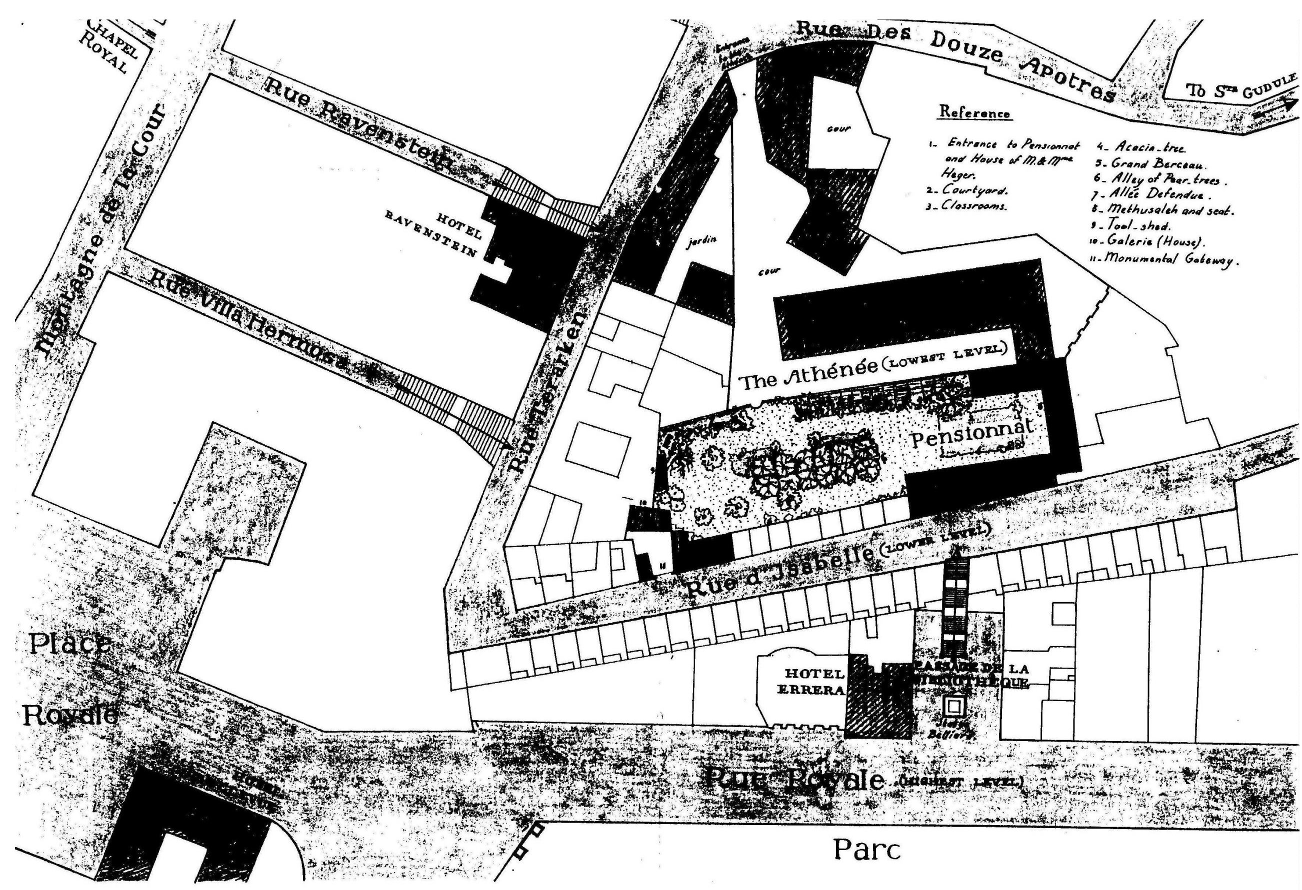
BRONTË BRUSSELS

This year, 2003, marked the 150th anniversary of the publication of Villette and to mark the occasion the Brontë Society organised a tour in October. About fifty Brontë Society members took part – mostly from the UK, but there were small contingents from the U.S.A., Sweden, the Netherlands and, of course, Australia. Elisabeth and I started our European trip with Susannah Fullerton's wonderful three -week literary tour with Australians Studying Abroad, and we were able to stretch our stay to end with a wonderful week in Brussels.

You will remember the Brussels connection. Emily and Charlotte went to the Pensionnat in 1842 to improve their French. They returned home on the death of Aunt Branwell and Charlotte returned in 1843. Two of Charlotte's novels – *The Professor* and *Villette* – are set there.

So, what were we hoping to see? The Pensionnat itself would have been an obvious place of pilgrimage. The only trouble was that it was demolished in 1912. Well, then, could we perhaps walk the cobbled street of the Rue d'Isabelle in which the school was located? Even that w as denied us since the whole area was redeveloped in 1910 and this involved the burying of the street.

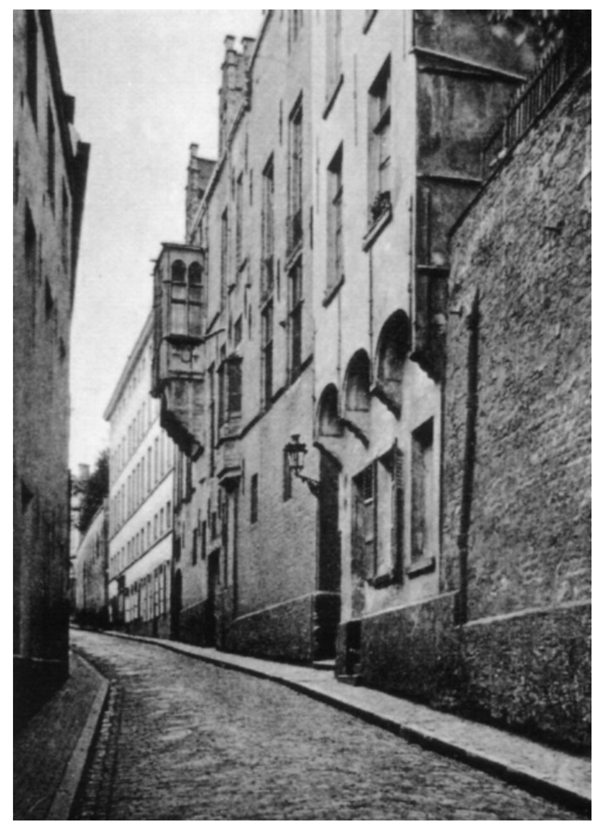
What might seem a frustrating disappointment became a fascinating challenge as we attempted to walk where Charlotte walked. To appreciate this you need to study this map of the area.



