LITERARY FATHERS AND FATHERS IN THE BRONTË NOVELS

A talk given by Michelle Cavanagh on 13th July 2019

What sort of father was Patrick Brontë? Mrs Gaskell did not paint him in a very favourable light. He certainly seems to have been a strange mixture of being very supportive to his children as well as being remote from them, at least that's the picture painted of him. And to what extent did his daughters' experience of their father colour the Brontës' descriptions of fathers in their novels?

Patrick Brontë was born twelve years before the French Revolution, the defining "watershed cultural moment" of the 18th century in a two roomed, white-washed thatched peasant cottage at Emdale in

the parish of Drumballyroney, Country Down, Ireland on 17 March 1777, the first of ten children born to Hugh Brunty, a farm labourer, and Alice McClory. Despite the demands which an ever growing family had on the family's meagre resources four years after Patrick's birth the family moved into a large, two storey stone-built house; they were now a respectable family. So Patrick's own father was a great example to his son, an example which no doubt helped to shape his son's character.

As Juliet Barker points out in her huge tome The Brontës: "Hugh Brunty may have been only a 'poor farmer' but he was not the impoverished peasant of Brontë legend. It is a further indication of the fact that the Brontës were not in desperate financial straits that Patrick escaped the customary fate of the eldest child in a large family. Instead of being put to work on his father's farm or apprenticed out so that he could make a contribution to the family income, he was allowed to remain at school much longer than was usual at the time." Later in his life, Patrick formally changed the spelling of his surname from Brunty to Brontë.

Many years later, when Mrs Gaskell wrote her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* Patrick gave her a brief account of his early years in Ireland explaining how he opened a public school, then became a tutor in a gentleman's family before, in 1802, travelling to Cambridge to study theology at St Johns College, receiving his BA degree in 1806. Not only was he of humble birth but the fact that he went on to study in an exclusive English university speaks volumes for the sort of man he was.

In 1812, a 25-year-old Patrick met and married 29-year-old Maria Branwell who had been charmed by her "dear Saucy Pat" as she referred to him in her letters. By April 1820 Maria and Patrick were the parents of six children who were all born in Thornton; Maria in 1814, Elizabeth in 1815, Charlotte in 1816, Patrick – always know as Branwell – in 1817, Emily in 1818 and Anne born in January 1820. The family then all moved into the parsonage at Haworth where Patrick took up the post of resident parish priest. But Patrick's wife Maria, who was from a comfortably well off Cornish family, did not live long enough to enjoy family life in Haworth; by September 1821 she had died of uterine cancer. At the time, Anne, the youngest of her six children was only 18 months old.

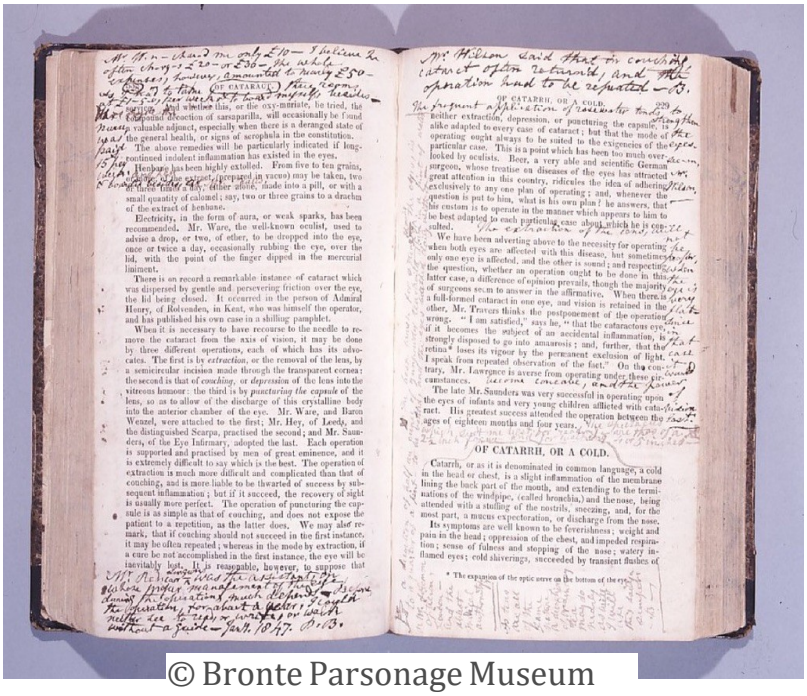
Little wonder that Patrick Brontë did his best to find himself a wife to help him care for the children, although it seems to me a little insensitive to propose to Elizabeth Firth just three months after Maria's death, a proposal she refused. And while Maria's sister Elizabeth Branwell – known as Aunt Branwell – stayed on to help with the children after her sister's death Patrick was in no position to propose marriage to her as marriage to a deceased wife's sister was then against the law.

Despite the fact that Aunt Branwell took responsibility for the welfare and education of the girls while her brother-in-law tutored his only son Branwell, Aunt Branwell's dutiful devotion to her stern practical religious nature meant that she was no substitute for a loving mother. This position appears to have been filled in the early years by the eldest daughter Maria. Her father noted that she had "a powerfully intellectual mind" which he immediately began to cultivate. Patrick took real pleasure in reading the newspaper aloud and discussing the topics of the day with this precocious daughter. She, in turn, would take her new knowledge to the nursery, read the newspapers and entertain her five younger motherless siblings.

By the age of forty-four, Patrick Brontë had found himself responsible not only for the busy Haworth parish church, with pastoral responsibility for five nearby moorland villages, but also for a young family in need of nurture and education. While Patrick rose to the challenge to take care of them without the help of their mother, he admitted to his friend John Buckworth that "oppressive grief sometimes lay heavy on me and that there were seasons when an affectionate, agonising something sickened my whole frame".

Despite his onerous responsibilities, as Juliet Barker pointed out "Most biographers would have us believe that their childhood was no childhood; no toys, no children's books, no playmates; only newspapers to read and their own precocious vivid imagination to amuse them." Certainly Patrick subscribed to 'The Leeds Inteligencer' (one of the first regional papers in Great Britain) while Aunt Branwell subscribed to Frasers Magazine and they also had access to Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine and it was the stories in these publications which did indeed fuel his children's imagination, becoming ideas in their

Juvenilia. Amongst Patrick's many books in his library, which the children were encouraged to read, was a collection of both Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron which were also amongst the inspiration for some of the characters and landscape descriptions in the Juvenilia of Charlotte and Branwell and Emily and Anne. And like the young Jane Eyre the Brontë children delighted in Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds*.



Another book which Patrick Brontë owned and annotated when he or any family members were sick was *Modern Domestic Medicine* by Dr Thomas J Graham and published in 1826. Here we see it opened at the pages relating to cataracts, catarrh and colds.

It was an extraordinary cultural legacy Patrick Brontë bequeathed to his children. His interest in nature, his taste in literature and writing practice, his love of art and music, his military and political interests, and his religious beliefs can be seen to be mirrored in the lives of his children. Patrick's own verse typically proclaims the beauty of nature as a manifestation of God:

> With heart enraptured, oft have I surveyed,
> The vast, and bounteous works, that God has made.
> The tinkling rill, the floods astounding roar,
> The river's brink, and ocean's frothy shore,

Christine Alexander in *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës* states that it was also likely the Brontës had access to the valuable library of their fathers parishioners at Ponden Hall and that they borrowed books from the Keighley Mechanics Institute Library. And of course, many years later, when she became a published author Charlotte's publishers Smith Elder sent regular packages of new publications to her.

Patrick Brontë's liberal nurture of his children can be seen as part of the movement to cultivate the mind and nourish the imagination. If anything distinguishes Patrick Brontë's parenting it is his commitment to the power of education — the right kind of education, based on the best that has been written and thought — to mould and change lives. In this philosophy of life he was one of many fathers in the first half of the nineteenth century whose own lives had been shaped by the "grace of culture" propagated not only in poetry of the period but in influential journals such as the aforementioned *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, read regularly by the Brontës and known affectionately in numerous households as simply "Maga". For the twelve year-old Charlotte Brontë, Maga was "the most able periodical there is" a judgment that must surely echo that of her father.

For a short time in 1823 his two older daughters, Maria and Elizabeth, went to school at Crofton Hall near Wakefield; but when Patrick Brontë heard of the establishment of the less expensive Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge a year later, and keen that his daughters received an education despite his limited means, he immediately secured places for his four older daughters. The school came well recommended, with eminent patrons like Hannah More, William Wilberforce and the Revd Charles Simeon. In less than a year, however, Maria became seriously ill with consumption exacerbated by unhealthy conditions at the school, and soon after Elizabeth also succumbed to illness; both children were brought home but died in quick succession in May and June 1825. The distraught father had already removed Charlotte and Emily from the school and Cowan Bridge Clergy Daughters' School later became Lowood School in Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre while Maria became Helen Burns in the novel. Having home schooled his son Branwell from 1824 it was not until 1831 that he would again send a daughter away to boarding school. Until then he educated his children himself at home, sharing teaching duties with Aunt Branwell.

Lessons were an integral part of life in the Brontë household. Patrick gave instruction to his children at regular times each day, "adapted to their respective ages and capacities" but he expected them to take responsibility for managing the outcomes. They were encouraged to commit their lessons to memory and they did so by discussing, playing and weaving new information into their latest stories and journals. This was a far cry from the dull reciting of numbers and grammar practised in most schools at the time and satirised by Dickens in Hard Times. For Patrick Brontë reading and learning were the key to success, and his rapid rise through the ranks of society reflects the way he used his own intelligence and determination, all of which he passed on to his children.

It was Mrs Gaskell who set the trend describing the Brontë children as "grave and silent beyond their years'" quoting their mother's nurse who Patrick had dismissed from the Brontë household for drunkenness and who

bore a grudge because of this, wreaking havoc whenever she could. While she sounds somewhat like Mrs Gamp in Dickens novel Martin Chuzzlewit it is easy to understand the gravity the Brontë children must have felt following the death of their mother and two older sisters.

But the sisters Nancy and Sarah Garrs, who worked at the Parsonage, disputed what Elizabeth Gaskell said in her biography, in which she stated that the children had nothing to eat but potatoes for their dinner. In a letter to Mrs Gaskell Patrick pointed out that such an assertion was "the principal mistake in the memoir" which was backed up by his cook who said the children had meat to eat every day of their lives. References in Brontë letters and diary notes confirm that the Brontë children's diet consisted of oatmeal porridge for breakfast, meat, vegetables and a milk pudding or fruit pie for dinner and bread and butter with fruit preserve for tea.

"…those who knew Patrick well, including his friends and servants, did not recognise him in Mrs Gaskell's portrait: the words they used to describe him were uniformly 'kind', 'affable', 'considerate' and 'genial'."

