

The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter



Issue No 5 July 2000

AT TEA WITH THE THREE CURATES



ABA Christmas Party December 1999

OUR NEXT MEETINGS

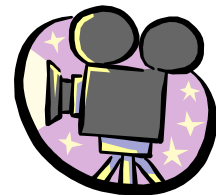
TWO VIDEO EVENINGS

at the home of the President Christopher Cooper
31 Epping Avenue, Eastwood 2122 Come to one or both evenings.

Friday August 18th 7:30pm and Friday August 25th

7:30pm

We'll view and discuss a 5 part series on the life of the Brontes. There's no charge. Please bring something to share for supper. RSVP 9804-7473



SADISTIC IMPULSES IN THE WORK AND WORLD OF THE BRONTES

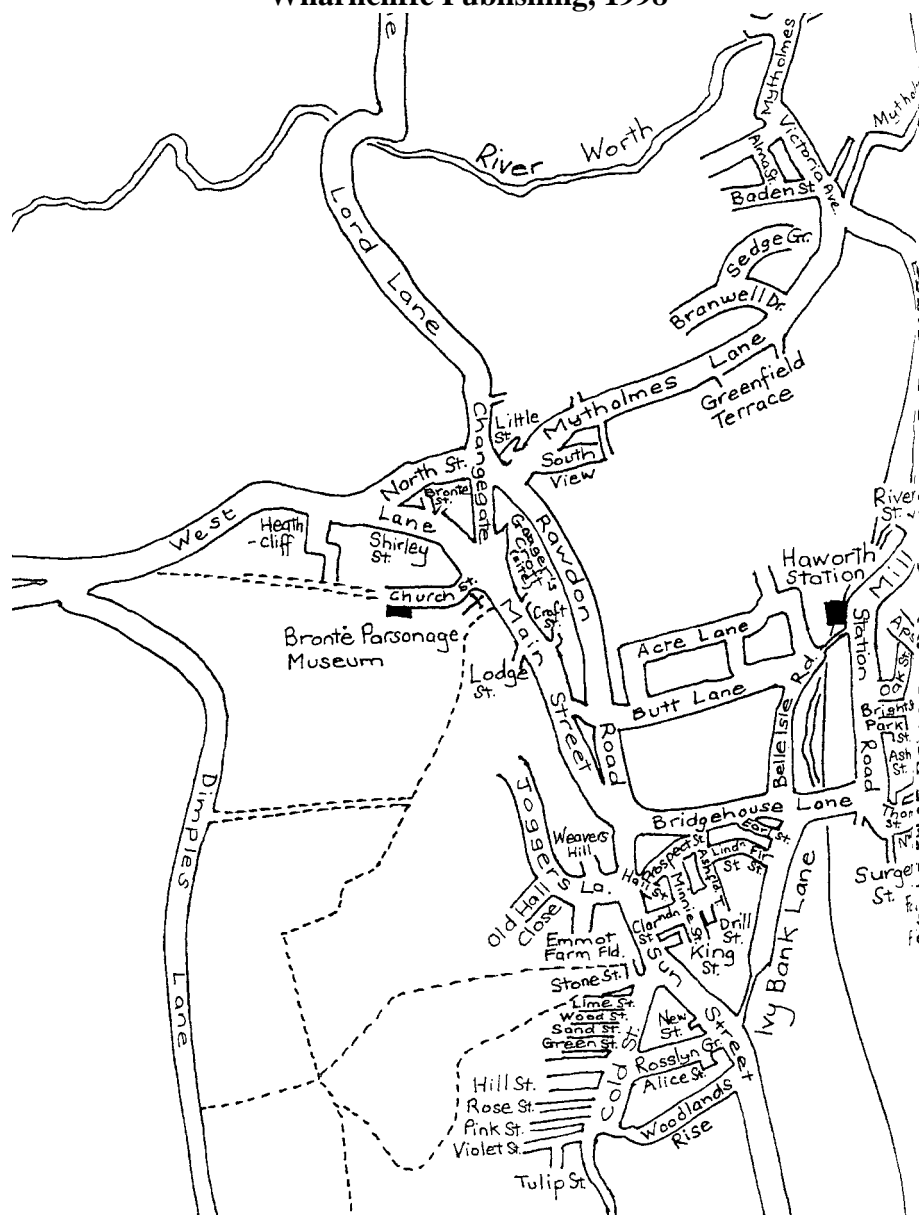
2pm Saturday October 14 at New College

A talk by Dr. Fran de Groen, Senior Lecturer at the University of Western Sydney.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH November/December Details will be announced later.