The Quartier Isabelle as Charlotte would have known it.
(Map drawn by Selena Busch for *Charlotte's Promised Land* by Eric Rijssenaars.)

Although the Rue d'Isabelle and adjoining streets are mostly buried a few small fragments remain. There's one short section of the Rue Terarken, once joining the Rue d'Isabelle not far from the Pensionnat, which survives as an access lane to the basements of office buildings. On a walking tour we trod this cobbled pavement. Special arrangements were even made for us to go inside a couple of the adjoining buildings so that we could look down from various angles at this street fragment.

The Hotel Ravenstein, on the corner of Rue Terarken and Rue Ravenstein, is the only building in the Quartier Isabelle to survive the 1909-1910 redevelopment. This aristocratic mansion, built in the 16th century (never a hotel in the sense of an 'inn') has now become the headquarters of a society of engineers. They couldn't understand why we wanted to climb up to the attic just to be able to look out of a window on what seemed to them to be nothing in particular, but they were kind enough to allow us.



The left picture shows the Rue Terarken, looking towards the Rue d'Isabelle, with the Hotel Ravenstein on the right, as Charlotte would have known it. The picture above shows how it looks today. The bay window has been reconstructed and the building with the three arches has gone.

On another walk we visited the basement of the former palace of Charles V where, below the rumbling of the trams in the Place Royale, we could walk on a cobbled section of the Rue d'Isabelle. But Charlotte could never have walked this section of the Rue d'Isabelle for the simple reason that it had been covered over before she came to Brussels. This street had been built in 1625 to provide the Infanta Isabella a direct route to St Gudule's Cathedral but when the Place Royale was built, that section of the Rue d'Isabelle was buried. About ten years ago, as a result of underground excavations, we can now walk a section of the Rue d'Isabelle that would have been unknown to Charlotte!

The foundations and basement of the Palais des Beaux-Arts now occupy the space where the Pensionnat once stood. On the corner of this museum, rather too high to be easily read, is a plaque that was placed there by the Brontë Society.

NEAR THIS SITE FORMERLY STOOD THE
PENSIONNAT HEGER WHERE THE WRITERS
CHARLOTTE AND EMILY BRONTË
STUDIED IN 1842-43

THIS COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE WAS
PLACED HERE BY THE BRONTË SOCIETY
WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE
PALAIS DES BEAUX-ARTS/PALEIS VOOR
SCHONE KUNSTER 28-9-79

Well, if we couldn't walk where Charlotte walked perhaps we could sit where Charlotte stood – in the Chapel Royale. This was once the Royal Chapel but became the Protestant Church in Brussels and this is the church that Charlotte attended. It has changed fairly little, except that these days there's seating, whereas Charlotte would have had to stand.

The Chapel Royale, as Charlotte would have known it, and as it is today.

Another highlight was visiting the Parc Royale. This is a large formal garden with a couple of round ponds, many statues, and a bandstand. It is described very well in *Villette* and looks very much as it did in Charlotte's day.

The 'stone basin', *Villette* chapter 38

The 'Byzantine kiosk', *Villette* chapter 38

A highlight of our week's stay in Brussels was meeting M. Heger! Well, not 'the Master" himself, as Charlotte referred to him, but one of his great great great grandsons. Now this might seem a rather long and slender connection, but the gentleman we met has taken a real interest in his family history. He remembers, as a boy, staying with his grandfather and sleeping in a room with old family photographs. His grandfather told him many stories about *his* grandfather – and that takes us back to Paul Heger, the son of the M. Heger to which Charlotte wrote many letters after returning to Haworth. These letters were torn up and discarded by Constantin but were rescued and stitched together by his wife. It was Paul Heger who donated them to the British Museum.

As for M. Heger himself, well, we visited him because he was unable to visit us. He lies buried in the Boitsfort Cemetery, on the outskirts of Brussels. Actually there are two cemeteries in Boitsfort, as we discovered! We arrived at what we thought was the right place, but it didn't look familiar to the two ladies who had visited the grave with the Brontë Society, about ten years previously. 'Perhaps we came in a different gate." So we all spread out, looking for the grave in all corners of the graveyard. There was a burial taking place, and the mourners were somewhat puzzled at this invasion of sight-seers who didn't seem to know what they were looking for. Finally someone called out 'wrong cemetery" and we all had to scramble back on the bus. Eventually we located the right cemetery and right grave, and stood in silence for a minute. Selena Busch, one of the tour leaders, placed a rose on the grave.

The most moving experience of all, during this fascinating week, was going to the confession box in St Gudule Cathedral. Charlotte told Emily how, during the summer when everyone was away for the summer holidays, she felt so lonely that she made a confession just to be able to speak to someone. (She later turned this into a scene from *Villette*.) Because the priest, on learning that she was Protestant, told her to visit him at such and such an address, it has been possible to find out, from church records, the name of the priest. And, since every priest used a specific pair of confessionals, we know precisely where Charlotte knelt. So, as we sat near this spot in the cathedral, Selina Busch read both Charlotte's letter to Emily and the corresponding scene from *Villette*.

VALE CAROL BOUGHTON

It is with great sadness that we have to announce the death, in December, of Carol Boughton. Carol joined the ABA in its earliest days, and has been one of our most enthusiastic members. A number of us attended the funeral on 16th December and Catherine Barker gave the eulogy and flowers were sent on behalf of us all. We'll miss you Carol.

JANE EYRE AND DECEIT

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a young woman in search of a husband will choose the wicked-but-not-too-wicked man in preference to the good, honest one. As most of you know the good, honest man is seen to be boring while the man who's a little bit wicked is exciting.

Now a man can be attracted to a boring woman, so long as she's good-looking and sexy. (I guess Rochester was the exception). But for a woman, a man can be almost anything as long as he's not boring.

A good, honest man might make the ideal husband but he doesn't make for interesting reading unless, like in *Madame Bovary*, the woman gets restless and, looking elsewhere, proceeds down the path of tragedy.

But the man who is more-or-less good but has some defects of character is ripe for reform. And women love nothing more than to reshape a man. I think it's something to do with feminine creativity. They love to remake last year's dress into this year's fashion or to renovate the living room. A man who is not yet perfect is a challenge.

Certainly in a novel he provides interesting dramatic tension for the reader. While the young woman has no doubt that she'll succeed we, the reader, wonder whether she'll be successful or whether it will all end in tears?