Many stories given to Elizabeth Gaskell about Patrick and the early life of the Brontë children came from the gossip Janet Kay-Shuttleworth, details of which Gaskell detailed in a letter she wrote to her friend Catherine Winkworth: "Such a life as Miss B's I never heard before Lady K S described her home to me as in a village of a few grey stone houses perched up of the north side of a break moor" The fact is that Haworth was not a backwater on the edge of desolation which Gaskell described in her biography but a prosperous industrial town. Following lots of other gossipy descriptions Gaskell's letter to Catherine Winkworth finishes with "All this Lady K S told me." When she did eventually meet Patrick Elizabeth Gaskell wrote in another letter to a friend "He was very polite and agreeable to me, paying rather elaborate old fashioned compliments, but I was sadly afraid of him in my utmost soul."

It was Lady Kay-Shuttleworth's husband Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth who had introduced Charlotte Brontë to Elizabeth Gaskell. The Kay-Shuttlewohs lived at Gawthorpe Hall which was twelve miles across the moors from the Brontë Parsonage. Once Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth discovered that

the author of Jane Eyre was a near neighbour he went out of his way to ingratiate himself with her. And while Elizabeth Gaskell despised Sir James Kay- Shuttleworth she certainly wasn't averse to accepting his hospitality.

Elizabeth Gaskell gave a "highly romanticised view of Charlotte's home and background, full of half truths and downright untruths and portraying Patrick as a strange half mad husband who drove his wife to an early death, sawed up chairs and burnt hearth rugs in fits of temper." inaccuracies she reluctantly removed in the third edition of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

William Dearden, a Keighley school master and friend of both Patrick and Branwell Brontë was reported in the Bradford Observer on 27 June 1861 to have said: "We are led to infer from Mrs Gaskell's narrative, that their father…did not manifest much anxiety about their physical and mental welfare". Dearden disputed this assertion stating that their "father watched over his little bereaved flock with truly paternal solicitude and affection" and was a "constant guardian and instructor" who took a lively interest in all their innocent amusements. Dearden furiously attacked Mrs Gaskell for her defamatory statements about Patrick saying the he was a 'venerable clergyman" whom she'd "tarred and feathered by the malice of an ignorant country gossip."

At the same time Gaskell did actually quote in her biography details which Patrick wrote to her about on 24 July 1855: "When mere children, as soon as they could read and write, Charlotte and her brother and sisters, used to invent and act little plays of their own in which the Duke of Wellington – my daughter Charlotte's hero – was sure to come off the conquering hero." Patrick went on to say, – again quoted in Gaskell's biography – "When the argument got warm, and rose to its height, as their mother was then dead, I sometimes had to come in as arbitrator, and settle the dispute according to the best of my judgement."

Patrick admitted that he saw their rising talents and that "As they had few opportunities, of being in learned, and polished society in their retired country situation they formed a little society amongst themselves – with which they seemed content and happy."

Mrs Gaskell's biography not only paints Patrick in a bad light it also confines Charlotte's transgressive nature to a version of Victorian female victimhood. Gaskell understood the value of domesticity or at least the appearance of it which no doubt was the reason that she didn't mention Charlotte's infatuation with Monsieur Heger even thought she knew all about it and even travelled to Brussels to find out details for herself. Such disclosures weren't the sort of information which Victorians would have expected of the revered author of *Jane Eyre*.

As June Foley pointed out in a 1997 article published in Modern Language Studies, entitled *The Life of Charlotte Brontë and Some Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell* from which I've already quoted, Foley wrote, and I quote:

“In the biography Gaskell portrayed Charlotte Brontë much as Gaskell publicly portrayed herself – as an ‘angel in the house’ turned totally non-threatening ‘authoress’ subordinate to father … Evidently, as a Victoria woman, one quality Gaskell could not acknowledge in Brontë was a quality she could not admit in herself – even perhaps to herself – enormous writerly ambition.”

Before the Industrial Revolution, most fathers worked on or near the home as farmers or village craftsmen, and their children would have worked alongside them from an early age. The Industrial Revolution, which began in the 18th century, saw agricultural societies became more industrialised and urban.

The railways, the cotton gin, electricity and other inventions permanently changed society and the role of fathers changed dramatically removing fathers’ work from the home as the cult of motherhood began to monopolise parenting.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, as small farms were consolidated under large estates and home craftsmanship gradually shifted to factories, work began to move away from the home, and fathers had less opportunity to educate, train, and interact with their children.

As Natalie McKnight notes in the introduction in *Fathers in Victorian Fiction* fathers fascinate us in fiction as in real life. The mysteries of their identities, their psychological impact, their powerful presence even in absence, their shifting roles over time, and their symbolic link to paternal institutions such as church and state make the activity of father figures better understood in our cultures, histories, and ourselves. Naturally the novels of this period reflect the shifts in father roles and the anxieties these shifts produced, while also drawing on father anxieties dating back to Oedipus and the Hebrew Bible.

There was a growing disillusionment with paternal authorities such as the church and state which yielded memorable portrayals of fathers from the best novelists of the age. Victorian authors as well as the Brontës included Dickens, Gaskell, Trollope, Eliot, Hardy, Elizabeth Sewall (English author of religious and educational texts) and Mary Augusta Ward who responded to these tensions in their lives and in their fiction.
(British author born in Hobart, Tasmania who wrote under her married name of Mrs Humphrey Ward and who worked to improve education for the poor, later becoming the founding President of the Womens National Anti-Suffrage League)

The stern Victorian father cliché activity persisted, but it was countered by imaginative, involved, albeit faulty and surrogate fathers. Traditionally, fathers were breadwinners and disciplinarians. This poses questions that are still relevant today: What does it mean to be a good father? And, with distrust in patriarchal authorities continuing to increase, are there any sources of authority left that one can trust? Nevertheless, on the whole today’s fathers are

far more eager to take on the job of fatherhood and are determined to be less distant and more hands-on than their own fathers were.

While many 19th century fathers had diminishing contact with their children, this wasn't the case for Patrick who lived with, and exerted an influence over his children throughout their lives, Patrick Brontë's profession, his situation as a widower, and his constant presence at home in his study (when he was not busy with parish visits, services and meetings) meant that he had more opportunities than other working fathers of the Victorian period to see and interact with his children. He had a profound effect on the creative and spiritual development of his children and the early depictions of Patrick as a tyrannical Victorian father were unfair mischaracterisations that did not do justice to his loving and close involvement in his children's lives.

On 30 July 1857, four months after the publication of The Life of Charlotte Brontë, Patrick Brontë wrote to the biographer Elizabeth Gaskell revealing his awareness of his own character and the influence he had had on his children: "I do not deny that I am somewhat eccentrick. Had I been numbered amongst the calm, sedate, concentric men of the world, I should not have been As I am, and I should, in all probability, never have had such children as mine have been"

These were the words of a man of courage and conviction, a man who had suffered the loss of a wife and all six of his children and yet could still view his failings with clarity and his remarkable legacy with pride. He exerted such a profound influence over his children throughout their lives; his interest in the beauties of the natural world which he saw as a manifestation of God, was a belief he passed on to his children who shared his passion for nature. While Patrick Brontë was a obviously a product of his time much of Elizabeth Gaskell's portrait of him was very negative and extremely unfair.

So how did Charlotte, Emily and Anne portray fathers in their novels? Fathers don't really figure in any major way in most of their novels as many of the heroines are either fatherless, loose their father in the early stages of the novel or don't play much of a part of the story.

Nevertheless there <u>are</u> father figures in the novels, a major exception being Wuthering Heights which is full of examples of different parenting styles that display the effects that they have on characters throughout the novel.

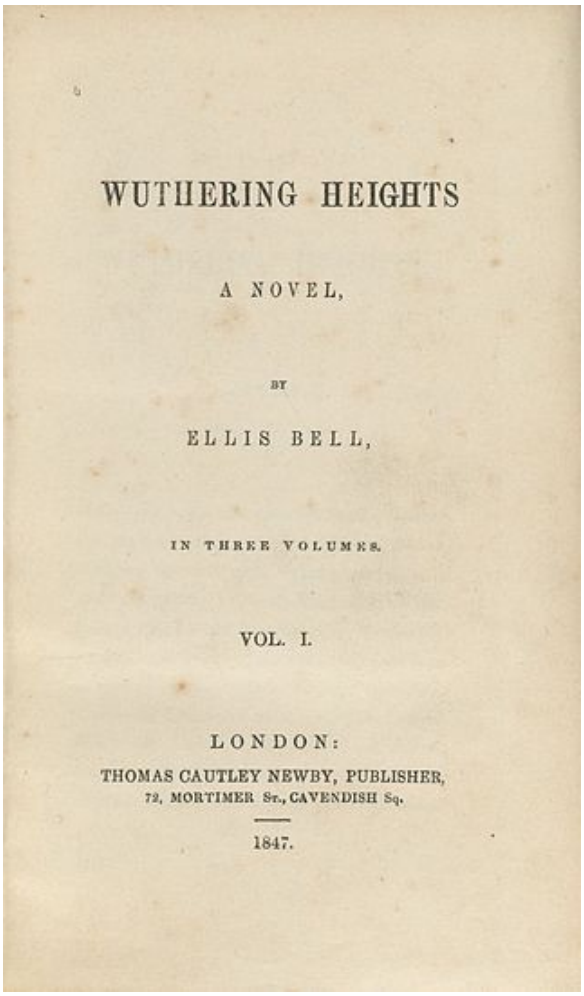
We learn that Mr. Earnshaw, the owner of Wuthering Heights lived with his son Hindley and younger daughter Catherine. On a trip to Liverpool, Earnshaw encounters a homeless boy, described as a "dark- skinned gypsy in aspect" who he adopts naming him Heathcliff. Hindley feels that Heathcliff has supplanted him in his father's affections and becomes bitterly jealous. Catherine and Heathcliff become friends and spend hours each day playing on the moors.

Years later Hindley Earnshow, when he becomes a father, is a terrible uninvolved parent to Hareton, simply choosing not to acknowledge or love his son. His actions no doubt brought about by his earlier feelings that his own father loved Heathcliff much more then him. Heathcliff was something of a father figure to Hareton, setting rules for him but treating him like a servant.

Edgar Linton on the other hand is much more of an authoritarian parent. While strict and very protective he is also full of love and kindness for his daughter.

The Brontës grew up in an era when husbands were entitled to keep the earnings of a woman they had divorced; children over seven years of age were always placed into the custody of the husband whatever the circumstances behind the divorce (which was very difficult to obtain) and a husband could legally keep his wife imprisoned if she refused to have sex with him.

Anne Brontë was no doubt unwilling to accept that women were in any way inferior to men and an incident which took place in 1841 was probably instrumental in giving her the idea to write *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.