REVIEW: Street Names of Haworth by Jennie Crawford.

Wharnccliffe Publishing, 1998



HAWORTH

This excellent little book is a guide to Haworth, as it was and as it is today. Most people will know of Main Street (known as Village St in 1841), the cobbled street that runs up through the most picturesque part of the village, including the Black Bull pub, and Church St (previously called Parsonage Lane) which runs beside the church, the parsonage and the Sunday School.

Lodge St (off Main St) is the site of the building that was rented by the Three Graces Lodge at the time when Branwell was secretary. The Old Brontë Museum (now the Tourist Information Centre) was once a branch of the Yorkshire Penny Bank, which might explain why the street that runs beside it, connecting Main St with Lord Lane, is known as Change Gate.

(Continued on page 9)

THE LANGUAGE OF TRUTH

by Harriet Bjork CWK Glerup Lund 1974

Reviewed by Beryl Winter

Harriet Bjork has taken the title "The Language of Truth" from a letter written by Charlotte Brontë to W.S. Williams, who had recently become a member of the publishing firm of Smith, Elder and Company. In her letter (September 1848) Charlotte wrote:

"The standard heroes and heroines of novels are personages in whom I could never from childhood upwards take an interest, believe to be natural, or wish to imitate. Were I obliged to copy these characters I would simply not write at all. Were I obliged to copy any former novelist, even the greatest, even Scott, in anything, I could not write. Unless I have something of my own to say, and a way of my own to say it in, I have no happiness to publish. Unless I can look beyond the greatest Masters and study Nature herself, I have no right to paint. Unless I can have the courage to use the language of Truth in preference to the jargon of conventionality, I ought to be silent."

The reader is inevitably reminded here of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act I, Scene iii) and the farewell speech by Polonius to his son Laertes, upon the latter's departure for France, in which the following words of advice are delivered:

"This above all, to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

In her introduction, Harriet Bjork comments: "The ideological significance of Charlotte Brontë's novels today is bound up with the way in which they reflect the woman question, as an issue of the industrialisation process and a perennial problem of human history. How did she succeed in making the novel express the female protest?"

One example of "how" is in relation to the emphasis on female dress. In *Jane Eyre*, for instance, Harriet Bjork points out the various stages of dress adopted by Jane,

vis-a-vis Frances Henri in *The Professor*. Jane, being "plain" and physically underdeveloped, her dress is less fashionable in cut, colour and fabric than that of Frances Henri, who moved in an educated, self-assured social sphere and dressed accordingly. Throughout the novel the significance of female clothing with respect to the emancipation of women is highlighted. The reader's attention is drawn to the subjection of poor women and children by the type of clothing they are obliged to wear. Jane becomes aware that "an attractive appearance is essential to worldly success" (Chapter IV); nevertheless, she continues to protest strongly against "fashionable dress".

In chapter IV of Harriet Bjork's examination of "The Language of Truth" she draws the attention of the reader to the part played by "dress" in presenting the social status of the characters, in particular, the women in the two novels *Shirley* and *Villette*. In the latter, many situations occur involving variations in clothing, for example, the contrast between Ginevra Fanshawe (likened to a butterfly) and her habit of acquiring clothes and jewels and other trinkets (always colourful and often vulgar) from friends and relatives, and the upper-class dress (tasteful and exclusive and almost always "white") chosen by Paulina. There is a measure of irony in the portrayal by Lucy Snowe of the dandy -- the suitor of Ginevra -- in the vaudeville presentation: Lucy does not adopt a masculine mode of behaviour, simply adding to her womanly garb and re-arranging her hair. At this point Lucy's perception of the sexual stereotypes of the world, as well as the role of the woman in genteel society, is sharpened.