All three of the Brontë sisters had their wicked men – in their novels at least. In Emily's *Wuthering Heights* Catherine marries the good, honest Edward and then goes mad because this has placed the wicked Heathcliff out of her reach. Anne's heroine, Helen, in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* goes into her marriage with Arthur Huntington with her eyes open. She's warned of the dangers by her family – but, the, what young girl listens to her family in matters of the heart. She's aware of Arthur's defects but she's confident that "love conquers all". And besides, he's so fascinating! Unfortunately it does end in tears and she has to run away, with her little boy. But with a twist of realism that's characteristic of Anne, Helen ends up with boring but good Gilbert Markham.

Now Jane Eyre has her somewhat wicked Rochester. She's alone in the world and has no-one to advise her. Not that she would have listened. She quickly becomes aware of Rochester's many faults, but she's confident that she can make something of him. Besides, his defects seem to make him more attractive to her.

There's another man in Jane's life – St John Rivers. He's the good but boring alternative. He too makes an offer of marriage. Now why does she reject him in preference to Rochester whom she can still love, even if it must be from a distance? It's simply because St John is the good, honest boring man while Rochester is wicked-but-fascinating.

St John is honest – a little too honest. On his first encounter with Jane he sums her up with the words 'she looks sensible, but not at all handsome'. When one of his sisters protests that 'she is so ill' he replies 'ill or well, she would always be plain – the grace and harmony of beauty are quite wanting in those features'. And his proposal to her some time later is full of blunt honesty. It doesn't matter that she's plain. She is 'docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant and courageous' – the ideal qualities for a missionary's wife. Here is no pretence of love. He comes right out with the stark truth. He wants a fellow labourer, and he can't take her to India as his helpmate unless they are husband and wife.

Rochester, on the other hand, is anything but honest. Deceit runs through his veins. The amazing thing is that the more Jane learns of his deceit the more it seems to turn her on.

Deceit probably controls her destiny more than anything else. After all deceit is what causes her to leave her aunt's home at Gateshead and sets her on her journey of life.

In the opening scene there's an incident that could be construed as deceitful or, to use John Reed's words, "sneaky". Jane was hiding behind the red curtains of the window seat and John may have thought she was doing this to spy on him. Of course, since Jane is the narrator, we have to believe her version rather than his.

Certainly one of them was telling lies as to who started the fight that took place shortly afterwards. We know it wasn't Jane because, as she says to Mrs Reed: "I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved you."

But nevertheless Jane is branded a "liar". She's given, by Mr Brocklehurst, a tract containing the account of the "awfully sudden death of Martha G—-, a naughty child addicted to falsehood and deceit". Before long Jane finds herself at Lowood School and the next time Brocklehurst visits the school he introduces her to the teachers and fellow pupils as

someone who is to be shunned – the lowest and most evil of creatures – worse even than a heathen. She is — a liar!

Of course, as we know, Jane is anything but a liar. We learn from her own account of her unfolding life that she's open and direct and speaks the truth even if this lands her in trouble. In fact in the whole novel there are only a couple of instances where she dissembles and in each case she has a very good reason. More of that later.

No, Jane isn't deceitful – but Rochester is. For many years he's lived a lie — an eligible bachelor with a mad wife hidden away in the attic. For ten years he's kept this secret from everyone except Grace Poole and the surgeon, Carter. Mind you he never tells an actual untruth on this matter. Even when confronted by Briggs at the wedding he doesn't actually deny he has a wife – not in so many words. Instead he responds by throwing back questions.

"And would you thrust on me a wife?"
"Favour me with an account of her – with her name, her parentage, her place of abode."

While he still thinks he can get away with it he lies through his teeth. Faced with the wedding certificate he not only doubts its authenticity but suggests that, if genuine it would only prove that he *was* married, not that he still is. It's only when Mason appears with his eyewitness account of having seen Bertha recently, at Thornfield Hall, that Rochester begins to unburden himself.

Now the amazing thing is Jane's reaction to this despicable deceit. Other women would have struck him down in a fit of anger and run off to the local magistrate. I'm sure attempted bigamy must be a crime.

Of course there are tears and even a little fainting. But he only has to ask for forgiveness and:

Reader! – I forgave him at the moment, and on the spot. There was such deep remorse in his eye, such true pity in his tone, such manly energy in his manner; and, besides, there was such unchanged love in his whole look and mien."

Amazing, but true to life. You only have to look around today at battered wives who refuse to leave their alcoholic husbands. "I still love him – and he needs me." Women stay with partners even after an attempted murder. The power of love of a woman for a man can be so strong that it holds reason and common-sense to ransom.

Jane listens patiently to his explanations. It all sounds so very reasonable and she feels sorry for him. What sort of a life must it have been to be united to such a maniac? And didn't Bertha's family deceive him first? He may not have had the legal right to commit bigamy, but surely he had the moral right. In fact so convincing is her analysis of his dilemma that we, the reader are convinced by her rationalizations. Rochester knows exactly the right things to say. He plays upon her heart-strings like a virtuoso.

Of course Jane has to leave Thornfield – reluctantly. Her moral upbringing at Lowood has made it impossible for her to consider living there as his mistress. But she doesn't recoil from his deceit. She forgives him and her love for him is as strong as ever – probably stronger..
"I do love you," I said, "more than ever: but I must not show or indulge the feeling: and this is the last time I must express it."

She's in no hurry to go, however. In fact the crisis quite exciting.

I was not afraid; not in the least. I felt an inward power; a sense of influence, which supported me. The crisis was perilous; but not without its charm; such as the Indian, perhaps, feels when he slips over the rapid in his canoe. I took hold of his clenched hand; loosened the contorted fingers; and said to him soothingly,--

'Sit down; I'll talk to you as long as you like, and hear all you have to say whether reasonable or unreasonable.'

So he beats up her emotionally by his deceit and yet she's turned on with excitement.

It wasn't just the lie that surrounded the concealment of his wife. Rochester's whole courtship of Jane was built around deceit. He masquerades as a gypsy fortune-teller to eavesdrop on her inner thoughts. He leads everyone, especially Jane, to believe that he'll marry Blanche Ingram and later tells her that, of course, he never intended to.

The lie was not that he intended to marry Blanche but that he never could have loved her. It was only after he'd tested Blanche by spreading the rumour that he was worth very much less than in fact he was that Blanche disappeared off the scene and he turned his attentions to Jane.

And while we're talking about money it's interesting to remember that Rochester was penniless until he married Bertha. It was her money that built Thornfield. So it was inevitable that Thornfield should be destroyed before the happy end of the novel. Nothing must be left of Bertha Mason. She symbolises his wicked side just as Jane symbolises, and was to become, his better half.