WUTHERING HEIGHTS

A NOVEL,

BY

ELLIS BELL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

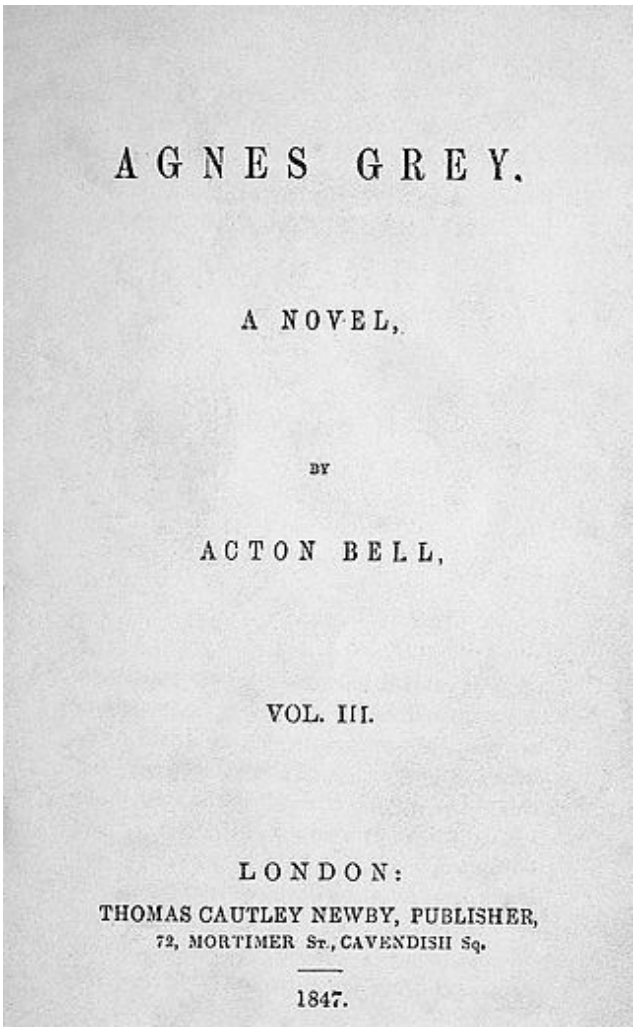
LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,

72, MORTIMER ST., CAVENDISH SQ.

1847.

Mrs Collins – who was married to John Collins, assistant curate to the Reverend Busfield of Keighley – sought Patrick Brontë's advise as to what to do in relation to her husband, who was a gambler and a drinker who beat his wife and children. Patrick told her to leave her husband and take the children with her, advise which she acted on. Six years later Charlotte wrote to Ellen Nussey that Mrs Collins has "triumphed over the hideous disease" and was running a boarding house in Manchester. So this incident, which Nick Holland reported in In Search of Anne Brontë, together with the situation the family were experiencing with Branwell's drinking and drug taking stands out as radical for the time in which *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was written and published in 1848.



AGNES GREY.

A NOVEL,

BY

ACTON BELL,

VOL. III.

LONDON:
THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
72, MORTIMER ST., CAVENDISH SQ.

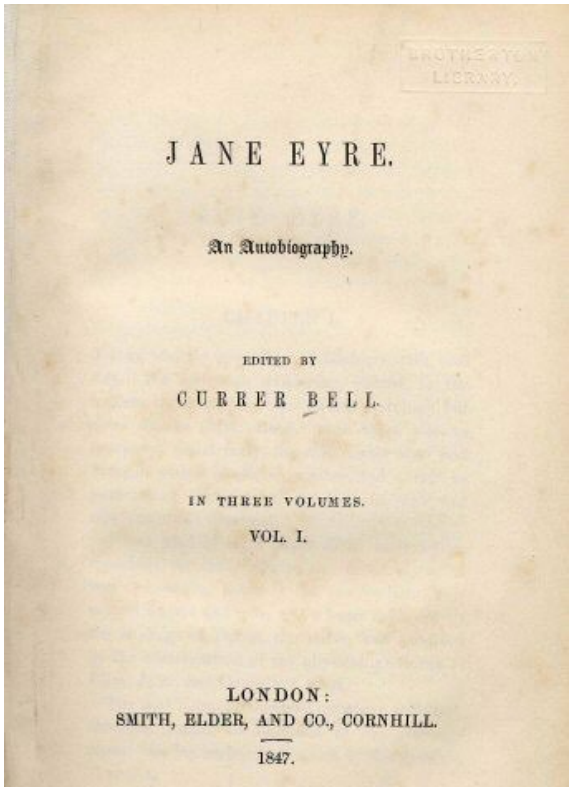
1847.

Anne's debut novel is Agnes Grey. Both scholars and her sister Charlotte suggest this novel is autobiographical with strong parallels to the events in Anne's own life as an governess. In the novel Agnes' parents, a Minister of Religion of modest means whose wife left her wealthy family and married for love is doubtless based on Annes's parents. Despite the fact that Anne never knew her mother she must have learnt such facts from her siblings and father. The plot of the novel - published in 1847 allowed Anne to deal with the issues of oppression and abuse of women as governesses and followed Anne's own experiences as a governess of the Ingram children at Blake Hall – which becomes Wellwod in the novel - and the Robinsons of Thorp Green which becomes Horton Lodge. Nevertheless Anne's experiences as governess were not all negative. Indeed it was during her time as governess to the Robinson children that, in the summer of 1840 Anne first accompanied the family on their yearly trip to Scarborough where she was to later die and is now buried. But despite all the grief Anne endured with regards to Branwell's affair with Mrs Robinson – if that's indeed what it was – Bessie and Mary Robinson were to remain friends with Anne visiting her in December 1848 which Charlotte wrote to Ellen Nussey about.

The first of Charlotte Bronte's novels which was published, *Jane Eyre*, appeared in 1847. Jane, the main character in the novel was orphaned as a baby so the predominant father figure in the novel is Edward Fairfax Rochester whose mistress Céline was the mother of Adèle Varens Rochester's ward who lives at Thornfield. While Rochester states that he isn't Adèle's father because she doesn't look like him and because Céline had other lovers I personally take that with a pinch of salt. Luckily for Rochester there was no such thing as DNA testing then!

Two years after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, the novel *Shirley* hit the bookshops but there's no mention of a father for either Caroline Helstone or Shirley Keeldar the two main characters in the novel.

In *Villette*, published in 1853, the narrator and main character Lucy Snowe appears also to have no living relatives. However the Count de Bassompierre, father of Polly Home in the novel is a sensitive and thoughtful Count who loves his daughter. When he notices Polly's relationship with Graham, he is very averse to parting with her. He regards her as a re child and calls her his "little treasure" or "little Polly." He at last relinquishes which rather reminds me of Patrick's aversion to Charlotte marrying Arthur Bell Nicholls.


JANE EYRE.

An Autobiography.

EDITED BY

CURRER BELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER, AND CO., CORNHILL.

1847.

The Professor, the first novel Charlotte wrote but which was only published posthumously in 1857 also has a main character, William Crimsworth, who is an orphan and who later marries another orphan Frances Evans Henri. So on the whole Charlotte seems to steer clear of describing fathers in her novels

Nevertheless as the father of Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell Brontë Patrick had a profound influence on the creative and spiritual development of his children bequeathing not only a "Victorian" but also a significant "Romantic" heritage. I've finished with a photo of Patrick Brontë as an old man taken a year before he died and the portrait Branwell painting in 1834, painting a pillow over his earlier self portrait.

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TRAUMA IN THE BRONTË NOVELS

An analysis of the depiction of trauma in the form of child abuse and domestic violence and its effect on character development in the Brontë fiction from a modern psychological perspective.
by Patrick Morris – a talk given to the ABA on Saturday 9th November

As a group the Brontë sisters (Charlotte, Emily and Anne) are renowned as writers who had the ability to express the deepest emotions of their characters in powerful and affecting ways. This ability to express, and indeed their affinity for, powerful emotional responses is one of the reasons their works have retained a resonance and popularity today, more than 150 years after they were written. Not only has there been a passage of years but the there have been dramatic changes in Western society over that time, probably most notably in the role of women in society. We have progressed from the avowedly patriarchal society that the Brontës wrote in and about to one in which gender equality is entrenched in law and women have far more legal rights and educational and work opportunities. This is particularly relevant to the Brontës' work where we are usually presented with a female perspective to society, often from a position of severe disadvantage.

The issue of trauma in the form of child abuse and domestic violence in the Brontës' novels are prominent concerns in a number of their works. The three critical texts in the Brontë canon which deal with the issue of traumatic experiences are *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë. The fact that each sister has written a novel which foregrounds these issues allows an analysis of how the traumatic experiences of child abuse and domestic violence are presented and approached by each individual writer. I commence with an analysis of *Jane Eyre* then address *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of*

Wildfell Hall before looking at common themes in all the sisters' work in relation to this area.

The character Jane Eyre's story in *Jane Eyre* (1847) is one of terrible child abuse starting from her time at Gateshead with the Reed family. She is the victim of verbal and physical bullying from her cousin, John Reed. He tells his sister to "Tell Mama (Jane) is run out into the rain- bad animal!" (15). Jane is frightened of John and hides behind the window curtain. Jane writes "He bullied me and punished me continually" (16).

Jane's life at Gateshead exemplifies the characteristics of severe child abuse. Jane was constantly tormented and brutalized and was wracked with fear. However, she could not tell the servants as she knew they could not risk offending their employer. Even worse, John's mother, Mrs Reed turns a blind eye to the abuse. The one person in the house with the authority to control John's behaviour condones by her inaction the abuse of Jane. The chronic situation of fear and helplessness that Jane is left in as a child is often a harbinger of severe personality disorder in later life (Herman, Perry & van der Kolk 490).

Charlotte Brontë gives us a taste of the abuse Jane receives at the hand of John Reed when he tells her "…you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg and not live here with gentlemen's children like us" (17) and then throws a book at Jane which cuts her head. Jane responds for the first time verbally with "You are like a murderer- you are a slave-driver- you are like the Roman emperors!" (17). This reply enrages John and he physically attacks Jane. Jane responds with what appear to be a couple of well-aimed punches and John retreats crying. Jane is subsequently punished for this response but she has had the satisfaction of at least briefly having a sense of empowerment over her tormenter. Through her verbal and physical response, one sees the beginnings of the strength of character Jane will exhibit throughout her tumultuous life experiences.

For defending herself Jane is sent to the Red Room, a room left vacant since the death in it of Mr Reed nine years previously. The servant, Miss Abbot literally puts the fear of hell into Jane when she tells her "say your prayers, Miss Eyre… for if you don't repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney, and fetch you away" (20). Jane is kept in solitary confinement in this gloomy room. Solitary confinement is known to produce severe depression in adults (Bauer et al 257) so this form of punishment for a child of Jane's age is unusually cruel. Jane starts to ruminate upon depressive thoughts conjured by her situation:

All of John Reed's violent tyrannies, all his sisters' proud indifference, all his mother's aversion, all the servants' partiality, turned up in my mind like a dark deposit in a turbid well. Why was I always suffering, always brow-beaten, always scared, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? (22).