Space does not permit, within the constraints of an overall review, further examples of the 'female dress' motif in

Charlotte Brontë's novels, and there are many.

In chapter V of *The Woman Question*, Harriet Bjork draws to the reader's attention the practicality of Charlotte Brontë's approach. "Liberation must be achieved by means of serious education and well-paid jobs. Women could not become ideal nurses and philanthropists in their present sphere of dependence and inferiority" (page 82).



It is Charlotte Brontë's lack of belief in social work as a profession for women in Protestant countries which detracts from her handling of philanthropy. Instead the prevalence of the governess in her novels contributes significantly to the female cause. As Harriet Bjork points out in chapter VI of her book, Charlotte Brontë uses Biblical references, but not in the traditional fashion aimed at keeping women, their children and the poor in subjection. She remains true to her individualistic views with respect to the teachings of the Bible, and to her own feelings rather than the attitudes of conventional society.

Harriet Bjork points to the Lowood and Gateshead sections of *Jane Eyre* dealing with the wrongs committed by evangelicals such as Mr Brocklehurst in that "institution for educating orphans". "The satirical

description of his (Brocklehurst's) régime is the first famous rebellion against the Church and its suppressive system described from the female viewpoint in the history of the English novel". (page 93 of chapter VI).

In her concluding remarks Harriet Bjork refers to the wide frame of Charlotte Brontë's literary reference, from her reinterpretation of the Bible for the purpose of female liberation" in her "handling of the central topic of the novel -- love and marriage", and her quotations from Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Thackeray *The Arabian Nights* tales and so on to accent her views of "life and the plight of women". (page 139)

One can only agree with Harriet Bjork that "few novels are as important ... behind the movement for emancipation as her adaptation of literary traditions ... in protest against convention ... towards a modified outlook."

From my own reading of *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, *Villette* and *The Professor* I feel that Charlotte Brontë did, in fact, employ "The Language of Truth". Harriet Bjork's presentation of the many aspects of Charlotte's approach is most informative and interesting. Her insight into the various aspects of the emancipation of women as revealed by the four novels is fascinating and engrossing. I only hope I have done it justice.

Addendum to the Review of *The Language of Truth* by Harriet Bjork.

In *The Language of Truth* I believe that Harriet Bjork underlines, in no uncertain terms, how adept Charlotte Brontë was in her use of language to portray the problem of "truth" through the characters in her novels. For example Lucy Snowe, in writing to Dr John (Bretton) compromises with the Truth: she writes two letters, one in the language of Reason (which she sends to him) and one in which Feeling takes control (which she keeps). In doing this, she observes the code that poor women, plain (not beautiful) and lovely old maids, should behave modestly and should not reveal their true feelings. If

one looks at that particular reference from *Villette*, it becomes obvious that Charlotte Brontë is revealing Truth in various forms, and through the eyes of various characters. Dr John Graham Bretton's infatuation with Ginevra Fanshawe, for example, is portrayed by the writer in terms of her (Ginevra's) extreme beauty (in his eyes) -- that is, from a masculine viewpoint -- which is at odds with the impression gained of Ginevra by Lucy Snowe. Even this small point reveals the unreliability of the term "Truth".

In *Villette*, in order to provide some companionship for herself which approaches some kind of reality in her solitary life within Madame Beck's establishment, Lucy Snowe personifies various matters which constantly occupy her thoughts, such as Fate, Imagination, Self-Respect, Destiny, Temptation, Hope, Desire, Impulse -- to name a few. Thus she peoples her mind, and argues the "pros" and "cons", as she did in her two letters involving Reason and Feeling already mentioned.

The question of Language is admirably dealt with by Charlotte Brontë in *Villette* and *Shirley*. In the former novel the reader finds that Lucy's inability to "speak" French when she loses her luggage and cannot express herself is a factor which isolates her to the point that she feels powerless. Throughout this novel, however, Charlotte Brontë shows the reader that a great deal of duplicity is engendered by the spoken word, particularly in Madame Beck's case. Consider her conversation with Lucy when she encountered her in the garden at twilight -- Madame Beck was polite and evinced no evidence of her curiosity concerning Lucy's meeting with Dr John which she had obviously witnessed. (See chapter 12 -- THE CASKET.) She merely commented on the evening air, and wished Lucy '*Bon soir ... dormez bien*'.