Rochester tells Jane that when he marries, Adéle will go to school

and she, Jane, must get a new situation. Indeed he's already found one for her—in Ireland. It's only after several pages of Jane's blubbering on about how much she'll miss him and how hard it'll be to be so far away from him does he turn it all inside out and tell her that she won't have to go after all for he means to marry *her*. The poor girl doesn't know whether she's coming or going – quite literally.

Quite naturally she expresses doubt as to his real intentions. He asks, "am I a liar in your eyes?" Luckily he doesn't give her time to answer for I think that she would in all honesty have had to say "yes".

So Jane eventually leaves Thornfield but she does so in a manner that is quite uncharacteristic of her normal practical good sense. I'd have expected her to throw herself on the mercy of the clergyman, Mr Wood. Surely he could have found some accommodation for her until, with the assistance of an excellent reference from Mr Rochester, she finds another situation.

But no, in the early morning she runs off she knows not where. She has only a pound in her purse and she takes the coach as far as that sum can take her. It's surprising that at £30 a year there was no money owing to her. Perhaps in all the excitement she forgot to ask.

After many privations she stumbles on the doorstep of the Rivers family. When asked her name she assumes an alias, Jane Elliot, another form of deceit. Her reasons were to 'avoid discovery'. Was she afraid of Rochester finding her and luring her back? Or was it to protect his good name?

Jane rejects St John's first proposal, but when he later presses it again she feels herself slipping towards weary acceptance. It's then that the voice of Rochester comes to her. It's no supernatural voice though, despite what she might claim. It comes from the inner workings of her mind as she concludes that she'd prefer to live with Rochester than as the wife of St John. Remember that as she runs back to Thornfield she has no knowledge of Bertha's death. As far as she knows nothing has changed.

In the final scene we see the last deception of the novel – a very gentle deception. Jane comes into the blind Rochester. At first she allows him to believe she's Mary, his maid. After some moments he recognises her voice and he's overjoyed. I think we can forgive Jane for this little deception.

And so the story ends happily – at least we hope so. They marry and have a son. Rochester regains some of his sight. And so his dark, deceitful side has been purged. But don't give Jane all the credit. I don't think she could've done it alone. It was only mad Bertha's final act that humbled Rochester. The refiner's fire was the burning Thornfield. The dross of his early life was removed. Only then was gentle Jane's influence able to remould him. I don't think he was guilty of deceit ever again. Jane now had the upper hand and she would make sure of that!

REFURBISHED VICTORIANA

An abridged version of a review of *Emma Brown*, by Clare Boylan, published by Little Brown in 2003.

The review, by John Mullan, appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* of Sep 19th 2003.

Some time between the publication of Villette in 1853 and her death in 185, Charlotte Brontë wrote two sketchy chapters of what was intended to be a new novel. The first chapter, narrated by a middle-aged widow called Mrs Chalfont, told of the arrival at the local "ladies' school" of a mysterious girl, Matilda. The second, oddly a third-person narrative, introduced a local gentleman, Mr Ellin. One of the prim sisters running the school recruits him as an adviser when Matilda's fees cease to be paid. The address given by her father when she was deposited is discovered to be false, as is his name. The girl has been abandoned and seems unwilling or unable to reveal her true identity. "As I read this little fragmentary sketch, I think of the rest", wrote Thackeray when he published the chapters in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860.

Clare Boylan has also thought of the rest and made out of the teasing opening a full-length novel, *Emma Brown*. It is carried forward, with considerable momentum, by the search for the girl's history; its title is what the character believes to be her real name (though, in suitably Victoria style, it turns out that she is herself

mistaken about her true parentage). We have a mystery story, but also a novel that will take us through the social layers of nineteenth-century England. From the northern county where Brontë sets her opening, we are taken to London where the solution to Emma Brown's mystery lies.

Boylan also includes in her novel material from an earlier Brontë fragment, "Willie Ellin", the story of the child who was to become Mr Ellin. Brontë abandoned this schematic tale of one brother's cruelty to another, but it returns here as part of the explanation of Emma's origins. In trying to identify her, Ellin (presented in Brontë's second chapter as a discerning but enigmatic character) recovers his own history. He discovers that he and his dastardly older brother were in fact responsible, many years earlier, for the impoverishment of Emma's mother, and therefore the subsequent abandonment of her daughter to the workhouse. The drawing of these connections is certainly characteristic of many Victorian novels, but you do feel the effort being made to stitch holy Brontë relics together.

Why attempt such an exercise? It is as if Brontë's intriguing fragments sanction a work of historical fiction. Here is a modern novel of Victorian England elaborated from Victorian DNA. There is research too. Boylan is conscientious with the texture of nineteenth-century observation (most of the action is set in 1851). She gives us much credible, often entertaining Victoriana: the clothes and the food, the ore of street hawkers and the preparations for the Great Exhibition. The substance of Emma's mystery, as imagined by Boylan, is taken from some of the darker areas of nineteenth-century social history. She sends her character onto the meanest streets. Biography has taught her about Brontë's interest in the hidden horrors of the metropolis, abut her visits to the Foundling Hospital and Newgate Prison. This licenses a tale of sexual exploitation and corruption. Destitute in London, Emma is only just saved from being sold as a child prostitute.

The implication of Boylan's afterword is that Brontë's "growing interest in social conditions in London" was the curiosity of a novelist as well as the inclination of a philanthropic Christian. She was about to take her fiction into new areas, to broach disturbing, even dangerous subjects. Yet there is also the thought that the modern novelist researches her history in order to get past Victorian proprieties – to do things that were not allowed to her predecessor. After all, however fearless Brontë undoubtedly was, it is difficult to believe that one of her novels would have featured a corrupt physician conducting an internal examination of a teenage girl, on behalf of procurers, o check that she was still a virgin. *Emma Brown* is candid about such things. Prostitution and paedophelia are prominent in this novel and are spoken of directly.

Boylan is able to relish some of the conventions of Victorian fiction: the inclusion of inset narratives; the exploitation of coincidence; the risking of sentimentality and melodrama, without giving in to them; the imagining of characters who understand their fates in Christian terms. All these are cleverly, enjoyably exploited.

