



The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter

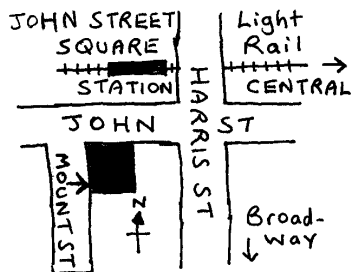
Issue No 2

December 1998

Programme of Meetings for 1999

For the first two meetings of 1999 we will be trialing a new time and venue. Depending on feed-back from members we will keep these arrangements for future meetings, revert to an evening meeting and/or return to New College, or trial some other time or place.

The venue to be trialed is the **Pymont Community Centre on the corner of John St and Mount St, Pymont Point**. It's about two minutes walk from John Street Square station on the light rail network (10 minutes from Central Station).



FEBRUARY:

Saturday February 27th at 2pm at the Pymont Community Centre.

THE HEALTH OF THE BRONTËS

Talk by Dr Christopher Cooper

Though perhaps somewhat incidental to their literary achievements their health, or lack of it, has fascinated many people for over a hundred years. Early items in the Brontë Society Transactions have included such gems as *The Eyesight of the Brontës* and an account of *Charlotte's Numbness at Thackeray's Dinner Party*.

MAY: Probable details:

Saturday May 1st at 2pm at the Pymont Community Centre. (Watch for confirmation later.)



WUTHERING HEIGHTS:



STAGE AND SCREEN

We will be watching, and listening to, short excerpts from a selection of the many videos, operas and musicals inspired by this novel.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER: A talk focussing on some part of the Brontës' works.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER: Social event.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 1999

Membership falls due on 1st January and voting in the Annual Meeting on February 20th will be restricted to those who are members at that date.

The cost of membership remains at \$20 for the year, with full-time students and pensioners paying a concession rate of \$15. The concession rate of \$15 for 1999 also applies to ABA members who, in 1998, were also members of the Brontë Society. Family membership (two members at the same address) is \$25. (If you joined late in 1988 you can apply to have your membership extended to the end of 1999.)

A renewal form is enclosed as an insert in this issue of the newsletter.

CHARLOTTE'S UNFINISHED DETECTIVE NOVEL

by Christopher Cooper

When she died Charlotte left behind two chapters of a new novel. Had she finished it it would have become the first full-length detective novel in English!

However that honour instead fell on Wilkie Collins for *The Moonstone*, published thirteen years after Charlotte's death. And of course the genre reached its peak in the late 1880's with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

It is true we cannot be sure whether the element of mystery that Charlotte so skilfully laid down in the first two chapters would have continued. We do not know what she had in mind. But certainly reading these existing chapters gives one the feel of something very modern.

The use of the phrases "amateur detective", "conduct an inquiry" and "her game is up now" sound a little out of place coming from the Haworth parsonage. Yet here we are in the world of mystery ("who is this child?"), intrigue ("there is no such place as May Park"), investigation (Mr Ellin consults old deeds and registers to ascertain the identity of Mr Fitzgibbons), interrogation ("speak you shall, sooner or later").

There is no murder, but nor was there in *The Moonstone*. This is a crime of property. The daughter of an obviously wealthy gentleman is enrolled in the Misses Wilcox's school but when their term ends, there are no fees paid and no May Park to send the young imposter back to. "The grand mansion, the grounds, the oaks, the deer, vanished clean away."

The bachelor, Mr Ellin, who finds himself cast in the role of "amateur detective" lacks the energy of a Sherlock Holmes. Nothing excites him. Summoned to assist in solving the mystery he must first quietly finish

his breakfast and dawdle to the school, stopping from time to time to lean against a tree to think about things. His take-life-as-it-comes attitude places him closer to Lord Peter Wimsey, Dorothy L. Sayers hero, but Lord Peter sparkles in a way that Mr Ellin would find all too tiring!

One mystery that no doubt would have been revealed in the remaining chapters is where the title character Emma enters the story. Is she one of Mabel Willcox's two sisters? Perhaps she is Mrs Chalfont the narrator. Or is Emma the real name of the imposter Matilda Fitzgibbons. More than likely her entrance is still several chapters away.

It is impossible to guess what the completed novel would have been like. If you read the first two chapters of any of Charlotte's novels and you get very little idea of the way the novel will develop. (Contrast this to Emily's *Wuthering Heights* where the first two chapters set the mood and introduce us to the house and its incarnation in the flesh.)

The fragment first appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860 and was later reprinted in the *Brontë Society Transactions* in 1899 accompanied by an introduction by William Makepeace Thackeray, who admired Miss Brontë enormously. Unfortunately what he has to say sheds very little light on the embryonic work, and despite his claim to have read it his words betray no evidence to that fact!

He begins describing a scene in which he visits an artist friend's studio after the artist's death and muses on an unfinished painting, still on the easel, wondering what it might have become. After this rather lengthy introduction he continues as follows.