Turning now to the novel *Shirley*, one needs to remember the tragic circumstances which prevailed in Charlotte Brontë's life during the writing of it. Emily and Anne, it is believed, were represented by Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone. Charlotte

Brontë is well aware that the fantasy world of Angria, which she shared with her brother, could be as destructive in adult life as it could be a source of creativity; this is probably why he (Branwell) could not deal adequately with the real world -- Angria became, in effect, a distortion of Truth. Even though the historical representation of the Industrial Revolution and the Luddites was not well received at the time of publication of *Shirley*, it may well have been because this novel dealt with the interaction between the individual characters and the society, which was undergoing significant change, in which each layer of that society the various individuals lived. To portray these facts Charlotte Brontë adopted a different linguistic approach; it did not incorporate the first-person narrative style which had given to *Jane Eyre*, *The Professor* and *Villette* the cohesion of an autobiographical imagination. Although such novels incorporated the social conventions of the period they did not confront the rapidly changing industrialisation of nineteenth century England. In *Shirley* the language of Shirley Keeldar is arguably closer to truthful utterances of her views and intentions than one has come to expect in Charlotte Brontë's novels. The position Shirley Keeldar holds, as a woman of some wealth and control in society, contrasts with that of Caroline Helstone whose guardian is her uncle, the Rector. Caroline, although portrayed as being intelligent and well-versed in the works of Shakespeare, nevertheless is reticent about expressing her feelings for Robert Moore, the mill-owner. She accepts the role imposed upon her by circumstance, believing in her inferiority. The two women, both solitary, become friends -- the contrast between their positions in society serving to enhance, rather than detract from, the image of women in the troubled times of early nineteenth century England. Quite apart from the Industrial Revolution the country was involved in war with France, and antagonism was rife in the area of religion (Catholic, Protestant, the Evangelicals and the Chartists).

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

I noticed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (5/7/00) that there is yet another operatic version of *Jane Eyre*, this time with David Malouf as librettist. Michael Berkeley is the composer.

Of course it's not "grand" opera with a stage full of extras but rather, more in keeping with the novel, a chamber opera. The *Herald* report says that there are only five singers but I could only count four on the cast list: Natasha Marsh as Jane, Andrew Slater as Rochester, Emily Bauer-Jones as Bertha and Beverley Mills as Mrs Fairfax. Perhaps the fifth is a cameo role for Adele.

Clearly the action centres on Thornfield so we miss the moving scenes at Lowood, and also Jane's adventures when she runs away, almost finding herself as a missionary in India. No doubt Emily Bauer-Jones as Bertha looms larger in the opera than in the novel, with the dramatic possibilities of Bertha's madness.

The flight from Thornfield, while not dramatised, is referred to because the high point of the music occurs at the point where Jane hears Rochester calling to her across the miles of intervening moorland.

The opera is being performed by the Music Theatre Wales at the Cheltenham Arts Festival in the U.K.. I wonder if we'll ever see it in Australia? Roger Covell, in the *Herald*, gave it a favourable review, as did *The Times* and *The Guardian*, though the London *Daily Telegraph* thought the characters were a bit flat.

"Dark, brooding and passionate" are the words used in the Cheltenham Arts Festival. Certainly all three qualities are present in the novel and they are all perfect for the operatic stage, so

the opera should be worth seeing if we ever get the chance.

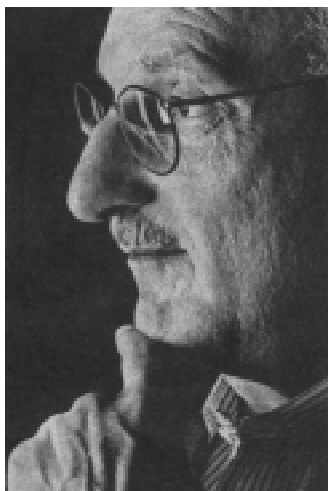
This is David Malouf's fourth opera libretto. He claims that *Jane Eyre* is the most widely read and translated novel in the English language. I'm not so sure. I would have thought that the most widely read novels were the Harry Potter ones if newspaper reports are anything to go by!