Inevitably, however, the novelist's elaboration of her original makes the reader especially sensitive to style and diction. In the early chapters in particular, it is difficult not to ask, would Brontë have ever written that? Listen to Boylan's Isabel Chalfont, confiding in her reader: "You like a book. Silent revelation on a page pleases you better than a self-bolstering display of verbal spillage". The rhetoric is clearly imitated from Brontë, whose narrators draw their readers into the explanation of their reticence. Yet the wording is all wrong. "Spillage" feels like a word minted by television news, and surely Brontë would never have allowed her narrator the mixed metaphors of bolstering and spilling at once.

When she writes as Isabel Chalfont, Boylan forces these considerations on you by adopting a self-consciously Brontë-esque style. Here is Mrs Chalfont introducing you to her turbulent personal history, concealed behind an appearance of contented respectability. "Come into my garden now. Yes, I am a gardener too. Mine is an English garden … Serenity holds government in this spot. Indignation sleeps and regret is overgrown by honeysuckle and moss." Such sentences are designed to remind us of a nineteenth-century original, so we will inevitably notice those phrases and words that seem entirely modern. The reader stumbles on innocent words like "glamorous" or "socialite", wondering if they were ever available to Brontë. We wince when anachronisms speak of our latterday assumptions about how a person's true self might be revealed. We hear, for example, that one character is "in denial" and that another is "self-obsessed". Any doubts about the novelist's phraseology are further encouraged by Boylan's occasional incorporation of sections from Brontë's actual letters. If the novelist wants to preserve Brontë's voice, she is setting herself a difficult standard of authenticity.

Yet the real problem of the novel comes from its movement between different points of view. The problem is set by Brontë's own opening, which is divided between two incompatible narrative voices. Perhaps this represents a choice yet to be made. In a conversation with her husband about the fragment, which she had just read to him, Brontë remarked that she would probably rewrite it several times if she were ever to build on this beginning. Boylan cannot, of course, permit herself to revise her piece of authentic Brontë. So intermittently she gives her novel over to the first-person narrative of Mrs Chalfont, but in between times she seems to narrate from other viewpoints.

Occasionally, as in Brontë's second chapter, we get the perspective, when convenient, of the sharp-witted taciturn William Ellin. Often we are with Emma and given access to thoughts of which Mrs Chalfont can know nothing. When she runs away to London from her would-be-helpers, we are asked to experience her confusion and desperation with her. Via recollections of Mayhew and Gustav Doré, Boylan crowds the city streets with threats and horrors. Yet while we are to see this through Emma's eyes, we are not allowed to know the secret that she nurses. She goes to London on 'her search", but though we are told her unspoken emotions we are not allowed to know what this search is. Boylan wants you to understand that there is a secret – an explanation that Emma carries in her memory. There in a peculiar scene where her character, taking refuge in a confessional booth in a Catholic church, wakes from a troubled sleep to find herself exhorted to confess by a priest. She tells him that she has done 'Terrible things" – but cannot say more.

This providing and withholding of information feels like cheating. It is not as if Brontë herself never did this sort of thing. In *Villette* she has a narrator who, for all her confidences, neglects to tell the reader important facts until it suits her to do so. But Clare Boylan's psychological realism is of a modern variety. When Emma does eventually tell her story, in a 'letter" to Mrs Chalfont, we find that she has been shocked into amnesia about parts of her life. In the denouement, it is shown that the truth about Emma is not as terrible as she thinks. At the very end of the novel, in a thoroughly twenty-first-century manner, she is beginning to remember her own past. The repressed is gradually released. However Charlotte Brontë began her novel, it is difficult to believe that she would have ended quite like this.

EMMA BROWN By Clare Boylan

Little Brown, 439pp, $29.95 (pb)

Review by Debra Adelaide in the Sydney Morning Herald

Based on a novel fragment let by Charlotte Brontë, this encompasses questions of repression and identity so beloved of the Haworth writers. Forget much resemblance to Brontë's passionate subversive genius beyond the obvious (widows, orphaned girls, loners, outsiders) but it's an intriguing blend of mid-19th century sensibility with a modern conscience. The plot, more sturdy than the themes (of the bleeding heart variety, but true to Brontë's late interest in social justice issues), concerns the disappearance of Matilda from a girls' school. When she recovers her memory, she becomes Emma, who harbours a past too shameful to reveal even to our very distant, ironic narrator. To enjoy this novel, you need to avoid comparing Boylan with Brontë, and relish the atmosphere of seedy London contrasted with starchy rural life, all in the pursuit of a mystery.

FINISHING OFF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

A Review of Emma Brown by Clare Boylan (Little Brown £16.99, 439pp) by Penelope Lively

It appeared in the Sunday Times on 21 Sep 2003.

There is a well-worn school English exercise whereby children re dished up with the opening paragraph of a story and required to continue it. This tests their narrative skills, and, ideally, there should be a stylistic challenge as well. The sophisticated form of this is the completion of the fragment left by a leading writer. Charlotte Brontë' last piece of fiction was a couple of chapters of a novel, working-title Emma, which were published in the Cornhill Magazine after her death. Clare Boylan has bravely put her head well above the parapet by providing this version of the finished work. Here, of course, style is all: make the thing a travesty of he original author, particularly in such a hallowed instance, and you are going to be run out of town.

Boylan should be safe. The surviving Brontë words segue

elegantly into a voice which, if not Brontë, is a convincing reflection and, crucially, retains that persuasive narrative drive. The storyteller is here, and moreover, she is a storyteller with the proper shifts of mod and tone, and with brisk control over a stable of characters and varied backgrounds. Brontë's own setting of the scene is familiar territory: a genteel school for young ladies, at which a girl, lavishly equipped and apparently of wealthy origins, is left by a mysterious gentleman. But te fees are not subsequently paid, and inquiry reveals that the address given by this man does not exist, nor can he be traced. The child would see to be an impostor; a neat passage of dialogue hints at her future treatment by the enrage proprietress of the school.

Well-tried ingredients abound: children abandoned and exploited, young women struggling to survive in a society inimical to women, inscrutable figures who come and go, and whose motives are opaque. Boylan has chosen to home in on the exploitation of young girls, not, here, as governesses (although, yes, we do get an instance of that as well), but the darker practice of the abduction and sale of children into prostitution. Victorian London becomes the backdrop (more Dickens at points than Brontë, and, in fact, strictly speaking Mayhew, who appears among the authors acknowledgements) as Emma, the enigmatic child whose past is unknown to herself as it is to everyone else concerned, is sucked into the stews and preyed on by one villain after another (a trade that apparently continues to this day – *plus ça change* – with girls from Albania and Kosovo as the 21st century alternatives to the working-class children of then).