With a feeling much akin to that with which I looked upon the friend's--the admirable artist's--unfinished work, I can fancy many readers turning to these--the last pages which were traced by Charlotte Brontë's hand. Of the multitude that has read her books, who has not known and deplored the tragedy of her family, her own most sad and untimely fate? Which of her readers has not become her friend? Who that has

known her books has not admired the artist's noble English, the burning love of truth, the bravery, the simplicity, the indignation at wrong, the eager sympathy, the pious love and reverence

.....

Much effusion about Charlotte but nothing as yet about her Emma.

One evening, at the close of 1854, as Charlotte Nicholls sat with her husband by the fire, listening to the howling of the wind about the house, she suddenly said to her husband, "If you had not been with me, I must have been writing now."

She then ran upstairs, and brought down and read aloud, the beginning of a new tale. When she had finished, her husband remarked, "The critics will accuse you of repetition." She replied, "Oh! I shall alter that. I always begin two or three times before I can please myself." But it was not to be. The trembling little hand was to write no more. The heart, newly awakened to love and happiness, and throbbing with maternal hope, was soon to cease to beat; that intrepid outspokener and champion of truth, that eager, impetuous redresser of wrong

.....

I must confess that this is not Thackeray at his best! But so he continues to the end of his introduction, praising Charlotte unceasingly and mentioning how much he had enjoyed *Jane Eyre*. But what of *Emma*?!!

As I read this little fragmentary sketch, I think of the rest. Is it? And where is it? Will not the leaf be turned some day, and the story be told? Shall the deviser of the tale somewhere perfect the history of little EMMA's griefs and troubles? Shall TITANIA come forth complete with her sportive court, with the flowers at her feet, the forest around her, and all the stars of summer glittering overhead?

Thank you Mr Thackeray.

Brontë Trivia Quiz

(Answers on page 7.)

1. Emily was first employed as a teacher at a girls' school on the outskirts of Halifax. What was the name of the school? For those with a mind for trivia, what was the name of the headmistress at the time of Emily's employment?
2. Charlotte's lifelong friend from Roe Head, Mary Taylor emigrated in 1845. To which country did Mary emigrate?
3. What event sparked the story of the Young Men, also known as the Twelves, which gradually came to dominate the imaginations of the young Brontës?
4. What was the name of the Belgian school attended by Charlotte and Emily in 1842? What were the names of the couple who owned the school?
5. Where and when did Charlotte begin the first draft of *Jane Eyre*?
6. What is the date above the front door of Wuthering Heights?
7. Who or what, connected to the family, was lost in a shipwreck?
8. The ruin near Haworth, called Top Withins, has been held to be the original of Wuthering Heights. But which other house is more likely to have been the original?
9. What connection did the Brontës have with mechanics?
10. Jane Austen wrote *Love and Freindship*. But which of the Brontë sisters wrote *Love and Friendship*?

REPORT OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Summary, by Amanda Collins, of her talk: *Charlotte and Emily Brontë and the Problems of Reading Shirley*

In my talk I looked at the effect which the recorded events of the Brontës' lives have exercised on critical responses to the novel. Many readers from Elizabeth Gaskell and Mary Augusta Ward to the present day have seen the disjointed aspects of the plot of *Shirley* as evidence of the impact of the deaths of Branwell, Emily and Anne on Charlotte's writing of the novel rather than as an artistic device which underlines the private and public divisions of *Shirley*. I argued that the standard view of Shirley Keeldar as the fictional counterpart of Emily Brontë has hindered an appreciation of the complexities inherent in Shirley's character and I proposed a new approach to the study of Shirley Keeldar — as the archetypal huntress figure of classical mythology rather than as an idealised portrait of Charlotte's sister.

New Brontë Society Representative

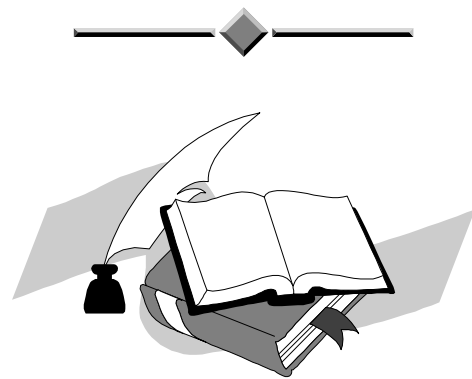
We are pleased to confirm that Owen Loney has been appointed as the official Australian representative of the Brontë Society.

Owen was recently in Haworth and has submitted the following account of his visit.

I youth-hostelled the UK in January and February 1998 with the help of a Britrail Pass. Great value! Whilst in York, I did a day trip to Haworth. Taking Britrail to Keighley, I changed there and took the wonderful steam train ride to Haworth. I left York at 9am and arrived in Haworth at 11.30am. From there, I explored the town and the Parsonage area. Unfortunately, the Parsonage was undergoing

repairs, and was closed to the public. I chose the perfect day to visit Haworth, grey, cold, damp and windy, it really set the scene we so often associate with West Yorkshire and Haworth. However, the weather was not so bad as to prevent a walk on the moors. I walked to Penistone Hill then, back in town, I completed my day with a walk down Main Street. This was very commercialised. Finally, I reminisced about poor Branwell over a light ale in the Black Bull hotel.