Malouf concentrates "almost entirely on the relationship ... between Jane, the harshly compelling Rochester and Rochester's dark secret, his mad, locked-away first wife".

There have been several Brontë operas but I can't think of a single Jane Austen one. Musicals, such as Bernard Taylor's *Pride and Prejudice* yes, but not a full-blown serious opera. No reflection on Jane, Susannah, but I think it reflects the great difference between the two authors' styles that Austen has been more successful than the Brontës will film adaptations while the Brontës have found their way into more opera.

What else is there to report? On a more mundane note, like most of the rest of Australia we have applied for an ABN for the ABA. So you won't have to withhold 48.5% of your membership subscriptions as withholding tax!

We have not yet finalised our 2001 program. We had hoped to have a return visit from Jack Nelson next year after his very popular talk on Emily, but he has unfortunately had a lot of health problems lately so we didn't want him to have to



commit himself at this stage. Perhaps in 2002.

Our committee has continued to discuss the possibility of a Three Sisters Weekend next year. At this stage the consensus seems to be for a very informal and light program from morning tea on Saturday to a special dinner on the Saturday evening. That would leave plenty of free time for informal socialising. At this stage the most likely time is late September 2001. The only Brontë anniversary that could be "celebrated" around this time is the 153rd

anniversary of Branwell's death on 24th September. That may or may not be a suitable theme for a Three Sisters Weekend. Anyway we're still working on it.

Another suggestion that was discussed at our last committee meeting was that we could make contact with the Brontë Society representatives in other parts of the world with a view to exchanging ideas and perhaps inviting Brontë Society members who are visiting Australia to contact us.

Christopher Cooper

Review: "Can Jane Eyre Be Happy?" John Sutherland, Oxford, 1997 reviewed by Geraldine Rawlings

In this entertaining and perceptive book, John Sutherland investigates questions frequently asked by readers about a selection of well known classics.

In answer to the question posed by the title chapter "Can Jane Eyre Be Happy?", he suggests that in writing *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë used as one of her sources a fairy story based on *Bluebeard* which she read in her youth. It's a fascinating concept and very well researched and supported -- in fact, the similarities between Edward Rochester and Bluebeard are quite disturbing!

Is Mr. Rochester, as presented by

John Sutherland, really so different from the charismatic and Byronic hero depicted by Charlotte Brontë? This book has all the answers and provides an excellent basis for discussion, as well as adding a new dimension to a well loved novel.

In addition to "Can Jane Eyre Be Happy?" the contradictions and anomalies of thirty-one other classics are discovered for readers to speculate on. Included in these is *Shirley* -- also written by Charlotte Brontë. John Sutherland's humorous, convincing and scholarly answers all contribute to making this a most

enjoyable book.



EMILY BRONTË'S POETRY

At our April meeting Dr Jack Nelson gave us a very well-received talk on Emily's poetry. He would have liked to have written this up for our newsletter, but unfortunately ill-health has prevented this. However he has supplied a bibliography. The following list gives just a few of these. To get a complete list just ask or phone the President Christopher Cooper (02-9804-7473).

BROWN, Helen *The Influence of Byron on Emily Brontë*, *Modern Language Review* 34, 374-381 (1939)

SMITH, Anne (ed) *The Art of Emily Brontë*, (Viking Press London 1976)

WINNIFRITH, T.J. (ed) *Critical Essays on Emily Brontë*, G.K. Hall (New York 1997)

DAVIES, Stevie *Emily Brontë (Writers and Their Work)* (1998)

My Favourite Brontë Novel

by Christopher Cooper

Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë

Reprinted from the Ashfield Library Gazette June 2000

I love this novel because of its mythic quality. Set in Yorkshire, it could have been in any wild place hovering between Heaven and Hell and as such it has much in common with "Gone With the Wind" despite the very different setting. Dialect and local references give realism but the elemental substance from which the story is forged can be found lurking in some dark corner of every human heart and imagination. Emily's genius was to give it a voice.