Jane begins to doubt herself, questioning whether she really does deserve all the humiliation she has been subjected to. She pursues this line of thought to its suicidal conclusion when she writes of "My habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression fell damp on the embers of my decaying ire. All I said was wicked, and perhaps I might be so: what thought had I been but just conceiving of starving myself to death" (23).

Jane's depression and hopelessness and the descent to suicidal thoughts are poignantly described. The abject distress Jane is in and her isolation leads to her having "a species of fit" (25). This may have been a form of dissociative state brought on by the severe emotional trauma Jane was experiencing in the Red Room, a not uncommon reaction in children (Sanders & Giolas 50).

This "fit" led to Jane being treated by the apothecary, Mr. Lloyd. With him present as an external source of security and comfort Jane feels "an inexpressible relief, a soothing conviction of protection and security" (26). This depiction of the recognized need for an abused child to have safety and protection for emotional healing (Schofield & Beek 21) is powerfully portrayed in Jane's desperation when Mr Lloyd leaves: "as he closed the door after him, all the room darkened and my heart again sank: inexpressible sadness weighed it down" (27). Jane, as an adult, remains aware of the profound effect the Red Room experience had on her. She writes of it that "I feel the reverberation to this day. Yes, Mrs Reed, to you I owe some fearful pangs of mental suffering" (27-28). The on-going and lasting effects of child abuse are well recognized in psychiatry (McCloskey & Bailey 1019) and the ability to put the trauma into its context and appropriately allocate responsibility for it is an important part of the healing process.

The Red Room experience had one positive result for Jane. It brings about a change in attitude of the young servant, Bessie, who felt the punishment was too harsh. Unobtrusively she starts to treat Jane with some kindness. Jane writes: "Bessie… addressed a word of unwonted kindness to me every now and then. This state of things should have been to me a paradise of peace, accustomed as I was to a life of ceaseless reprimand and thankless fagging" (28).

The importance of even a single consistent source of benevolence in an abused child's life cannot be overstated and Bessie is able to fill this role to some degree, contributing to Jane's resilience.

Mr Lloyd mentions the idea of school to Jane and she becomes excited as she thinks "school would be a complete change: it would be a long journey, an entire separation from Gateshead, an entrance to a new life." (33). The sad reality of Jane's early experiences at Lowood School is rendered even more powerfully when Jane had such an expectation of safety and escape from her abusive situation.

After recovering from her Red Room experience Jane is even more isolated from the Reed family. Jane writes that Mrs Reed "appointed me a small

cabinet to sleep in by myself, condemning me to take my meals alone and pass all my time in the nursery" (35) and writes of being neglected at that most important family occasion, Christmas: "From every enjoyment I was, of course, excluded" (36). Jane has to again rely upon physical self-defence against John Reed as neither the servants or Mrs Reed will protect her from him (35). Jane's self-confidence allows her to stand up to John Reed which is an encouraging sign of her ability to cope with adversity.

Bessie remains the one example of love, affection and comfort to Jane. Although she can be appropriately critical of Jane at times, she would often offer her gifts of kindness and this meant a lot to Jane. She writes "Bessie seemed to me the best, prettiest, kindest being in the world" (37).

Mr Brocklehurst, the manager of Lowood School, visits Gateshead and meets Jane. His sanctimonious and judgemental comments about Jane: "That proves you have a wicked heart; and you must pray to God to change it" (42) does not augur well for her time at Lowood, especially after Mrs Reed complained to Mr Brocklehurst of Jane's "tendency to deceit" (42). This comment hurts Jane enormously as not only was it not true but "it was uttered before a stranger" (42) and she had the feeling that Mrs Reed was deliberately "sowing aversion and unkindness along my future path" (43).

Brocklehurst accepts Jane to his school. Before she leaves Jane feels the need, and has the self-confidence, to tell Mrs Reed that "I am not deceitful…I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed" (45) and "You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness, but I cannot live so; and you have no pity" (46). She is able to ventilate her pent-up feelings of anger and frustration and the effect is powerfully cathartic. Jane writes "I was left there alone-winner of the field. It was the hardest battle I had fought, and the first victory I had gained: I stood a while on the rug…and I enjoyed my conqueror's solitude" (46).

Despite the abuse she has received Jane's strength and determination shine through. This incident is immediately followed by some affectionate and touching farewell scenes with Bessie. Bessie tells Jane "I believe I am fonder of you than all of the rest" (49) and kisses and embraces her. Jane writes "That afternoon lapsed in peace and harmony: and in the evening Bessie told me some of her most enchanting stories, and sang me some of her sweetest songs. Even for me life had its gleams of sunshine" (49). Even after all she had suffered there Jane left Gateshead with a sense of her individual worth and her ability to give and receive affection and love.

At Lowood Jane enters an environment of systematic abuse and violence. She sees the sickly Helen Burns birched on the neck by a teacher and she "quivered at this spectacle with a sentiment of unavailing and impotent anger" (65). It is usually much harder to watch another person who one has feeling for being abused than to suffer it oneself and Jane's sense helplessness and lack of control in this situation is well-depicted. Jane argues with the virtuous and

Christian Helen about how to respond to aggression. Jane relates to her own experiences with John Reed and says “When we are struck without a reason we should strike back again very hard…so hard to teach the person who struck us not to do it again” (68) and “I must dislike those who…persist in disliking me” (68). Helen argues for a response of passivity and acceptance that Jane from her past experience cannot understand.

The conditions in the school are appalling. Jane writes “the scanty supply of food was distressing…we had scarcely sufficient to keep alive a delicate invalid.” and “our clothing was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold; we had no boots” (71). Brocklehurst singles Jane out for humiliation in front of the whole school. She has to stand on a stool in the hall and not be spoken to as punishment. Brocklehurst describes her to the school as “this girl, this child; this native of a Christian land, worse than many a little heathen…-this girl is-a liar!” (78). Jane’s humiliation is only tempered by her two allies at Lowood, the principal, Miss Temple, who says to her “Don’t be afraid, Jane” (77) and her friend, Helen who smiles at Jane “What a smile!” (78) as she walked by her. After this traumatic experience Helen brings Jane coffee and bread and comforts her. Helen’s genuine love and affection for Jane is beautifully described by Jane: “resting my head on Helen’s shoulder, I put my arms around her waist; she drew me to her, and we reposed in silence” (82). The healing importance of touch in this situation is eloquently described.

Later Miss Temple calls Jane and Helen to have tea with her in her apartment. Miss Temple asks Jane to relate her life story. Jane is able to share her traumatic history with a supportive and understanding figure of authority. Miss Temple believes her and validates her response to her experiences. This is tremendously healing for Jane. That evening had a profound impact on Jane as she writes “We feasted that evening as on nectar and ambrosia; and not the least delight…was the smile of gratification with which our hostess regarded us” (85). Miss Temple tells the whole school at assembly that Brocklehurst’s charges against Jane are not true and Jane feels “relieved of a grievous load” (87). She has a new positive attitude to the school: “I would not now exchange Lowood with all its privations, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries” (87).

After Brocklehurst is dismissed from his post Jane finishes her schooling successfully and becomes a teacher at Lowood. After Helen dies her chief source of support and encouragement remains Miss Temple. Jane writes movingly “To her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirement; her friendship and society had been my constant solace; she stood me in the place of a mother, governess and latterly companion” (98).

The powerful healing role of Miss Temple in Jane’s life as a role model, mother figure and counsellor is given prominence by Jane’s acknowledgement. Miss Temple’s leaving Lowood to get married prompts a crisis for Jane and she leaves the school to set out on a new role as a governess at Thornfield Hall.

Jane returns to Gateshead after she is requested to by Mrs Reed who is on her death-bed. This is a sad and frustrating visit for Jane as the Reeds continue to lead lives of selfishness and Mrs. Reed cannot allow herself to reconcile with Jane. Jane finds out that she has been deliberately disinherited by Mrs Reed but still reaches out to her. She says to her "I long earnestly to be reconciled to you now: kiss me aunt" (269). Mrs Reed refuses and she died, as accurately described by Jane "living she had ever hated me-dying she must hate me still" (269). Jane had, however, been able to make her own peace with her before she died as she says "you have my full and complete forgiveness" (269) - an important part of the healing process for Jane as it is for many abused people.

Jane's strength of character is tested in two situations with important men in her life. After Rochester's marriage to Bertha is revealed he entreats Jane to go with him to live as his mistress in the south of France. He threatens violence if she will not comply (340). But Jane will not back down from her decision, based on her sense of morality, despite her overwhelming love for Rochester and his position as her master. She says to him "I must leave Adele and Thornfield. I must part with you for my whole life: I must begin a new existence amongst strange faces and strange scenes" (342).

Later Jane must also refuse the marriage proposal of St John Rivers, a man who has literally saved her life and set her up in a new life. However, she cannot contemplate a marriage founded on duty not love. She writes:

Can I receive from him the bridal ring, endure all the forms of love…and know the spirit is quite absent? Can I bear the consciousness that every endearment he bestows is a sacrifice made on principle? No: such a martyrdom would be monstrous. I will never undergo it. (451)

These two situations exemplify the strength of character and determination Jane has forged through the trauma of her earlier life experiences. She has the self-esteem and sense of individual identity not to go against her strongly held beliefs and values despite the attractions of passionate love and social acceptance respectively.

Finally, Jane finds love again with the crippled Rochester and her contentment and bliss are obvious. She tells Rochester "to be your wife is, for me, to be as happy as I can be on earth" (494) and she longs "to put my arms round what I value-to press my lips to what I love" (494). She has found love and security but on her own terms and as an active agent- it is she who goes to Ferndale and finds Rochester.

I believe Charlotte Brontë is successful in *Jane Eyre* in depicting the abuse of a child, through the description of the physical abuse of John Reed, the emotional abuse and neglect of Mrs Reed and the institutional abuse at Lowood and the effect it all has on Jane's self-esteem. However, the resilience of Jane is foregrounded, based on her innate strengths and the positive role of significant women in her life- Bessie, Helen Burns and most importantly, Miss Temple.

The ability of Jane to risk rejection and make important, self-affirming decisions about her life course is powerfully portrayed.