Emma is not working class, of course. We can be certain from the outset that she will turn out to have some tragic ad distinguished history, an indeed she does, but not before there is much suffering stoically endured, and so many twists and turns and revelations and about who did what and why that it is sometimes hard to keep abreast of things. Reader, I was quite bemused. There are fortuitous encounters at moments of crisis (which is fine, a properly Brontëan device) and the plotting, if a bit hectic, seems to work out nicely once on the home straight. And you want to know who Emma Really is – the essential test of success, along with that seminal matter of style. Would Brontë have engaged with the fetid world of Victorian child abuse? In an afterword, Boylan cites Brontë's growing interest in London social conditions of the day as her trigger for the plot: if liberties are taken, even a fairy central liberty, that seems fair enough if the product is convincing. And this one is, a 19th-cntury novel for today, with a creditable Brontëan flavour.

PARSONAGE IS RECREATED FOR BRONTË FILM

By Dalya Alberge, from The Times

The house in which the Rev Patrick Brontë and his extraordinary family lived for four decades in the 19th century is to be recreated on the Yorkshire moors for a British film.

The museum housed in the Brontë Parsonage at Haworth, where the family lived from 1820 to 1861, is also allowing the Oscar-winning director Marleen Gorris to reproduce original furniture and jewellery from its collection.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* were written in the house. The sisters' father and their brother, Branwell, also saw their works in print.

Alan Bentley, manager of the museum, confirmed that Ms Gorris, who won a best foreign language film Oscar in 1997 for Antonia's Line, will be given access to original material for a £7.5 million film. The film-makers will be able to reproduce the writing desk at which Charlotte wrote Jane Eyre, the horsehair sofa on which Emily is reputed to have died, and jewellery such as Charlotte's engagement ring, a bracelet made of her hair and a silver locket.

Filming in the parsonage itself would be a problem, "unless they can think of a clever way round the 1870s extension", Mr Bentley said.

The script has been written by Angela Workman, who has been researching her subject since 1995. The British Library, in London, gave her access to original Brontë literature. Ms Workman, whose writing credits include The Touchstone, for Warner Brother, said: "I've approached it in the same way as a biographer. I've tried to infuse the script with the same colours, tones and passion they expressed when they wrote. Audiences will hear the language of the books."

She said that being able to reproduce the family's possessions as props would give the film added authenticity. "There's some kind of inspiration from anything original," she said. "Something happens to your heart and the way you're drawn to the story."

The film will be as much about Branwell as the sisters. It will

contrast Charlotte's amb ition with the self-destruction of her brother, who was seen as the genius of he family.
"They were all equally precocious," Ms Workman said, "At ten they were reading political papers, literature, French novels. They had an incredible capacity for learning. As they grew older and Branwell was expected to make something of himself, that's when the divisions began. It wasn't a lack of ambition – it was as if he couldn't focus."

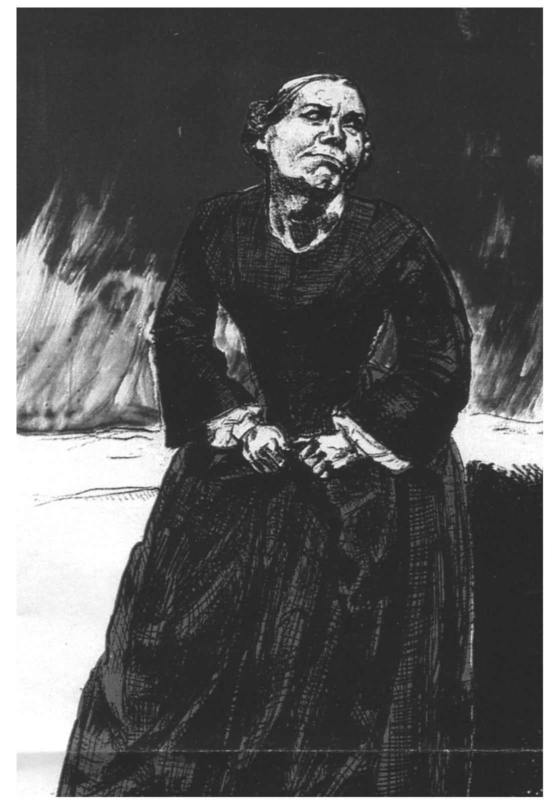
Brontë follows a romantic portrait, *Devotion*, in 1946 with Ida Lupino as Emily, Olivia de Havilland as Charlotte and Nancy Coleman as Anne. In 1979, Isabelle Adjani was cast in *Les Soeurs Brontë*.

PLAYTIME

An excerpt from an interview with artist Paula Rego by Louisa Buck, published in the Sunday Times magazine 18th October 2003

Paula Rego may be in her late sixties, and one of the most important artists working today, but there is nothing of the grand dame about this tiny vivacious figure with tousled hair, bird-bright eyes and wicked, snaggle-toothed grin. "My need to draw is very important," she says, "but you also have to play – I always like to play, and now I've got people to play with."

Right now, Rego is just emerging from a two-year preoccupation with the tale of Jane Eyre which she considers to be "the best story of a ll time". But, of course, Rego's version is very different. The passionate, changeable creature we see portrayed on the walls of her studio is not the mousy Jane Eyre as we know her, but a much more complicated and contradictory individual, the product of Rego's imagination as much as Charlotte Brontë's.
Crucially, Jane Eyre is no victim. "I'm making her stronger, I'm avenging her – she's admirable, and they treat her s badly." In one work, Jane's fists clench and her face crumples and grimaces as the flames of Thornfield Hall leap up in the background. "It's called Come to Me – he's calling her, but she has her doubts. It's not such a good deal," Rego explains. Another lithograph offers a perversely Rego-esque take on Jane's innocent immersion in Bewicks Hisory of British Birds, as a giant pelican tenderly inserts its beak into Jane's rapturously opened mouth. "It's very sexy", says Rego.



***Come To Me*, 2001-2002, depicts Emma hearing Rochester's voice**

Paula Rego's exhibition Jane Eyre and Other Stories ran until 22nd November 2003 at the Marlborough Gallery in London.

***Bertha*, 2003, depicts Ana Lopes as Mrs Rochester with a toy monkey**

THE AUSTRALIAN BRONTË ASSOCIATION

A talk given in August 2003 at a gathering of several literary societies at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts

The Australian Brontë Association, like Australia itself, had a colonial history. It all started back in 1893, when the Brontë Society was formed in the U.K., with the blessing of Arthur Bell Nicholls, Charlotte's husband, who was then still alive.