The story is told through an elaborate series of windows with many narrators and levels of narration. Windows feature prominently in the plot: the spirit of Cathy trying to get in, the dying Cathy wanting to look out and Heathcliff's death at an open window. Yet as revealed in this novel Emily disliked the windows of organised religion, preferring to experience the eternal forces directly amidst the wind and rain, snow and storm.

More photographs from the 1999 Christmas Lunch



The 2000 Committee

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(Dr) Christopher Cooper

SECRETARY:

Geraldine Rawlings

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Brigitte Lucey

TREASURER:

Ann Lock

PUBLICITY OFFICER:

Anne Harbers

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Annette Harman

HAWORTH REPRESENTATIVE:

Owen Loney

New Items in the Library

VIDEOS:

- *Jane Eyre* starring Timothy Dalton and Zelah Clarke, BBC Video (1983) 225 mins on 2 cassettes
- *Wuthering Heights* starring Laurence Olivier, Merle Oberon and David Niven (1939) 104 mins

BOOKS:

- *The Brontes* by Juliet Barker, Phoenix Giant Paperback (1994) 1003 pp
"An outstanding and magnificent portrait which not only contains a wealth of

important new material, but is also a delight to read" *The Times*

- *The Brontes - A Life in Letters* by Juliet Barker, Viking (1997) 415 pp (2nd copy)

BOOKLETS:

- *Notes on Charlotte Bronte: Jane Eyre* by Kathleen Good, Brodie Notes 78 pp
- *Notes on Emily Bronte: Wuthering Heights* by Norman Carrington Brodie Notes 76 pp
- *Bronte Society Transactions*, Vol 25 Part 1 April 2000 108 pp

LIBRARY RULES

Only current members may borrow from the library. Members may borrow one book or booklet plus one audio or video set at any one time. Borrowers undertake to return items within the time specified. Items may be borrowed by post. Any postage is the responsibility of the borrower.

BOOKS \$1 per book. (4 weeks)

VIDEOS \$2 per video set (2 weeks)

AUDIO TAPES \$1 per cassette up to a maximum of \$5 per set. (2 weeks)

BOOKLETS 50¢ (4 weeks)

LIBRARIAN: Maria-Louise Valkenburg 31 Epping Ave EASTWOOD NSW 2122

Other Items in the Library

BOOKS:

Regarding Jane Eyre ed by Susan Geason
Brontë by Glyn Hughes
Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys
Charlotte Brontë by Jane Sellars
The Crimes of Charlotte Brontë by James Tully

BOOKLETS:

Blackwood's Magazine
A Leaf from an Unopened Volume
Treasures of the Brontë Parsonage Museum
Brontë Society Transactions from 1985

AUDIO TAPES:

Jane Eyre (complete) Maureen O'Brien (reader)
14 cassettes (may be borrowed for 4 weeks)
Jane Eyre (abridged) Emma Fielding (reader)
3 cassettes
Letters of Charlotte Brontë Imogen Stubbs (reader)
2 cassettes
The Brontës of Haworth Christopher Cooper (reader)
3 cassettes

STREETS OF HAWORTH (continued from page 1)

At the southern end of Lord Lane is the Manor House, once belonging to the Lord of the Manor of Haworth. During the time of the Brontës it was the home of their doctor, Dr Ingham. Later he moved to a house in Mytholmes Lane

Sun Street lies at the bottom of main St. The Old Hall in Sun Street dates back to Elizabethan times and is said to be very very haunted! (I know, having stayed there.) Also it is said that there is an underground passage which leads to the church (one story) or the wine cellar at the Black Bull (another). At the junction of Sun St and Cold St is the

site of a ducking pond (for dipping nagging or scolding men or women, tradesmen who short-changed, and anyone else guilty of some petty offence.

As you will see, many street names go back along way. Others are definitely post Brontë, such as the ones that celebrate the famous family: Ann Street, Branwell Drive, Brontë St, Emily St, Heath-Cliff and Shirley St. Others relate to other famous Victorians: Baden St (Baden-Powell before he founded the scouts) and Nelson St (Duke of Brontë) while others celebrate exploration of hot and cold climes: Nile St and Arctic St.