If *Jane Eyre* is a vivid description of the process of child abuse, its ramifications and healing, *Wuthering Heights* (1848) by Emily Brontë has within it depictions of child abuse and domestic violence and the link between them through its exploration of the experiences and behaviour of the pivotal character, Heathcliff. Heathcliff, an orphan of possibly gypsy origin is brought to Wuthering Heights from Liverpool by Mr Earnshaw. His experience of bullying by Hindley Earnshaw parallels in many ways the experience of Jane Eyre at the hands of John Reed. We read of Heathcliff that "he would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear" (36), possibly "hardened by ill-treatment" (36) he had already received as an orphan. Heathcliff initially gets support and understanding from Mr. Earnshaw: "He took to Heathcliff strongly, believing all he said… (generally the truth)" (36) but as soon as he dies Hindley becomes extremely violent to Heathcliff (much more so than John Reed was to Jane Eyre) as depicted when "he cuffed him over the ears" and later "threatening him with an iron weight" and "hitting him on the breast" and "knocking him under the feet of a horse" and shouting at him "Off dog!" (37). Heathcliff initially responds not with retaliation like Jane Eyre but with stoic acceptance. However, Nelly Dean interprets this as more through "hardness, not gentleness" (37). Heathcliff's more passive acceptance of these insults will brew up into a torrent of revenge that will emerge later in the novel. Nelly gives a forewarning of this when she writes of the child Heathcliff that "he complained so seldom…I really thought him not vindictive- I was deceived, completely, as you will hear" (38).

After Mr Earnshaw's death, Hindley returns to Wuthering Heights with his new wife, Frances. She despises Heathcliff which leads Hindley to isolate him as Nelly writes: "He drove him from their company to the servants, depriving him of the instruction of the curate and insisting that he should labour out of doors instead" (44). Joseph "would thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached" (44). Hindley would "order Heathcliff a flogging" (44) and Frances "pulled his hair heartily" (19). What keeps Heathcliff together at all during this abuse is the intense, deep friendship he shares with Catherine Earnshaw. Emily Brontë depicts this relationship in most evocative terms. Catherine writes in her diary: "We made ourselves as snug as our means allowed in the arch of the dresser" (19) and Nelly writes "it is one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at" (44). The importance of trust and companionship in dealing with any adversity is highlighted in these scenes. Heathcliff is totally dependant for his emotional security on Catherine-a circumstance with fateful consequences.

When Catherine is injured and spends weeks recovering with the Lintons at Thrushcross Grange a change in the relationship occurs. She returns to Wuthering Heights described by Nelly as "a very dignified person" dressed like a young lady in "splendid garments" (52). Heathcliff is even more unkempt than usual and is introduced to Catherine by Hindley as just another servant. Heathcliff is deeply embarrassed as Catherine laughs at his dirty appearance and he realises their closeness has gone- Catherine has changed, it will never be the same again. Heathcliff has lost his confidence and his response to his abusive situation becomes violent. He views Edgar Linton as a rival for Catherine's affection and when Edgar makes a sarcastic comment about Heathcliff he "seized a tureen of hot apple-sauce…and dashed it full against the speaker's face and neck" (57). He starts plotting revenge as a way of dealing with his suffering as he tells Nelly Dean: "No, God won't have the satisfaction that I should…let me alone, and I'll plan it out: when I'm thinking of that I don't feel pain" (60). Heathcliff is caught in a vortex of grief, loss and pain and perceives revenge as his only way out. He leaves Wuthering Heights after misinterpreting some overheard words of Catherine's. The last thing Heathcliff hears her saying is that it would "degrade me to marry Heathcliff" (80), reinforcing his sense of rejection.

Heathcliff returns years later, a wealthy, powerful and violent man. He tells Catherine that if he were to marry Isabella Linton "You'd hear of odd things if I lived alone with that mawkish, waxen face, the most ordinary would be painting on its white the colours of the rainbow, and turning the blue eyes black every day or two" (106) -a classic example of the victim of violence about to become the perpetrator, a not uncommon consequence of child abuse. Heathcliff marries Isabella and succeeds in inflicting on her all the torment he suffered as a child. This comes through powerfully in Isabella's desperate letter to Nelly Dean when she writes of Heathcliff "…I assure you, a tiger or venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that which he wakes…promising me I should be Edgar's proxy in suffering…I do hate him- I am wretched- I have been a fool!" (145).

She fears retribution from Heathcliff and pleads with Nelly not to speak of her predicament, a natural feeling for a woman in her situation. Heathcliff describes Isabella as "a mere slut" (150). He prides himself that his first action upon being married to Isabella was to "hang up her little dog" (151) and says "I've sometimes relented, from pure lack of motivation, in my experiments on what she could endure" (151).

The horror and helplessness of Isabella's position is graphically described- she is the victim of a situation of which she had no part in the genesis or development. Isabella pleads to Nelly "I just hope he may forget his diabolical prudence, and kill me! The single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or see him dead" (152). This is a depiction of the severest form of domestic violence- a helpless woman with no support or help who feels that suicide

and/or homicide is her only possible way out. Heathcliff's response to this is chilling. He tells Nelly "I have no pity! I have no pity! The worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething, and I grind with greater energy, in proportion to the increase of pain" (152)'

Heathcliff has become almost inhuman in his attitude to life. He can show no compassion at all. His lack of conscience indicates a psychopathic personality, a far cry from the little boy who rarely told a lie and tolerated abuse quietly and patiently, but in the context of the novel perhaps an inevitable conclusion.

Isabella escapes to Thrushcross Grange after Heathcliff has thrown a dinner knife at her in an argument. She has "a deep cut under one ear, which only the cold prevented from bleeding profusely, a white face scratched and bruised" (170). Isabella's hatred of Heathcliff has reached an understandable intensity-she describes him to Nelly as "the brute beast!" (170) and she smashes with a poker and burns her wedding ring and leaves him forever.

Heathcliff becomes the master of Wuthering Heights and takes over the guardianship of Harleton, Hindley's son after Hindley dies. He neglects him: "He was never taught to read or write; never rebuked for any bad habit; never led a single step towards virtue, or guarded by a single precept against vice" (196). However, because of Harleton's "fearless nature" (196) Heathcliff does not physically abuse him. Heathcliff is depicted as an opportunistic bully, tormenting those who cannot retaliate like Isabella but avoiding confronting Hareton, a powerful young man. Heathcliff's psychopathy is depicted most frighteningly in the way he treats his own dying son, Linton. Nelly writes "I could not picture a father treating a dying child as tyrannically and wickedly as I afterwards learnt Heathcliff treated him" (259). Linton is terrified of his father- "I dread him-I dread him!" he tells Catherine.

Heathcliff is shown to have mixed feeling about Hareton- he admires his strength and courage and tells Nelly "He's no fool" and "he takes pride in his brutality" (219). He can identify with Hareton's feelings as being similar to what he felt when tormented as a child by Hindley: "I can sympathise with all his feelings having felt them myself" (219). He clearly prefers Hareton to his own sickly son. It is only through this process of identification with Hareton that Heathcliff regains some sense of common humanity. He can reflect on the experience of Hareton which he was not able to do in a positive way from his own experiences, unlike Jane Eyre.

Heathcliff's story of being orphaned, taken in by Mr Earnshaw and then after his death being abused by Hindley parallels in a number of ways that of Jane Eyre. One critical difference is that Heathcliff has no significant supportive figure he can relate to like Miss Temple was for Jane Eyre. Old Joseph, the servant, is a sanctimonious hypocrite who colludes in the abuse of Heathcliff. Nelly Dean is somewhat supportive and understanding of Heathcliff but she is in a powerless position to effect help. For a period Heathcliff is comforted by

his deep, mystically close relationship with Catherine Earnshaw, a true soul mate, but this is dramatically fractured by her stay at Thrushcross Grange and her subsequent courtship with and marriage to Edgar Linton. Heathcliff's only bond to the rest of humanity is shattered. He leaves Wuthering Heights and returns years later a bitter, violent, truly psychopathic man, horrific in his abuse of his wife and son. Only when he can identify with the young Hareton does he develop some sense of feeling for another human being's situation, but to his death-bed he remains a lonely misanthrope haunted by the memory of his one true love, Catherine Earnshaw. His is the sad and powerful story of the abused becoming the abuser and the terrible consequences that this has for him and those around him.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1849) by Anne Brontë is, unlike the more complex *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, a more straightforward account of an abusive marital relationship. Helen Graham, against her family's advice, marries the charming but feckless Arthur Huntingdon. It is only after their marriage that she becomes aware of his demanding nature. He resents her religiosity and says to Helen "To my thinking a woman's religion ought not to lessen her devotion to her earthly lord" (204). Helen rejects this attitude to her faith and replies "I will give my whole heart and soul to my Maker and not one atom more of it to you than He allows" (204). Arthur starts to emotionally abuse his wife, as Helen relates in her diary, telling her "stories of his former amours, always turning upon the ruin of some confiding girl or the cozening of some unsuspecting husband; and when I express my horror and indignation he lays it all to the charge of jealousy and laughs" (208).

Arthur emotionally torments Helen by these stories of his past infidelities and then compounds the pain by accusing her of jealousy. Initially Helen remains stalwart in her commitment to Arthur. She writes "…I don't and won't complain. I do and will love him still; and I do not and will not regret that I have linked my fate with his" (209).

Arthur expresses his violence at his favourite dog, Dash, hitting it and then throwing a heavy book at it. Ominously when he sees Helen has also been hurt by him he says to her "I see you've got a taste for it" (212) implying that the violence could soon be directed at her. He also starts verbally abusing Helen calling her a "confounded slut" (213). His violent nature is implied in his love of hunting which Helen describes coldly as "the destruction of partridges and pheasants" (226) and his "pulling poor Dash's ears" (226).

Helen bears a son and this change in the family dynamic only intensifies Arthur's abusive behaviour, as is often the case when an abusive partner sees a potential rival for his victim's attentions come on the scene. Arthur complains to Helen "As long as you have that ugly little creature to dote upon, you care not a farthing what becomes of me" (241) and "How the devil can I waste my thoughts and feelings on a worthless little idiot like that" (241). Arthur's

immaturity and lack of any parental concern is highlighted; however he does not physically abuse his son.

Arthur invites his group of friends home to Grassdale Manor and we witness numerous scenes of drunkenness, debauchery and violence directed both at each other and their wives. Their behaviour shocks and frightens Helen. She becomes aware of Arthur's infidelity to her through his relationship with Lady Lowborough. She confronts him with this information and asks him if she can take her son and leave him. He adamantly refuses- "No-by *Jove*, I won't!" (306) and even when Helen just asks to take the child without any financial support he refuses as well. Helen had no rights to leave the marriage without her husband's permission in the prevailing legal framework (Alexander and Smith 168). She acquiesces to remain in the marriage but with conditions as she tells Arthur "then I must stay here, to be hated and despised- But henceforth we are husband and wife only in name" (306). This is a difficult situation for Helen as she is refusing her husband sexual relations which she had no legal right to do at that time. But she is resolute and determined even as she has to encounter her husband's dissolute friends at breakfast the next morning: "…let me remember it is not *I* that is guilty: *I* have no cause to fear, and if they scorn me as the victim of their guilt, I can pity their folly and despise their scorn" (307)'

Helen acknowledges painfully the change in her feeling towards her husband. She writes: "I HATE him! The word stares me in the face like a guilty confession, but it is true: I hate him!" (308). She continues in the marriage, from which there appears no escape for her, tolerating the situation as "two persons living together…with the mutual understanding there is no love, friendship, or sympathy between us" (321).