If you have any questions about the Brontë Society, please feel free to approach Owen.



Recent Publications

The Brontës: A Life in Letters, by Juliet Barker (Viking, 1998).

Barker's latest Brontë publication is a well edited and readable selection of Brontë correspondence, beginning with Patrick's 1821 letter describing the death of his wife at 38 and ending with Charlotte's death at the same age as her mother, presumably caused by excessive vomiting during pregnancy.

This edition complements Barker's 1994 biography, *The Brontës* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson) and adds to our knowledge of Branwell's relationship with Mrs Robinson with a new letter establishing the intimacy of their relationship.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we come to the end of the first year of the Australian Brontë Association I believe we've firmly established ourselves as a viable and active literary organisation. During the year we held four meetings and produced two newsletters and our membership now stands at over 50.

We began the year with a video screening of a new version of *Jane Eyre*. Then, in July our Patron, Professor Christine Alexander, spoke to us on Art as Accomplishment — the art of the Brontës in relation to the attitude of early Victorian culture towards women and art. At our third meeting Amanda Collins spoke about Charlotte's novel *Shirley* and drew some parallels between the characters and the Brontës themselves. Our final activity for the year was a Brontë Christmas brunch.

We'll announce details of our 1999 activities early in the year. At this stage I can tell you that at the first meeting, in February, I will speak on the *Health of the Brontës*. Judging by the many articles on this subject that appeared in the Brontë Society Transactions at the end of the 19th century this topic has fascinated the "members of the Brontë cult" (to use a phrase that was often used in *Transaction* articles at that time). Although our attitude today is that what they wrote is more important than the "trivia" surrounding their lives I'm sure that many of us find their lives (and deaths) almost as fascinating as their works.

At our second meeting we hope to focus on *Wuthering Heights* and the many films, videos, operas and musicals it has spawned. It might be interesting, for example, to take a particular scene in the novel and see how the various interpretations have treated it.

Your committee has some preliminary ideas about the third meeting. It will most probably be a talk that will focus on some aspect of what they wrote (to balance the first talk). Then, as we've done this year, our fourth activity will be some form of social activity. Hopefully our membership will have

grown sufficiently by then to preclude a private home from being the venue.

The subject of venues and times of meeting has given the committee some concern. Apart from our Christmas Brunch our meetings in 1998 have been midweek evenings, following the tradition established by the occasional meetings that were organised by the Australian Representative of the Brontë Society. However many of our members have said that they preferred not to have to use public transport at night and would prefer a daytime weekend meeting time. We've therefore decided to experiment with a Saturday afternoon time. This may not suit everyone but we'll see how it goes.

We haven't yet settled on a permanent venue. In 1988 we held two meetings at New College at the University of New South Wales. Our patron, Christine Alexander, was able to arrange for favourable rates for us and the meeting room is certainly very comfortable. However, while not abandoning that venue we thought we'd experiment with alternatives.

A promising possibility, and one that we shall probably use for the first one or two meetings of 1999, is the Pymont Community Centre at Pymont Point. It's about two minutes walk from John St Square station on the light rail network (10 minutes from Central Station). The centre was once a primary school (built about a hundred years ago) and has been refurbished, giving it a very light and airy atmosphere. (Quiet all those "Eyores" who say a dark and gloomy pace would be more in keeping!) However it has retained its schoolroom atmosphere (in the nicest sense) which I think is appropriate. Depending on what our members feel, after one or two meetings there, we'll either return to New College or try a third alternative.

We now have a number of members who live out of Sydney and we've had many enquiries from interstate. In setting up ourselves as the *Australian Brontë Association* we feel we should do something for those Brontë enthusiasts who can't get to our meetings. Unfortunately out-of-town meetings is not a possibility at the moment but I like to think that eventually we'll get enough

members in Melbourne say, to make it feasible to have an occasional meeting in some other city. Some of our speakers travel interstate from time to time to conferences and if a local person was willing to organise a venue, say a private home, it might be possible to arrange for a repeat of one of the talks given in Sydney.

Eventually it would be nice if there was enough interest in another city for a separate society to be formed, just as there's now a flourishing Jane Austen Society in Melbourne. A city the size of Melbourne must surely contain enough Brontë lovers to form their own group.

But what of those who live away from a capital city? We want to continue to develop our newsletter and this will provide one way for such people to keep in touch. Another thing we can do is to provide access to resources for Brontë study. We'll shortly be setting up a library. We'll have to look into the logistics of it, but it may be feasible to offer loans by post, at least for some items. Also we hope to make available printed material or cassettes tape of material that our members have developed (at a nominal cost to cover photocopying or the blank cassette). Already available is a series of three cassettes on the lives of the Brontës (see elsewhere in this newsletter for details.

Finally we have set up a web site. The web address is:

<http://www.mpce.mq.edu.au/~chris/bronte/aba.htm>

It contains an electronic version of our newsletters as well as many other resources.