RACHEL'S STORY

by Rachel Fairfax

So mistress is an author and I didn't even know it! She thought it safe to leave a copy lying around on the library table because she called herself Acton Bell. But when I was dusting and picked it up I had a peek at it. You could have knocked me down with a feather duster! It was her story even though she changed the names (except she kept me "Rachel"). But so as you won't get confused I'll use the book names instead of the real ones.

I took the liberty one night of removing the book from the library, and took it up to my room with a supply of candles -- just like Gilbert did with Mrs Graham's diary. What a revelation! Of course I knew most of the facts already and the book is mostly true, but I could tell she'd changed a few things here and there.

Now if *I* was telling the story I'd stick to the facts proper. And I'd tell it straight from start to end with none of this fancy going back and forth which I find so confusing.

I'd start by telling about the early times at Wildfell Hall when Mr and Mrs Lawrence were both alive. I came to the family when Frederick was about seven and Helen was just a babe in arms and I remember carrying her about the lanes of the village. But when she was three Mrs Lawrence died and because Mr Lawrence was in the navy the children had to be looked after by relatives. I went with Helen to Mrs Lawrence's sister at Staningley and Frederick was looked after by someone else.

Helen hardly knew her father. I don't know why he never came to visit her. There was a real mystery about him that I could never fathom. But Helen seemed to be very happy with Aunt and Uncle Maxwell, and so was I.

She was a strange one. She didn't play much like other children, and didn't often laugh. She was a real little Miss Joan of Arc -- hard as nails when it came to standing up for some principle or another, such as it being wrong to hunt God's creatures for sport. And she was always rescuing injured animals and nursing them back to health.

Her brother was quite different. He came to Staningley for a few weeks every year but he and Helen were never close. They were so different. He was as weak as thin gruel. He could always see three sides to every argument and whenever there was a problem he'd prefer to "wait and see" rather than act. No wonder Helen had a hard job persuading him that she needed to run away. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

When Helen decided the time had come to marry she fell for Huntingdon like a bucket down a well. I quite liked him in a way, but he had his problems. She could see that but to her, he was a challenge -- another of God's creatures to rescue. She thought she was strong enough for the two of them. How wrong she was! Now if she'd only married Boarham. That wasn't his real name of course and I think it was most unkind

to have called him that in the book. He wasn't really boring at all. Really a nice man in fact. He was only in his forties but to a young girl he seemed so old. What's more he was too set in his ways to reform, not that he needed it mind you. No, Huntingdon was to be the challenge.

Well, as the book tells, it didn't work out. Not that Huntingdon was quite as bad as he's made out to be. I love her dearly but I have to admit she isn't always the easiest person in the world to live with. And she was always going on about his hunting. No wonder he was away from home so much. Not that this excused his disgraceful behaviour when he was at home. That was really quite shocking.

There was a real tug-of-war with young Arthur. His father was determined to make a man of him while Helen wanted him to be a Nancy boy like her brother. Someone you could mould. My word she tried to be a sculptress of human beings as well as painter. But the stronger she resisted her husband's influence the more extreme he became. He taught Arthur to swear mainly out of spite for Helen. And because Helen reacted so violently to young Arthur being given an occasional wine and water Mr Huntingdon gave it to him often, as well as brandy and water just "to see how she likes it".

When he was away Helen'd give her son wine adulterated with an emetic so that he'd get a strong dislike for it. I know she meant well, but it

was a bit underhand if you ask me. When Mr Huntingdon died there was even gossip in the servants' quarters that she hastened his end by slipping some sort of poison into his medicine! I don't believe a word of it. She wasn't like that. But you can understand why they might have thought it.

Helen did keep a diary, though reading the book you might think she only wrote in it once or twice a year, which wasn't so. And I'm quite sure that whatever she confided to it she would never have been so silly as to reveal her plans for escape. And that business about her husband destroying all her paintings and painting stuff? I almost wish he had and then I wouldn't have had all that work in packing it all up to send on to Wildfell. No he just threw a few things into the fire and broke one or two others.