During this period Helen also has to cope with the unwanted attentions of the persistent Mr Hargrave who wants her to leave her husband for him. She has to literally protect herself from his physical advances as she relates: "I snatched up my palette- knife and held it against him… I looked as fierce and resolute as him" (358). She tells him finally "Stand off then! And listen to me-I don't like you and if I were divorced from my husband-or if he were dead I would not marry you!" (358). Through her trials Helen has developed the strength to assert herself even in situations where she feels threatened.

Arthur's behaviour to Helen only worsens and he destroys all of her valuable painting implements: "deliberately proceeding to cast them into the fire- palettes, paints,
bladders, pencils, brushes, varnish" (365) - attempting to destroy any external sources of pleasure for his wife. After she learns of Arthur's infidelity with another woman Helen finally leaves him with her son with the support of her brother, Frederick Lawrence.

Helen moves into the disused mansion, Wildfell Hall and starts supporting herself as a painter. She is extremely protective of her son, Arthur and when she sees Gilbert Markham with him she becomes "pale, breathless

and quivering with agitation" (25) as she shouts out "Give me the child!" (25). Helen questions the prevailing attitude to raising boys which seems to her to promote aggression and discourage affection and states to Mrs Markham, who holds such an opinion: "I hope my son will *never* be ashamed to love his mother" (29). She and her son abstain from alcohol which is drunk widely and heavily by men, women and children in that society. She intends to keep a firm eye on her son to prevent him falling into the dissolute ways of this father. She says to Gilbert Markham "I will lead him by the hand till he has the strength to go alone; and I will clear as many stones from his path as I can, and teach him to avoid the *rest*" (31). She goes to the extreme of saying she would "rather he died tomorrow! -rather a thousand times!" (35) than her son becomes the type of man his father and his degenerate friends were.

Helen is understandably afraid of making new relationships with men after her traumatic experience of marriage. She tells Gilbert Markham, who is trying to develop such a relationship that "if you cannot be content to regard me as a friend- a plain, cold, motherly, or sisterly friend I must beg you to leave me now, and let me alone hereafter" (91). It is very difficult to regain the trust necessary for such a relationship after one has been hurt as much as Helen has in her marriage. It is only after the death of Arthur Huntingdon that Helen and Gilbert finally marry and have their own children.

Helen's behaviour in the novel reflects the abusive marriage she survives. At the time the novel is set in England she had no legal rights as a wife and could not leave her husband without his approval and had no rights to financial support either for herself or her child (Alexander and Smith 346). She tolerates constant abuse, more emotional and verbal than physical, but eventually cannot tolerate any longer her husband's unfaithfulness, drunkenness and inability to love and care for her and her son. She leaves him and starts an independent life but her experience has left her extremely over-protective of her son, fearful of any other male's influence on him and in trepidation of, and trying to prevent at all costs, him turning out like his father and his father's friends. It is only with the slow development of trust in her relationship with Gilbert Markham that her emotional wounds begin to heal.

Many readers through the years have been drawn to the Brontë novels by the intense emotional truth of the stories and the characters depicted. Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is a powerful portrayal of individual and institutional child abuse and the effect it has upon Jane. Jane is able to overcome the abuse through her innate strengths coupled with interactions with strong and supportive women at critical times in her development. Despite her at times wavering self-confidence she is able to assert her individuality with two powerful men in her life. She eventually takes the lead in finding happiness with Rochester.

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* presents a much bleaker picture of the effects of child abuse. Heathcliff has no relief from the abuse of Hindley and

Joseph and particularly has no significant adult supportive and protective figure like Jane had in Miss Temple. He has the deep bond with Catherine but when she breaks that and falls in with the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange he loses his ties to humanity. He becomes a violent, abusive, psychopathic man who treats his wife and son with unbelievable cruelty. Although he eventually develops some degree of understanding of his young alter-ego Hareton, he remains to his death a lonely misanthrope, haunted by his past.

Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, whilst not as complex or emotionally engaging as the two other novels, presents a realistic picture of domestic violence in the early nineteenth century in England when married women had almost no legal rights at all. Helen's desperate marital situation yet also her courage in leaving Arthur and starting her own independent life are depicted with clarity. The continuing scars of her experience are left in her extreme protectiveness of her son and her own fear of relationships with men, only brought to an end by her husband's death and her relationship with and marriage to Gilbert Markham.

The Brontë sisters, in their unique individual ways, had a deep appreciation of human nature and especially the ability to describe graphically the emotional content of human interaction. Their understanding of the experience of trauma, both for children and for married women, is deep and their ability to express its effects and the way their characters deal with it is vivid and realistic. At the core of their enduring appeal are a keen observation of human nature, vivid imagination and clarity of expression. Their characters react to their traumatic experiences in ways that are very understandable from the perspective of modern psychology. I believe the Brontës' profound psychological insight is one of the core elements underlying their enduring popularity as writers through the years into an entirely different society and cultural milieu.

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"Moors, shores and indoors"

Landscape and the Brontës

September 14th, 2019

A presentation given by Graham Harman, Annette Harman and Mandy Swan at the ABA meeting on 14th September 2019

Introduction: Graham

Good morning everyone, and welcome to today's look at landscapes in the works of the Brontës – moors, shores and indoors.

I'll be telling you about the motivation for this session and providing an overview, and then, this is a three-way morning or, more precisely, a three by three by three morning, and I'll be dealing with the moors part, of moors shores and indoors.

We have three varied speakers today, so hopefully at least one or two of us, will strike a chord with each of you. Annette Harman our membership secretary will be dealing with the indoors aspect and Mandy Swann will be dealing with the shores. The third set of threes is, of course, the three Brontë sisters themselves, Emily, Charlotte and Anne. If you wanted, you could loosely associate Emily with the moors – because of *Wuthering Heights*; Charlotte with the city and indoors – because of Brussells and London; and Anne with the shores, because of her love for the seaside, her propensity to spend her holidays at Scarborough with the Robinsons, and the fact that she was buried there.

Turning to my personal interest in country, city and ocean, I'm interested in them in the sense that they are contrasting realms in the lives of most of us. I myself was born on a farm in England, for example, with meadows and woods and streams and so forth; I crossed the shores and the seas to Australia as a £10 Pom; and for most of my life now I've lived in a house in a street in the metropolis of Sydney. These various landscapes appear to be different in important ways, and I'm interested in what the Brontës have to say about them as a general proposition. So – I'll come to that shortly, and we'll look at what, in the Bronte's portrayal of them, is special or distinctive or of interest.

My second and related motivation in reading the Brontës from this perspective, is political, and contemporary – that is, contemporary with now, not contemporary with the 1840s. Annette has given me firm instructions not to even mention the word Brexit, because as she expresses it, "not everything is about Brexit, and not everyone wants to talk about Brexit". So – I won't be mentioning Brexit. In terms of country versus city, however, I find it interesting that many Western societies today are being split down the middle along city versus country lines. Here's a picture of Great Britain, for example, with the results of a recent referendum used to re-size the various regions of the country.

Finally – but still relatedly – I'm interested in reading the novels of days gone by, as part of a connected narrative of human progress.

Moors: Graham

So – cutting to the chase – I delved into the Brontë novels, wondering whether the three sisters had a message of support for the country cohorts of today, and they certainly did, from a number of perspectives.

There are many descriptions of natural beauty, which is unspoiled and inspirational and of value, for its own sake. In the "Excursion" chapter, early in Wildfell Hall, we read the following for example:

Not many days after this, on a mild sunny morning—rather soft under foot; for the last fall of snow was only just wasted away, leaving yet a thin ridge, here and there, lingering on the fresh green grass beneath the hedges; but beside them already, the young primroses were peeping from among their moist, dark foliage, and the lark above was singing of summer, and hope, and love, and every heavenly thing—I was out on the hill-side, enjoying these delights.

We can go further – still mindful of our present day populist thesis that the country yeoman of Yorkshire or of Arkansas or of Australia's red soil plains, Hanson-country are uncomplicated and honest and good people, as contrasted with the out-of-touch tricky elites of the Washington beltway or of the Canberra bubble – and we can find examples where the outdoors of the moors are good, in ***explicit contrast*** to the indoors of the city. Here's how Anne

Bronte finishes off the story of Huntingtdon's friend Hattersley – this is The Tenant, again:

As for Mr. Hattersley, he had never wholly forgotten his resolution to 'come out from among them,' and behave like a man and a Christian … **Avoiding the temptations of the town, he continued to pass his life in the country**.

So – the city is a place of temptation, and the country is somewhere, where not too much can go awry. We hear elsewhere in the same novel that:

Arthur did not come home till several weeks after my return to Grassdale; but I did not feel so anxious about him now. To think of him engaged in active sports among the wild hills of Scotland, was very different from knowing him to be immersed amid the corruptions and temptations of London.

So – so far so good. That, is pretty clear. London is a swamp, that needs draining, and the country, is a good place, full of good people!

There are at least four more positive features of the countryside, according to the Brontës, so let's quickly touch on those for the sake of completeness.

Firstly, we know that the moors are a place of refuge and of regeneration. So powerful is the imagery of the moor in Wuthering Heights, for example, that you are never going to shake me from my lifelong belief that *Wuthering Heights*, is a moors novel.

Checking through *Wuthering Heights* to find out about the central role of the elements of nature I was, as always, somewhat set back by the recurrent awkward truth, that this is in fact a story, not of the moors, but of two houses.

The reality is, that Thrushcross Grange gets twice as many mentions as the moors, in the novel and the farmstead of the Heights, three times as many.

For all that though, the moors are a reserve of natural energy and regeneration, and in the glory days of the youthful Cathy and Heathcliff, it's where they head out to, when they need a refuge:

But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at.

Just on that "noble savage" aspect as well, I should mention the "tough love" aspect of the moors and of the countryside.

I only say that it is better to arm and strengthen your hero, than to disarm and enfeeble the foe;—and if you were to rear an oak sapling in a hothouse, tending it carefully night and day, and shielding it from every breath of wind, you could not expect it to become a hardy tree, like that which has grown up on the mountain-side, exposed to all the action of the elements, and not even sheltered from the shock of the tempest.'

That was Anne – but Emily has the same attitude, in Wuthering Heights:

‘Wuthering’ being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times.

So – the countryside is “bracing”. If we back off from the cliffs and the crags of the moors, we also know that the countryside is fruitful. And by way of a climax, regarding the virtues of the moors, there’s the sense in which the countryside is the threshold of a greater dream.