Answers to the Trivia Quiz

1. Law Hill. Elizabeth Patchett
2. New Zealand
3. The purchase of a box of soldiers by Patrick Brontë on a trip to Leeds. Both Charlotte and Branwell recorded the origin of the Young Men in their early writing.
4. The Pensionnat Heger, run by Madame Claire Zoe Heger and Constantin Georges Romain Heger.
5. Charlotte began writing the first draft of *Jane Eyre* during the five weeks she stayed at Manchester in 1846 while her father recovered from surgery to remove cataracts from his eyes.
6. 1500 (chapter 1)
7. Maria Branwell had some of her possessions sent by sea from Cornwall shortly before she married Patrick and these were lost in a storm.
8. High Sunderland Hall near the Law Hill School.
9. They borrowed books from the Mechanics Institute at Keighley, thinking nothing of the 4 mile walk each way.
10. No it wasn't Jane Austen. Her childhood piece was titled *Love and Freindship* not *Love and Friendship*. The correct answer is, of course, Charlotte Brontë. There is a poem of hers that has since been set to music called *Love and Friendship*. And *Emma*? When she died, Charlotte had been working on a fifth novel with *Emma* as its working title. See elsewhere in this newsletter for more information.

THE ABA LIBRARY

We have begun a small Brontë library for the use of our members. Currently this modest collection consists of one book and a box of *Transactions*. If you no longer require any material on the Brontës, we would be grateful for any donations. Once the library has expanded, we plan to appoint a librarian who will facilitate borrowing at each meeting.



ABA Committee Members

Patron:	Professor Christine Alexander
President:	Dr Christopher Cooper
Treasurer:	Meg Hayward
Secretary:	Dr Kate Newey
Membership Secretary:	Brigitte Lucey
Publicity Officer:	Susannah Fullerton
Newsletter Editor:	Vanessa Benson
Haworth Representative:	Owen Loney

ANNUAL MEETING 1999

ELECTION OF

OFFICE-BEARERS

At our first meeting in 1999, on February 20th, we will be electing our office-bearers. The positions to be filled are: President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Publicity Officer and Newsletter Editor. (Under our constitution two positions, that of Patron (Professor Christine Alexander) and Haworth Representative (Owen Loney) are not elected directly but are appointed by the committee.)

Nominations must be made in writing to the President by 1st February (in lieu of the Secretary, Kate Newey, who has accepted a job overseas). Also, since Kate will no longer be able to stand for Secretary, there is a particular need for a suitable nomination to this position.



THE



BRONTËS



A set of three cassettes on their lives.

Many years ago a couple of Brontë enthusiasts (including your president) produced a series of 6 half-hour programmes for radio station 2SER. Copies of these are available to ABA members for a nominal cost.

The programmes are not quite up to professional ABC/BBC standards. These programmes were put together in a very short time at the 2SER studios at Macquarie University using whatever voices could be scrounged at short notice from colleagues in the university. However they do give an interesting account of the lives of the Brontës and they include musical interludes and extracts from a number of the letters.

Each of the six programmes features one member of the family, starting with Patrick, moving through the Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell, and finishing with a programme on Arthur Bell Nicholls, Charlotte's husband (including the story behind the establishment of the Brontë Society which took place while Mr Nicholls was still alive).

You can obtain a set of the three cassettes for \$6 at one of our meetings, or by post for \$9. This charge is just to cover the cost of blank cassettes (and postage/packing where relevant). To order by post write to the president:

**Christopher Cooper, 31 EPPING AVE
EASTWOOD 2122.**

MEMBER PROFILES

We announced in the last newsletter that we would be beginning a series of profiles on our members. We have decided to begin this with our next issue.

Musical Review:

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

A Musical by Bernard J. Taylor

Newcastle Theatre Company, directed by Don McEwan. Saturday 10th October 1998.

Cast included: Timothy Blundell (Heathcliff), Venetia Seddon (Cathy), Aldas Kisonas (Hindley), Wendy Ratcliffe (Isabella), Craig Goddard (Edgar), Nancy McLean (Nelly).

It was quite an adventure for the three of us, myself, Elisabeth and Owen Loney, to travel all the way to Newcastle and back for the evening to see the Australian premiere of *Wuthering Heights*. It's many years since I've gone that way by train and I'd forgotten what a beautiful trip it is, particularly as the sun was setting and poured golden light over the rivers and lakes that we passed.

But by the time we reached Newcastle and walked up the steep hill to the theatre it was dark and the rain was coming down quite heavily. The wind came "wuthering" through the streets as we made our way up to the Mission Theatre. Real *Wuthering Heights* weather — the only thing missing was the snow!

It was just the sort of weather to keep the audience away in droves and unfortunately the small theatre was only half full. But that didn't stop us enjoying it. As the lights went down and the mist machines began to create the wuthering atmosphere on stage, assisted by sound of the rain on the iron roof, we settled back in expectation. We'd bought the CD version a few weeks before and we were really looking forward to seeing and hearing it live. Nor were we disappointed.