In the early years there were many American members, and one or two from other countries, such as Canada, South Africa, Holland, France and even Latvia. Somehow we Australians didn't seem to hear about what was going on, on the other side of the world for quite some time. In fact it wasn't until 1919 that the first Australian joined – a certain Miss Davis from Toowoomba. But she only lasted 4 years. Then in 1928 Robert Kelly, from Sydney, joined and for the next 9 years he was the only Australian member.

You see, I've been doing some research within the *Brontë Society Transactions*. Until 1966 they published the names and addresses of all their members, and it makes interesting reading. By 1966 there were 1302 members of the society, of which only 11 lived in Australia, and only 2 in Sydney. Clearly it wasn't yet possible to have a local branch.

Things seemed to change in 1985. In that year Sydney University's Centre for Continuing Education managed to attract 65 people to a *Weekend in the Country with the Brontës*, at the Victoria & Albert Guesthouse in Blackheath. So clearly interest in the Brontës in the Sydney region was growing. Perhaps, now, local meetings might be possible.

In that year, Fergus McClory was appointed the Australian Representative of the Brontë Society and he called together a meeting in his home. The first Australian meeting of the Brontë Society took place on February 28th 1986, with 12 members. I was one of them.

Over the next 11 years we had one or two meetings a year. There was no committee and no local funding. Every decision had to go through the headquarters of the Brontë Society in Haworth and by 1997 many of us were finding this unworkable. Besides we wanted to have more activities and to carry out publicity. But this would require a committee and freedom to make our own decisions.

The Brontë Society had served us well but, just as Australia reached the stage where it needed to be independent from the old country, so it was with the Brontë lovers in Sydney. Christine Alexander urged us into a bloodless coup, and a unilateral declaration of independence was made.

Haworth didn't mind and so with the blessing of the Brontë Society, we formed an independent organization – the Australian Brontë Association. The Brontë Society still has a presence in Australia, and as well as being the president of the ABA I happen also to be the current Australian Representative of the Brontë Society.

The two organizations complement one another. By belonging to the Brontë Society you can support the important work they do in maintaining the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth and purchasing letters and other items of Brontë interest.

By belonging to the Australian Brontë Association you support the local activities. We meet 5 to 6 times a year and we produce a twice-yearly newsletter. It's quite a good little newsletter, if I say so myself, but it doesn't pretend to the academic quality of *Brontë Studies*, the journal published by the Brontë Society.

We currently meet, on certain Saturday mornings, right here in the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts and at these meetings we generally have a speaker, sometimes from within our membership, but more often than not, it's someone from one of the universities or an author of a book related to the Brontës.

We think we strike a nice balance with the talks between being academically respectable on the one hand, and being informal and down to earth on the other. Although we have a few academics among our members, most of us are simply interested amateurs – fans of the Brontës. And we make sure our university speakers understand this.

In addition we occasionally hold activities in other places, at other times. We generally have one meeting a year in my home. And in 2001 we went away for a

weekend with the Three Sisters … at the Three Sisters, in Katoomba. We're having another such weekend this year at the end of October.

Let me tell you of some of the things we've done in the last five and a half years so that you can see if we're your cup of tea.

We've had a couple of talks focussing on Emily and Anne and various talks focussing on several of the Brontë novels and we've watched some of the Brontë novels on video. These were a lot of fun and are probably the sort of things you might have expected us to do. But some more unusual topics have been *The Health of the Brontës*, *The Art of the Brontës*, *Sadism and the Brontës*, *The Church of England in the Age of the Brontës*, the novel *Villette*'s indebtedness to a series of cartoons in Punch Magazine and *Charlotte Brontë and DH Lawrence*.

Christine Alexander has spoken to us about her experiences of editing the Juvenilia, and also about an album of poems and pictures that she discovered recently to which many of the pupils of Roe Head School, including Charlotte Brontë, had contributed. So we're kept right up to the cutting edge of Brontë scholarship.

The author of *Coldwater*, a novel loosely based on the Brontës, but set in Australia, came to talk to us last year. Next year we'll have another Australian writer, who's based his novel *Cedar House* on *Wuthering Heights*.

An interesting excursion last year was to Ebenezer, on the Hawkesbury, where there's a little chapel that was built before any of the Brontë sisters were even born. We had a picnic, followed by a service of celebration for the lives of the Brontës, like they do in Haworth each year. And we finished the day with some dramatic readings of scenes from the novels that take place in a church.

Over the years we've had quite a few dramatic readings, mostly at our annual Christmas lunch. This year the lunch will become a Brontë Brunch and it will be held here on the last Saturday in November.

Our membership is small by comparison with the Jane Austen Society. We like being small, because it gives us a different character to the huge Jane Austen Society. We'd like to be a bit bigger, though. Currently we have just over 40 members, with about 25 coming to each meeting. So, if you're interested you can ask me later how to join. Of course you don't have to join – you can just come along to see if you like it.

Well, that's who we are, and that's where we've come from. What I'd like to do now is to very briefly look at the connections between the Brontës and the other two authors represented here today.

George Henry Lewes, author and reviewer, and husband of George Eliot, wrote to Currer Bell (that was Charlotte's pseudonym) to say that he intended to review *Jane Eyre*. In so doing, he warned her to 'beware of Melodrama' and 'adhere to the real', suggesting that she ought not to 'stray far from the ground of experience'.

Well, having read Lewes's review, Charlotte wrote to thank him for his generous treatment, adding an explanation for her defence of the imaginative over the real.

'I mean to observe your warning about being careful how I undertake new works … if ever I do write another book, I think I will have nothing of what you call 'melodrama', I think so, but I am not sure. I think too I will endeavour to follow the counsel which shines out of Miss Austen's 'mild eyes'; 'to finish more, and be more subdued'; but neither am I sure of that."