Here’s Charlotte, in “Shirley”:
Our world is heroic,its inhabitants half-divine or semi-demon; its scenes are dream-scenes; darker woods and stranger hills, brighter skies, more dangerous waters,sweeter flowers, more tempting fruits, wider plains, drearier deserts, sunnier fields than are found in nature, overspread our enchanted globe. What a moon we gaze on before that time! How the trembling of our hearts at her aspect bears witness to its unutterable beauty!

And Emily, again, in Wuthering Heights:

The pleasantest manner of spending a hot July day was lying from morning till evening on a bank of heath in the middle of the moors, with the bees humming dreamily about among the bloom, and the larks singing high up overhead, and the blue sky and bright sun shining steadily and cloudlessly. That was his most perfect idea of heaven's happiness: mine was rocking in a rustling green tree, with a west wind blowing, and bright white clouds flitting rapidly above; and not only larks, but throstles, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pouring out music

on every side, and the moors seen at a distance, broken into cool dusky dells; but close by great swells of long grass undulating in waves to the breeze; and woods and sounding water, and the whole world awake and wild with joy.

So – there you have it, and I think that all of that is true, so far as it goes. Where it doesn't go, of course, is all the parts I've left out, and all the examples that go the other way. If we're looking for ways in which the Brontës looked at the appearance and character of the countryside well, there's no shortage of material.

But if we're looking for ways in which the countryside and the moors, and ***only*** the country side and the moors fulfil particular functions in the novels well – that's a much shorter list.

One way in which things are more multi-dimensional than I have so far described, is as simple as whether the characters are in a good mood or not. Emily and Charlotte had different experiences of Brussels on their first visit, for example, and Charlotte felt differently about it on her second visit, than on her first.

The whole world may well be awake and alive with joy, out on the moors, if your life is going well in any event, but the Brontë characters can experience a similar experience of Brussels as a cityscape, if they feel so inclined. Here's Charlotte's description of the move to Brussels – which in this passage is as positive an escape for William Crimsworth, from his dodgy brother, as the escape to the moors was, for Cathy and Heathcliff:

I stepped out into the street with a relieved heart;the task I had imposed on myself for that day was executed. I might now take some hours of holiday. I felt free to look up. For the first time I remarked the sparkling clearness of the air, the deep blue of the sky, the gay clean aspect of the white-washed or painted houses; I saw what a fine street was the Rue Royale. . My sense of enjoyment possessed an edge whetted to the finest, untouched, keen, exquisite.

Another issue is that many of the advantages of the country, in the Brontë novels, arise merely from the fact that it is not, the city. If you're Mr Lockwood or you're Helen Huntingdon or whoever, and you're in the city and want to get away from it all, well, great. But what if you have the opposite problem?

Let's think about Robert Moore, the impoverished mill owner in Shirley. He's in love with his cousin Caroline, but Caroline is impecunious, so he needs to marry the wealthy Shirley for her money. When he proposes to Shirley, she turns him down – on the not unreasonable basis that he only wants to marry her for her money – and Robert has a crisis; but he can't go and rejuvenate in the country, because he's already in, the country. So he goes to London. It's the change of scene, rather than anything inherent in the country or the city, that works the charm.

The other problem with the vision of noble savages and honest yeoman in idyllic bucolic surroundings is, of course, that there's a dynamic aspect to all this –villages change, people move, and the very concept of class, changes.

Here's a shot of the industrialisation of the countryside – Shirley, and the opening chapters of *The Professor*.

Quiz:

"What happened on Wednesday, May 23, 2007 for the first time in human history?"

My point is, that the Brontës were at the heart of these tectonic social changes, and many of the novels were central to change.

I'll finish up though on just two related points that I believe really are – for better or worse – genuine fundamental differences between country and city, as manifested in the works and also in the lives, of the Brontë family. And these points also tie back to my initial motivation of thinking about current political conditions.

The reason that Emily and Charlotte go to Brussels is like a finishing school – it's a similar reason for Lucy Snowe in Villette, or for William Crimsworth, to go to the city. Emily and Charlotte brush up on their language skills, Crimsworth individuates and matures and gets married, and so on. By and large however, there's an abstraction and an academic quality, about what they are doing – it's professors and it's governesses and it's bookwork, and it's also French or at least, Continental, which we might regard, through the eyes of John Bull, as somewhat effete.

"Etymology, geography and civilization"

mac Aedh Ó Proinntigh

Prunty

Brunty

Brontë

I would see Patrick Bronte as a prototypical boat-person in this sense. He leaves the uncouth countryside of County Down peasantry and moves upmarket to England and the ministry. Social climbing go hand in hand with book learning and with mental abstraction, and with sophistication in both its positive and negative aspects.

Yet again, I'm seeing current themes here. Vernon Bogdanor, who's a Professor of Contemporary British History at Kings College in London and an expert on Brexi… on current social issues, Bogdanor has described the Bremainers and the Clinton and Malcolm Turnbull supporters as "the exam-passing classes", and I'd see Patrick Brontë as having been there, at the get-go, for that. The next generation, his daughters, then take that process a whole layer further, with moves to the city proper, and to culture and literature, which they not only embrace, but shape and create.

I'd go further still and see in the Bronte sisters a propensity to take their learning and their culture and to go back to the rural roots, and to dish out advice about how people should live their lives. This isn't a unidimensional perspective, because it should be clear from what I've said so far that we meet both good and bad people in the city, and good and bad people in the country. But when Agnes Grey goes to Wellwood, and has to deal with Tom Bloomfield for her sins, she writes:

I looked in vain for that generous, noble spirit his mother talked of; though I could see he was not without a certain degree of quickness and penetration, when he chose to exert it.

There's a baseness about Tom which is bad, and a groundedness which is good; and there's a civility about Agnes Grey which is good, but also a weakness and a degree of abstraction which we might see as bad.


The couple in happier times.

If you want to draw present-day parallels from that array of character, that's up to you. I'm casting Tom as Trump, and Agnes as Clinton, if you'll humour me for a moment on that one.

It's interesting that it's Tom that prevails in that tussle, and that he sees off Agnes Grey, despite what we might view as Agnes Grey's superior mental and moral compass. And daggy-dad Scott Morrison has obviously seen off the sophisticated Malcolm Turnbull and Julie Bishop, in a similar vein.

The second sense in which there's a weak abstraction about the city, in my view, relates to sheer numbers. When Patrick Brontë did the rounds of his flock at Haworth, he didn't even have a horse, setting him up and apart from the

people – he got out there, and he talked to every individual, eye-to-eye in both the literal and figurative senses of that expression. Even Agnes Grey, in her failure at Wellwood, was at least eyeball to eyeball with her Trumpian charges. And you can practically do that, when you have a parish that's small enough to transverse or a schoolroom that's small enough to eyeball.

Here's a recent quote from Andrew Leigh though, the progressive Australian politician – he's currently the Federal member for Fenner.

According to anthropologist Robin Dunbar, primitive societies across the world converged on a group size of about 150, because that is about the number of stable relationships our brains can handle. (so – country village) …. Hunkering down, in the face of difference, might have been a useful evolutionary strategy in the past, but the growth of cities changed that equation … Cities are bound together not by familial relationships, but by rules and norms".

In the grand narrative of history as I see it, The Brontë father and daughters lived at a pivotal time in the ascent of the city, and of the attendant degree of abstraction in our lives. But their power is increasingly in their books, not in their persons – Anne and Charlotte's influence on feminism in works such as *The Tenant* and *Shirley*; and Charlotte's impact on literature, in *Jane Eyre*, and on language in Villette. Meanwhile, we see the grounded countryside, atrophy. We have seen a transition, over the past 200 years, from Patrick Brontë's personalised concerns with the welfare of his manageable number of parishioners, to the welfare state, and to robodebt, and to an abstract and disembodied approach to welfare. My point is, that the Brontë sisters, were early, driving forces in that urbanisation and abstraction, of society. Papers have been written, extolling Emily Brontë's impressively detailed and accurate knowledge of the times and seasons of the moors. But there's a dark suspicion that she attained that knowledge, not by crawling Cathy-like through the heather and the mud, but by cribbing it out of an Almanack.

Annette: Indoors

For space reasons, Annette's talk has been carried over to the next issue of *The Thunderer*.

Mandy: Shores

I can't recall the first time I saw the sea, but I know that I was young. And I know I spent a lot of time as a child with the sea. My parents liked to drive down to beaches around the Wollongong area, we lived in Campbelltown, so it was about 30 to 40 mins drive. Once beach we visited regularly, with my pet dog Sam, a black and white cocker spaniel, was where the Minnimurra river met the ocean, Stanwell Park beach, I had the songs of Dire Straits in my head as my dad often played their music – on tapes!

Later in life I learnt to scuba dive and I have had wonderous encounters with marine animals beneath the waves, I have had the opportunity to witness the visceral beauty of the marine realm in many oceans, the Pacific, the Indian and the Coral sea. Much of this experienced is inspired and encouraged to an extent simply by the fact we live in Australia. In Australia most by live on the coastal fringes, and beach culture is synonymous the Australian culture in many respects. My experience is in great contrast with the experiences of Charlotte, Emily and Anne. The Bronte's lived many days travel away from the ocean, Haworth was not by the sea, and there no accounts of childhood's spent by the sea. It was as adults and non-swimmers that Charlotte, Emily and Anne would have encountered the sea: we can think of Anne, on visits to Scarborough with the Robinson family on holiday, and later, when the seaside of Scarborough became the place she wanted to see while deathly ill, and ultimately her resting place. We can think of Emily travelling to Brusslls as well as Charlotte, an ocean crossing full of sea sickness and a destination while sought after, certainly not one of holiday making

Charlotte had seen the ocean for the first time with Ellen Nussey a few years before the Brussels trip and Nussey notes that when Brontë took her first view of the sea in 1839, it "quite overpowered her" and Brontë "could not speak till she had shed some tears".[i] Now you know I can relate to that, the sea can be a very emotional and emotive place. The ocean may not have run past their door but the ocean ran through the imaginations of Charlotte and Emily and Anne surely, woven possibly first and foremost by the Bible, with its purgative and punitive seas, a paradoxical symbol of God's power, wrath, fertility, creative abundance. The ocean hung on their wall too, Emily, Charlotte and Anne would have seen John Martin's *The Evening of the Deluge* (1828) every day they passed the parsonage walls, its whorls of chaotic water rising blackly in a seeming elliptical oceanic temple of storm, its tiny, fragile human figures suffering prostrate on a dwarfed stone jutting into the apocalyptic, lightning-lit abyss with arms raised in desperate supplication.

I will now turn briefly to some examples of the way Charlotte and Anne and Emily wrote about the sea, there are many wonderful examples, I have chosen but a few. And I have chosen their poetry to look at, though my understanding of the sea is also informed by their fiction.