Bernard Taylor, originally from South Africa, has lived in England for many years. He was a journalist but in recent years he

turned his attention to composing. Over the last few years he has written five musicals and a symphony. The musicals are: *Wuthering Heights*, *Pride and Prejudice* (in fact I saw two

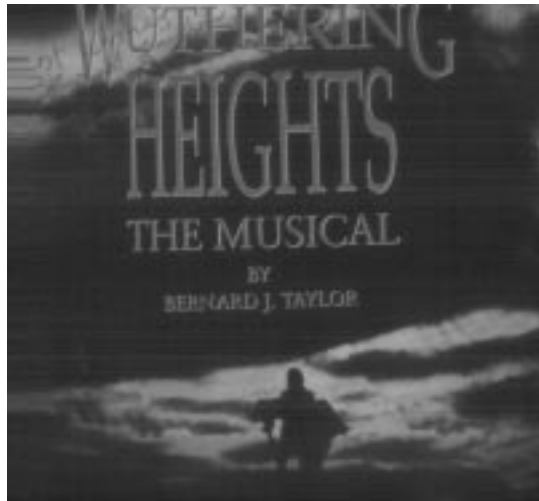
separate amateur productions of P & P during the last week), *Much Ado*, *Success* and *Nosferatu the Vampire*. The symphonic work, the *Millennium Suite* has been performed by the Polish Symphony Orchestra.

Elisabeth and I were able to meet Bernard a few weeks previously. He'd come to Australia to see the Melbourne production of *Pride and Prejudice* and was in Newcastle talking pre-production details

with the Newcastle company. He told me why this was in effect the first professional production of the musical in English (though it has been performed professionally in Poland and Rumania).

There was to have been a full-scale production in England but Cliff Richard's *Heathcliff* (which is quite another thing!) came onto the scene and the competition was considered to be too difficult. Not that Cliff Richard's version was any *real* competition, Bernard assured me. I must confess to liking Cliff Richard's version in a "quirky" sort of way, but I do agree with Bernard. It doesn't represent any real competition. Suffice to say that the Brontë Society has endorsed Bernard's version but not Cliff's!

Of course whether you'd enjoy *Wuthering Heights* depends to a great extent on whether you like the genre of the musical. If not you must inevitably be disappointed



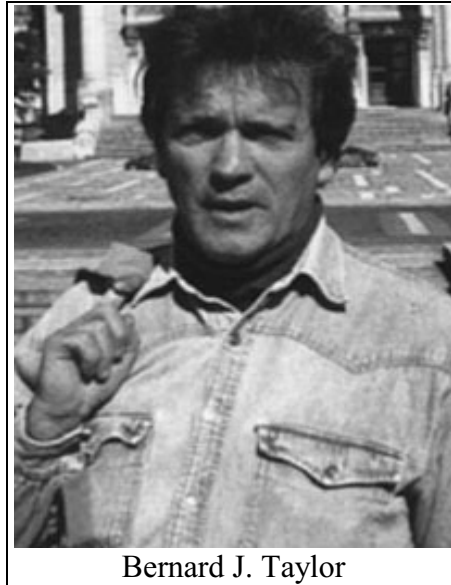
because no musical version could possibly be equivalent to the text. But if you approach it as a separate work, inspired by the novel and if you liked the music in, say, *Les Miserables*, I'm sure you would enjoy this work.

The musical does follow the book reasonably well, though of course much has to be left out or truncated. Like most versions it only covers the story of the first Cathy. One scene I wish had been included is the scene where Lockwood first visits the Heights. The comedy of errors surrounding the puppies which turned out to be dead rabbits and the confusion over young Cathy's relationship with the other occupants would have made good theatre.

Taylor's version has Lockwood meeting Heathcliff for the first time *after* the events of the dream, when Heathcliff is roused by the noise of the broken window. Lockwood has to introduce himself at that point and explain that he'd lost his way on the moors and the housekeeper had invited him to stay and shown him up to this room. Economy of character and action causes this servant to become Nelly Dean, not Zilla. And so the words that "Mr Heathcliff has a funny notion about this room but I don't know why", doesn't ring true since Nelly knew perfectly well why! This same economy led to old Mr Earnshaw dying and turning up again a few minutes later as Edgar Linton's father, which was a little confusing.

But there! I've said all the negative things I can think of about it. It was an excellent evening's entertainment. When we first saw Timothy Blundell, who played Heathcliff, as a cowering young urchin, hiding under Mr Earnshaw's cloak, I thought that he was too boyish in face and too slight in figure to become a convincing adult Heathcliff. Yet as the musical progressed he seemed to grow in both stature and presence and despite not

conforming to my mental image of Heathcliff as a big man, Timothy Blundell did project a ruthless power that made him a quite convincing Heathcliff, albeit a different one to the one I had imagined on reading the book.



Bernard J. Taylor

Venetia Seddon played Cathy and she captured Cathy's spirited nature. Craig Goddard acted the part of Edgar well, but I felt that he was not youthful enough to be totally convincing. The singing was very good, and particularly the ensemble singing. The "orchestra" was not large but they were still able to produce powerful sounds, not just in terms of volume, but powerful dramatically.

The director Don McEwan has done an excellent job. I'm told that he considers that it's still being "workshopped". It's travelling to the Hunter Valley and Taree and will return to Newcastle in the new year. I really think it is worth the effort to go to Newcastle to see it.