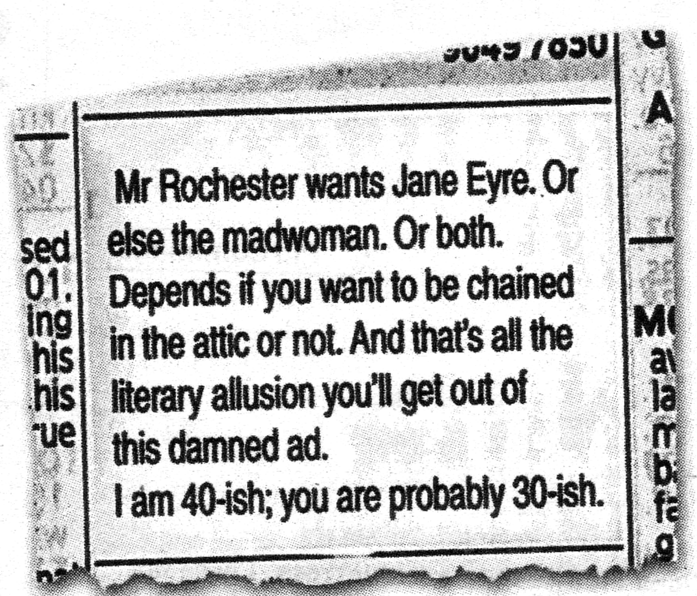
Until Lewes suggested it, Charlotte had never read any Jane Austen. But, then she read *Pride and Prejudice* and having finished it, she wrote:

"An accurate daguerrotyped portrait of a common-place face, a carefully-fenced, highly cultivated garden with neat borders and delicate flowers – but no glance of a bright vivid physiognomy – no open country – no fresh air – no blue hill – no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses."

Let's now hear what she had to say about Jane Austen's *Emma*.

She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well, there is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting: she ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound: the Passions are perfectly unknown to her … Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet; what she sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study, but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through what is the unseen seat of Life and the sentient of Death – this Miss Austen ignores … Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete, and rather insensible (not senseless) woman, if this is heresy – I cannot help it."

So Charlotte didn't think much of Jane Austen, I'm afraid. Which is a pity, because over half of our


Mr Rochester wants Jane Eyre. Or else the madwoman. Or both. Depends if you want to be chained in the attic or not. And that's all the literary allusion you'll get out of this damned ad.
I am 40-ish; you are probably 30-ish.

members think so well of Jane that we belong to the Jane Austen Society as well.

Rather fewer of us belong to the Byron Society, which is a shame. Now that I'm retired and hopefully will have a bit more time I intend to sample Byron and his society here in Sydney. And I venture to say that if they were alive today both Charlotte and Emily would have been staunch members of the Byron Society. They adored him! Especially Emily.

Let me quote from F. B. Pinion's paper 'Byron and *Wuthering Heights*' that appeared in the *Brontë Society Transactions* in 1993.

The greatest literary influence on *Wuthering Heights* was that of Byron. It was from him more than from life or intuition or any other source that Emily Brontë gained those psychological insights which powerfully influenced, and validated, she must have thought, Heathcliff's almost inhumanly criminal and relentless pursuit of revenge.

In their adolescence the Brontë children read Byron's poetry as well as whatever biographies of him they could lay their hands on. All this must have become part of their imaginative apparatus. Pinion makes a strong case for Byron's *Manfred* to have been strongly in Emily's mind as she wrote *Wuthering Heights*.

Well, this isn't supposed to be a lecture on Byron and the Brontës or Austen and the Brontës. I just wanted to point out how you can't study one writer in isolation. You're constantly bumping up against others who influenced them, or were influenced by them.

Which just goes to show that it's hard to belong to just one literary society – these writers are so interconnected.

Let me finish by mentioning a connection between Jane Austen, the Brontës and Lord Byron in which I have a personal interest. You see, many years ago I wrote a series of little mathematics books for A-level students in the U.K. They were published by John Murray. I remember sitting in the little room, with a domed skylight, at the rear of John Murray's Georgian premises in Albemarle Street, London and thinking "Jane Austen might have sat here", because her novel *Emma* was published by the first John Murray. As I later discovered it would have been more likely that Henry, her brother, would have come to Albemarle St to attend to the business end of the novel. Still, it gave me a buzz to think that I shared the same publisher as Jane Austen.

Whether or not she ever met John Murray is debatable. But there's no doubt that Lord Byron did. They weren't just publisher and client but very good friends. Indeed Murray was present that day when Byron sent his diaries up the chimney in flames, in that very house in Albemarle St. Indeed if I remember the story correctly (and Jacqueline could set me right) it was John Murray himself who committed these papers to the fire, under Byron's instructions.

So Jane Austen and Byron used the same publisher. What about Charlotte Brontë? Well, she used Smith, Elder & Co and I discovered, last time I visited Albemarle St, that John Murray had bought them out, so even Charlotte has now become one of the family.

And family, it is. John Murray's, though one of the leading British publishers, is still a family business. It's run by John Murray the fourth, or is it the fifth. His son is the next John Murray and his parents are hoping that he will take over the business one day.

[I've since heard that this is not to be and that this noble publishing house is being bought out by a multi-national company with the archives going to some university library.]

Brontë, Austen and Byron – one big happy family. And that's just what the literary societies of Sydney are – one big happy family. The wonderful experiences we all have by studying our favourite writers, and the friends we make, are very similar.

ABA MEETINGS FOR 2004

MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AT:
The Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, 280 Pitt St Sydney
(near Town Hall Station)

Note that the meetings this year start slightly earlier than in 2003.

Saturday FEBRUARY 7th 10:30am
COWBOYS AND INDIANS: A double-barrelled adventure.

(1) **Ann Lock** will speak about the influence of James Fenimore Cooper on Charlotte Brontë.
(2) Team quiz (the Indians vs the Cowboys) where we fire Jane Eyre questions at each other.
A short AGM will be held at the beginning of this meeting.

Saturday APRIL 3rd 10:30am
VILLETTE 150 YEARS ON

Last year marked the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Villette*.
Christopher Cooper will share some insights he gained on the novel when he took part in the Brontë tour to Brussels last year.

Saturday MAY29th 10:30am
CEDAR HOUSE AND *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Poet **Edwin Wilson** will talk about the themes and genesis of his "Australian Wuthering Heights", *Cedar House* (Woodbine Press, 2001), with references back to the original *Wuthering Heights*.
Other recent books: *The Mullumbimby Kid*: a portrait of the poet as a child and *Anthology: Collected Poems 1967 - 2002*, with an introduction by Professor John S., Ryan (Kardoorir Press, Armidale 2002).

Saturday SEPTEMBER 4th 10:30am
A YEAR IN CAMBRIDGE

Our patron, **Professor Christine Alexander**, will report to us on the Brontë research that she is carrying out in her sabbatical year mid 2003 - mid 2004.

Saturday OCTOBER 30th 10:30am
BRONTËS AND RELIGION

Annette Harman will speak on religious education and practice in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *Wuthering Heights*.

Saturday DECEMBER 4th A BRONTË CHRISTMAS

As usual details as to venue and time will be announced closer to the time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
Contact Christopher Cooper 9804-7473 or chris@maths.mq.edu
website: www.maths.mq.edu.au/~chris/bronte/aba.htm