Charlotte Brontë and the Sea

So Charlotte Brontë was twenty-three years old by the time she stood that Bridlington cliff with Ellen Nussey to face the sea, but she had already interiorised "how dark the waves flow".[ii]

In a journal fragment from Brontë's teaching years at Roe Head the sea is thought. The wonders and terrors of exploring the mind become embodied in the oceanic quest of the diver "sink[ing] through the surge". Here is the poem:

Look into thought & say what dost thou see
Dive, be not fearful how dark the waves flow
Sink through the surge & bring pearls up to me
Deeper ay deeper, the fairest lie low

I have dived I have sought them, but none have I found
In the gloom that closed over me no <form> flowed by
As I sunk through the void depths so black & profound
How dim died the sun & how far hung the sky

What had I given to hear the soft sweep
Of a breeze bearing life through that vast realm of death
Thoughts wear untroubled & dreams were asleep
The spirit lay dreadless & hopeless beneath.

As equated with the seas depths, the mind's depths in this poem are made analogous to the "dark", the "black", the "gloom" and even to a "vast realm of death". Thought is terrifying in its gaping extremes of potential shining pearls and reality's "void".[iii] With its forceful calls to action, the first stanza exclaims against the fear of a submersion deep into thought's realm through the use of the verbs "look", "dive" and "sink". The suggestive "pearls" result from energetic, even exhausting but exhilarating excavation; they seem the fruits of bravely pursuing dreams. However, the second stanza intimates the futility of such action, the suffering which is linked to the longing for thought's riches, and even in the final lines of the last stanza, for the suspension of the agony of desire associated with dreams. More ambiguously, the "spirit" which seems to have returned empty in the second stanza is "dreadless", which should be promising in its links with the fearlessness required to plumb the abyss of the mind, and "hopeless", which seems its antithesis or at least a contrarily impotent companion. In part, Brontë's poem simply and even childishly states the

problem of coming up with good ideas, yet it also suggests the painfulness of contrary desires.

Charlotte's poem sets up the following oppositions: the desire for an active, challenging engagement with one's own consciousness and the frustrations of failing creatively *versus* the opposing need to achieve a mental peace based on not needing or wanting to create or to know the self, a peace based around contentedness with sleeping dreams (passivity, inactivity, resignation to an unchallenging mental state). To be content with sleeping dreams would allow the inner world to model the "frail, modest figure, the epitome of sobriety"[iv] the English public demanded of poor, plain women—the modest figure which masked the glory but also the pain of the imagination released, a pain which emerges in Brontë's attitude to her own writing and in her heroines' experiences of their emotions.

Anne Brontë

Where sea depths are the inner realms of the mind in the above poem by Charlotte Brontë, a tempestuous sea is made into a metaphor of subjective freedom by Anne Brontë in "Lines Composed in a Wood on a Windy Day".[v] In this poem, the awakening of the soul is linked to the "rapture" of the "earth and the seas". The poetic speaker imagines her "spirit" caught by the "wind", and a correspondence is established between what the wind does and emotional activity: its roaring, its turbulent effect on the branches of trees, leaves, clouds and the ocean is linked to fierce emotional energy: the "soaring of my spirit". The speaker declares a longing to have sight of the sea swept to drama by the wind, and through her depiction of the violent movements of the elements, Anne brings to imagistic life the surge of intangible feelings:

I wish I could see how the ocean is lashing
The foam of its billows to whirlwinds of spray;
I wish I could see how its proud waves are dashing,
And hear the wild roar of the thunder to-day![vi]

From 1840-45 Anne spent summers with the Robinson family at Scarborough and she developed a love of the sea. In her biography of Anne Brontë, Winifred Gérin notes Anne "loved the sea best when it was at its wildest".[vii] During her final illness she longed to be near the sea, insistently pressing her case to a reluctant Charlotte, who eventually took her to Scarborough to die there. She is buried in the graveyard there overlooking the sea.[viii] In *Agnes Grey,* the sea environment recurs as a place where the senses are elated to such a pitch that words fail. In chapter 24, Agnes notes that "no language can describe the effect of the deep, clear azure of the sky and the ocean . . . above all the brilliant sparkling waves".[ix] Agnes' "footsteps" are "the

first to press the firm unbroken sands",[x] and here she echoes the delights of personal freedom and independence. She is not lonely on the beach but glad that hers are the only footsteps, just as in the previous poem she is glad to be alone, carried by the wind. Like the other writers in this thesis, Anne Brontë establishes a link between the rapture of the individual soul (described through sea imagery) or the vision of the solitary person on the shore and an intense access to the inner self, some kind of privileged wisdom or deep universal truth.

Emily Bronte

By way of contrast to Anne's correlation of the freed inner self and oceanic vistas, in Emily's poetry the sea recurs as an image of the agonies of mortal, material life. Detailing an intense feeling of misery she writes:

Sleep brings no strength to me,
No power renewed to be brave:
I only sail a wilder sea,
A darker wave.[xi]

For Emily, the sea is associated with the imprisonment of the "home of clay" that is the human body and its subjugation to the vicissitudes of time and death. The unstoppable repetitive action of the waves of the sea mimes the ravaging effects of time, a popular poetic metaphor throughout English verse, Emily's poem highlights Time's ability to separate people by death.
Time's effects are ruinous and wasting; time does not lead towards hopeful regeneration but the achievement of the cruel rupture of loving human relationships. In "R Alcona to J Brenzaida" (also known as "Remembrance") written in 1845, she writes:

Have I forgot, my Only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's allwearing wave?[xii]

The sea is also linked to the finite trappings of the natural world in Emily's verse, and in the long tradition of this device, expressed most potently perhaps in Genesis 1 (and discussed in chapters 3, 5 and 6 of this thesis), the sea and the rest of the material world, are dualistically set against the construct of an immortal non material spirit. In a poem of 1838, "I'm happiest when most away",[xiii] she writes of the joy of her soul when it can transcend "its home of clay", when it can be released, a pure soul, resembling no aspect of the material earth:

Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky
But only spirit wandering wide
Through infinite immensity

Whereas the sea is a place of independence and liberation in Anne's writing, Emily often makes the sea part of those earthly things that cloy at liberation and imprison the true, ethereal, spirit.

However, the "inky sea" of Emily's poem "'Enough of Thought, Philosopher" (1845)[xiv] is briefly transformed into a luminous space where three streams representing the dichotomous aspects of human subjectivity (read by Juliet Barker as "heart, soul and mind")[xv] are resolved.

This ocean receives a golden stream, one like blood and one like sapphire, streams which she intimates are three warring gods, emblems of the wars of human desires and sufferings—wars which make the speaker of the poem utter a "coward cry" for death.

The "inky sea" also described as "ocean's gloomy night" is transformed by the "dazzling gaze" of "the spirit" thereby ceasing to embody the imperfections of mortal life: imperfections of identity, hope for heaven, and fear of hell.

O for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity—
And never care how rain may steep
Or snow may cover me!
No promised Heaven, these wild Desires
Could all or half fufil—
No threatened Hell—with quenchless fires
Subdue this quenchless will!'(Lines 7-14)

Under the "sudden blaze" of the "spirit", the sea containing the three aspects of self is become "the glad deep" which "sparked wide and bright-white as the sun, far more fair/Than their divided sources were".

Though an isolated case in Emily's verse, this is a particularly significant imagistic contrast to the dominant portrayal of the sea, in Charlotte Brontë's writing because instead of the idea of passion out of control or the chaotic elements of self in need of control, the sea is momentarily a place of the luminous peaceful co-existence of all aspects of the self.

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[i] Ellen Nussey: *Reminiscences of Charlotte Brontë by a Schoolfellow* in *Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol 1 ed., Smith, Appendix, p. 606.

[ii] *The Poems of Charlotte Brontë*: A New Text and Commentary, ed., Victor A. Neufeldt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), dated as Oct, 1836, numbered as poem 117, p. 209.

[iii] "Well here I am at Roe Head", 4 February, 1836. Alexander "Charlotte Brontë at Roe Head", in *Jane Eyre: Authoritative Text*, 3rd edn. ed., Dunn, pp. 399-401, p. 399. In this journal fragment from Brontë's Roe Head teaching days, she writes of the brief time when she could rest and have mental space after her long hard day: "I now, after a day of weary wandering, return to the ark which for me floats alone on the billows of this world's desolate and boundless deluge". As a contrast to the sea's depths as containing thought's private gems, Brontë elsewhere in this journal links the vast ocean with her teaching duties, the duty of thinking about and thinking for others whereas an "ark" that "floats" her over this vast ocean of duty is a space of private thought.

[iv] Gordon, Lyndall: *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), p. 4.

[v] Anne Brontë, "Lines Composed in a Wood on a Windy Day", *Agnes Grey and Poems*, ed., Anne Smith (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1991).

[vi] Anne Brontë: "Lines Composed in a Wood on a Windy Day", in *Agnes Grey and Poems*, ed., Smith, p. 170, Stanza 3, Lines 9-12.

[vii] Winnifred Gérin, *Anne Bronte* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1959), p. 163. Gérin reprints "Lines Composed in a Wood on a Windy Day" (p. 163).

[viii] Juliet Barker: *The Brontës* (London: Phoenix, 1985), p. 588, p. 594.

[ix] Anne Brontë: *Agnes Grey*, ed., Hilda Marsden and Robert Inglesfield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 196-7.

[x] Anne Brontë: *Agnes Grey*, p. 197.

[xi] Emily Brontë, "A.G.A.", in Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights and Poems*, ed., Hugh Osborne, intro. Margaret Drabble (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), p. 298, Lines 13-16. Dated November 1837. This poem is also known as "Sleep brings not joy to me" in Janet Gezari, Last Things: Emily Brontë's Poems (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 96.

[xii] Emily Brontë: *R Alcona to J Brenzaida*", in *The Poems of Emily Brontë*, ed., Barbara Lloyd-Evans (London: B. T. Batsford, 1992), p. 130, Lines 3-4. Numbered 36 from The Gondal MS.

[xiii] Emily Brontë: "I'm happiest when most away", in *Gezari, Last Things*, p. 75, Lines 6-8. Gezari reproduces the poem.

[xiv] Emily Brontë: "'Enough of Thought, Philosopher'", in *The Poems of Emily Brontë*, ed., Barbara Lloyd-Evans (London: B. T. Batsford, 1992), p. 57-8. This poem (no. 27) appears in one of the three notebooks into which Emily transcribed her poems, the 'E. J. B. Transcribed February 1844' (EJB notebook or EJB MS). Lloyd-Evans notes (p. 164) that these lines (7-14) are underlined in the manuscript. I reproduce the lines from her reproduction.

[xv] Juliet Barker: *The Brontës: Selected Poems* (London: J. M. Dent, 1984), p. 139.