If you want to find out if you'll like the music just pop into a music store, one where you can listen before you buy, and ask to hear a track from *Wuthering Heights The Musical* by Bernard J. Taylor SONGCD 904 by Silva Screen. It features Lesley Garrett (whose powerful voice has lifted the roof of the Albert Hall with Rule Britannia on more than one occasion) as Cathy and Dave Willits (who has sung the Phantom in the London production) as Heathcliff. The orchestra is the Philharmonia Orchestra. While the Newcastle team were very good, the world class performers on the CD are even better than very good.

I've just heard that Lesley Garrett has featured four of the songs from *Wuthering Heights* on a new album *Soprano in Love* and that it went straight to No. 5 in the UK Classics Chart in the first week of October.

Christopher Cooper

WHAT'S NEW IN TRANSACTIONS?

The latest issue of the Brontë Society Transactions has just been sent to members of that organisation. Now although many ABA members also belong to the Brontë Society, the rest may like to know what they are missing out on.

The text of Stevie Davis's address to the BS in June of this year, is reproduced here. In it she reflects on the poetry of *Wuthering Heights*, not so much on the embedded verse as on the poetic nature of the prose itself. She says that "we can open the novel almost at random and chance upon prose whose music reminds us that this is a poet's novel".

Robert Barnard, once a leader of Australian students through the fields of literature, continues the *Wuthering Heights* theme by asking the question "What does *Wuthering Heights* mean?". He says that this is not an appropriate question for many novels, but that in WH we "feel we are engaging with eternal questions, presenting us with a view not just of lives, but of life itself". And he points out that one feature which makes WH unique in Victorian fiction is its striking lack of a moral dimension. Emily observes with a cool scientific detachment, leaving any moral judgement to the reader.

Simon Avery explores the way Charlotte and Emily employed elements of gothic in their novels. Maartje Scheltens examines the role of Hareton Earnshaw as pivotal to the structure of *Wuthering Heights*. And Peter Donnelly discusses the contrasting narrative styles of Lockwood and Nelly Dean.

Tim Cockerill gives an account of the Postlethwaite family whose two sons were tutored by Branwell. And a nice surprise, ten years after her death, are some thoughts on Branwell by Daphne du Maurier. This short paper, published here for the first time, supplements her book *The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë* and in it she puts forward the theory that Branwell was an epileptic (explaining, for example, why he was never sent to school).

David Warwick and Ruth Baker discuss Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth (he introduced Charlotte to Elizabeth Gaskell) and Dr Wright (his book *The Brontës in Ireland* attracted much attention a hundred years ago).

Short Notices include yet another view on the Brontë name and a description of some new Brontë drawings. Richard Wilcocks explains what you can find on the web. (He hasn't yet discovered our very new site.)

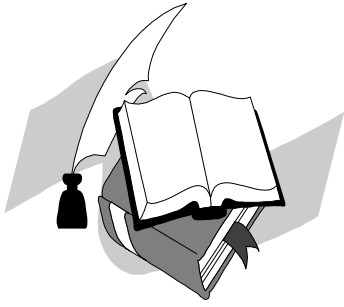
There are ten book reviews. You can read what Brian Wilks has to say about *The Birth of Wuthering Heights* and compare it with the review in this issue of our newsletter. Another review which warrants special mention is that of a CD-ROM containing a huge amount of source material.

I have only scratched the surface. This 120 page issue represents half of an annual subscription which mightn't sound much at £25 but, converted to our still weak Australian dollar, comes out at around \$70. Some may say it is too expensive, but for those who take their Brontë studies seriously it is indispensable. If you are not a Brontë Society member and would like to join, contact **Owen Loney**, the Australian representative.

The Brontës: Sisterhood and Selfhood

The University of Sydney Centre for Continuing Education held a most successful study day in October. About 65 people, including a number of ABA members (plus several who subsequently joined) listened to some excellent talks by Amanda Collins, Professor Margaret Harris, Kelly Stephens, Associate Professor Jenny Gribble and Dr Jim Sait.

I'm told there are plans afoot to hold a Jane Austen Study Day in March next year and Jim Sait has tentative plans for another Brontë Study ay in the middle of 1999.



Book Review:

The Birth of Wuthering Heights: Emily Brontë at Work

by Edward Chitham
(Macmillan 1998 £19.99).

More than any of the other Brontë novels, *Wuthering Heights* leaves a trail of clues from which it is possible to piece together chronologies of the events of the novel. But Edward Chitham in this book goes a step further. He believes that there are enough clues, in the novel itself, in Emily's poetry, and in the scraps of biographical detail, for us to deduce not only how the novel evolved but in what time frame.

To begin with he feels the need to apologise to those who believe that a work of such stature, having no antecedents, must have come from a single blaze of creative inspiration. To suggest that she had to work at it, painstakingly sculpting it, making radical changes along the way is perhaps to some Brontë fans, gross heresy! Yet I wonder how many indeed do hold to this "creationist" view. Wild and elemental the novel might be — Emily herself always demonstrated control and precision.

I believe that of the three sisters she had the most ordered mind. I first felt that when I saw a reproduction of a page which she had filled with geometric constructions as an exercise in drawing. She was the one who undertook the investment of their modest legacy from Aunt Branwell and she read on it so as to make an informed decision. And, as Chitham reveals in considerable detail, she had a deep knowledge of Latin, deeper than either Anne or Branwell. And they say that the study of Latin either develops or demonstrates an ordered mind. (I'm not sure which!) But I am quite sure that had the girls been alive today it would be Emily who would be the computer-literate one of the family and would download material from the internet for the other two!

Chitham begins with a very lengthy introduction where he discusses three main ways in which we can learn something of Emily's creative methods. I was fascinated by the discussion of the "physical conditions of work", the size and other characteristics of the scraps of paper on which she wrote, and whether she worked mainly indoors or out of doors. We tend to think that the Brontës only ever wrote on postage-stamp pieces of paper. There were good reasons for doing so in the Juvenilia, such as the ease with which they could be concealed. But it appears that Emily used the scraps much as we would use those 3" × 5" index cards. She often combined fragments of poetry, written at different times, into larger works at a later date, thereby showing her methodical way of working.

She loved the moors and it is romantic to think of her writing her poetry in some wild place. But Chitham doesn't think that this was her normal practice. There is one second-hand piece of evidence that she wrote out of doors from Mrs Ellis Chadwick (who doesn't give a primary reference) "... they kept odd bits of paper on which to chronicle their thoughts. Emily's favourite spot for writing was in the little front garden, sitting on a small stool ...". The front garden is hardly the wild moorland. But it is interesting to note that in the first catalogue of the Brontë museum in 1897 there is listed a "small wooden stool, used by Emily Brontë on the moors".

It seems that her normal place of work was indoors and that it was often late at night after everyone else had gone to bed. It was probably for this reason that she was the one to let Branwell in when he stumbled home from "The Black Bull", not because she had been waiting up for him.

“All day long, I’ve toiled but not with
pain

In learnings golden mine
And now at eventide again
The moonbeams softly shine.

There are three sheets of Latin translation by Emily in the library of King’s School in Canterbury showing where one of these golden mines was located. Chitham discusses at great length her translations, from *The Aeneid* and from Horace’s *Ars Poetica*. One would need to be quite a Latin scholar to appreciate his detailed arguments which hinge on why she used this English word rather than that. With my schoolboy Latin at the level of “Caesar marched into Gaul” it mostly went over my head. What is clear is that, though Emily made a couple of errors, her understanding of the language was what we might consider today as university level. More importantly, for Chitham’s argument, she showed great deliberation as she agonised over a word, crossed it out and replaced it with a better one. She was a mistress of wordcraft and her Latin (largely self-taught, though she did join in Branwell’s lessons from their father) was her apprenticeship.

In the next three chapters Chitham discusses her creative methodology as revealed by her poetry and her French devoirs. But then almost half-way through the book he begins work on *Wuthering Heights* itself.

The novel, as we now have it, went through three stages, according to Chitham. The first stage consisted of an initial burst of creative inspiration which gave rise to chapters 1 and 3 and parts of chapter 2. This, he says, was triggered off by visiting a large, crumbling house, High Sunderland, near Halifax when Emily was at Law Hill. This, not Top Withins, is the real *Wuthering Heights*, as he demonstrates by comparing the description of the architecture and topography in chapter 1 with that of High Sunderland. He even suggests that “Sunderland” suggests “Wuthering” and that, with a transposition, “High Sunderland” becomes “Wuthering Heights”.

The other ingredient to this burst of inspiration, he says, is the Gondal poetry and that she got the idea of transplanting some of the characters of the imaginary world of Gondal into the real world of Yorkshire, with January 1845 suggested as the date of this fragment. One of several arguments to support this is that there was a gap in her poetry writing at this time.

But then her poetry output resumed, suggesting that she put the novel aside, perhaps uncertain of how to develop the character of Heathcliff. Chitham suggests that it wasn’t until August 1845 that Emily discovered Nelly Dean (echoing the name Emily Jane) as the perfect vehicle for developing the story. Nelly’s homely style would provide the ideal contrast to the strange and almost supernatural character of Heathcliff.

So began stage II. This continued through the first part of 1846 with the “completed” novel being finished in the middle of that year when *Agnes Grey*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Master* (later published as *The Professor*) were submitted for publication as a three-volume set. They were rejected, several times in quick succession. We do not have any of the letters of rejection, but Chitham speculates, and supports it to some extent, that *Agnes Grey* was considered publishable, but too short to appear by itself, *The Master* was rejected outright (explaining why Charlotte put it aside and started *Jane Eyre*) and *Wuthering Heights* needed some revision.

Now here comes the interesting part! Chitham argues that *Wuthering Heights*, as we know it, would have been far too long for such a three volume project. He believes that Charlotte pulled out of the project and that Emily reworked *Wuthering Heights*, almost doubling its length. In fact, Chitham argues, the original version finished just after the death of the first Cathy and the birth of the second. So those film-makers who ignore the second generation story are simply presenting the original version!

Expanding the novel required some rewriting of the first part so that the two parts would appear a seamless whole. For example the young Cathy, now grown up, had to be

inserted into chapter 2. But some of the seams remain with a few minor discrepancies between the two parts. In the first part Isabella asks Joseph, when she first arrives at Wuthering Heights as Heathcliff's bride, whether there is a place they call a parlour. "Nay," says Joseph, "we've no parlours." Yet by the time of the next generation Linton "spent his evenings in a small apartment they called the parlour".

In her preface to the second edition of *Wuthering Heights*, after Emily's death, Charlotte almost apologises for the wildness of the novel. Chitham suggests that Lockwood was given a larger role in the second version providing a southerner's perspective on the wild life-style of the northern counties.

The very elaborate chronological framework of the novel didn't appear, says Chitham until the second version. Possibly as a result of criticism of the movements backwards and forwards in time being confusing in the first version Emily seems to have gone overboard with the second version, peppering it with so many chronological clues as if to say to the critics "there you are, now you can work it out for yourselves".

We have evidence that Anne used an almanac for Helen's diary part of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and this would have been at the time that Emily would have been reworking *Wuthering Heights*, if Chitham is correct.

Chitham's book is closely reasoned and like the novel it has a complicated structure. So that we don't get lost he peppers it with several summaries at various stages of the argument. And I get the impression that, like Emily's novel, the book might have been once only half as long as it is now. At least I feel that one only needs about half of it to support his major conclusions. But the tangential material (that is not to say that it is irrelevant but just that there is enough other evidence not to require it) is fascinating in itself and I'm glad it was included. Chitham seems able to actually pinpoint the months in which Emily wrote certain chapters by correlating various aspects with the poetry, which is dated. Also there is evidence from her poetry that she nearly always wrote about the

weather at the time of writing. Poems written about snow are invariably written in the winter. If applied to *Wuthering Heights* this would suggest a parallel between the seasons in the novel and the seasons in which she was writing.

Let me conclude by listing a number of other questions which are only hinted at but which if explored in full would have doubled the size of the book. (But where do you stop?) Why is the face at the window that of a child, when Cathy died as a woman. Is she perhaps Maria or Elizabeth who died at Cowan Bridge at about that age, and *twenty years* before the novel was written? In fact the time interval of twenty years ("I've been a waif for twenty years") more accurately fits the Brontë time-scale than that of the novel. Was Charlotte jealous that Anne's first novel was accepted while hers was not? Was the incest theme a conscious one. Was Heathcliff not just an adopted brother but in fact an illegitimate son of Mr Earnshaw? Was he really a gypsy? Was he West Indian? Or was he from darkest Ireland, perhaps reaching Liverpool by stowing away.

Christopher Cooper



ABA WEB SITE



[html://www.mpce.mq.edu.au/~chris/bronte/aba.htm](http://www.mpce.mq.edu.au/~chris/bronte/aba.htm)

We now have our own web site at the above address. No doubt some of our members will feel that something so late-twentieth-century as the internet is out of keeping with something so early Victorian as the Brontës. Yet I venture to say that had they been alive today the Brontë sisters would have badgered their father to organise web access for them. And I believe that despite having a tight budget he would have agreed. He was a forward looking man for his times and he made it possible for his daughters to access the nineteenth century version of the World Wide Web — newspapers and periodical publications. Some he subscribed to, others he organised to borrow copies. As a result the Brontë sisters kept well abreast of what was happening in the world around them, especially in the worlds of politics, art and literature. And they would have seized the opportunity to inexpensively promulgate their writings by setting up their own home page with Emily as the “webmaster”!

More and more people these days are getting access to the internet and most people, if they ask around, will find that they have a friend or family member who does have internet access and would be willing to allow it to be used from time to time for you to obtain Brontë material from our site.

If internet technology sounds daunting, just remember that your friend with internet access would probably fall over themselves to show off to you what can be found there. They’ll happily look after all the technical side. All you’ll have to do is look at the screen and the possible directions that can be followed and say, “that looks interesting, can we go there?” and your friend will do the rest. And you don’t have to read them on the screen. Provided you don’t overdo it you can say to your friend, “could we print that out?” and they will.

You’ll be able to access our recent newsletters and read about forthcoming meetings and other items of local Brontë news. It is also our intention to make a large quantity

of Brontë resources available. You can read the items on the screen, print them out to have a permanent copy, or even save them to incorporate portions in your own documents.

Finally we’ll shortly be providing links to Brontë sites overseas. The Brontë Society doesn’t yet have it’s own site (just a page on a Yorkshire Travel site) but it probably won’t be long before they do. There’s an excellent Japanese site (in English) and places where, if you wish, you can “download” the entire novels. We’ll also provide links to other local literary sites such as the excellent one maintained by the Jane Austen Society of Australia.

Around the beginning of each month extra items will be added, highlighted by a *What’s New* link. So if you’re on the web it will be worth looking us up every month or two and if you rely on a helpful friend you should at least try to visit our site once or twice a year.