Well although I felt a little sorry for Mr Huntingdon I felt much more sorry for mistress and I was right behind her when she decided to escape. But I tried to tell her that the best time was when he was away, which was quite often. No, she always insisted on doing things the hard way -- slipping out at night while he was asleep was what we had to do. Besides she needed some moral cause as a trigger.

Alice Myers, the new governess was to be that trigger. She was a harmless little creature but Helen got it into her head that Arthur had brought her into the household as a sort of substitute wife. There was nothing really to make her think that, if you don't count some silly taunts of master. And I don't think Helen really believed there was anything in it. She just needed

a straw to explain why the camel's back broke.

But why for Heaven's sake did she think she'd be safe at Wildfell Hall? Yes, it was a long way from Grassdale and yes it was a secluded place. But really, it must have been quite obvious to Arthur that if she wasn't at Stanningley the only other person who would have been able to help her was Lawrence. And Arthur knew that the Hall had been empty for many years. It was just so obvious! If I was Lawrence I would have put her in some other place until it all blew over. A busy seaside town, for example, where people are always coming and going and nobody knows anybody. This would've been much better than going back to the house where she was born. Did she think Arthur was that stupid?

Of course Arthur didn't find her, but not because it was such a wonderful hiding place. I don't really think Arthur wanted to find her at all. He thought his blustering remarks to the Maxwells and his letter to Lawrence would be enough to convince his friends that he'd done all he could.

So here we were having to maintain the charade that we were newcomers to the district. Of course nobody at Linden-Car would have recognised Helen. She was only three when she left. But what about me? Many people, like Mrs Markham and Rev Millward, would have recognised me. Although it's been over twenty years, I don't think I've changed that much. So I couldn't go out of doors very often for fear of being recognised. And I couldn't even go to church which annoyed me greatly. We could have taken Arthur with us but

no, I had stay at home to look after Arthur.

Fortunately the only visitors to the house were the young folk, like Gilbert and Rose and Eliza. They were too young when we lived here before to remember me. But I had to keep out of the way when Rev Millward came to visit. He'd have known me for sure! Now you know what really annoyed me was that although he didn't know it was me as was living with Mrs Graham, he did know she had a maid. But when he scolded her for not coming to church the first week did he think of extending his pastoral visit to the maid? No, not a bit! He couldn't be bothered whether or not someone of the servant class graced his pews. Oh, I never did like him!

Well then when Arthur was dying we went back to Grassdale. I must say that Helen was a real angel at that time. I never saw her so gentle and caring. You could say that at last she could look after him like one of her sick lapwings, but I really think it went deeper than that. If only he'd recovered I really think he would have become a new man.

Now the bit I really chuckled over was the bit where Gilbert hears that Helen has remarried and that what's more Walter Hargrave is the one she's given her heart to. He travels furiously to Grassdale just in time to see the bride and groom coming out of the church. All is lost. But wait. No, it's not *Helen* Lawrence (as she was before she married Huntingdon) and *Walter* Hargraves. No, it's *Frederick* Lawrence and *Esther* Hargraves. A Lawrence-Hargrave wedding indeed but

not the one that Gilbert had expected.

Silly! Sounds like something out of one of Miss Austen's novels. I remember Helen telling me about some mix-up with a couple of Mr Ferris's in one of them. And I remember her sighing, as if she'd been the heroine herself, when she read that it was the brother Mr Ferris who'd got married, not her own. No, it wasn't like this at all in Helen's story (and probably Miss Austen made up that bit in her novel too). But perhaps, like Miss Austen, Helen thought it would add flavour to the story, like you add herbs to potato soup to make it tastier

So, finding that Helen is not the one who was being married Gilbert madly dashes to Staningley to see Helen. What, she wasn't at the wedding?! Apparently not. As if Helen wouldn't have attended her own brother's wedding! I ask you! And having inherited her uncle's estate she now had a fine carriage that she could use, and it were only twenty miles away. No Helen was there at Lawrence's wedding alright. It was Gilbert what wasn't. He came to Staningley a few weeks later but it had nothing whatever to do with Frederick's wedding.

It was only when he got to Staningley that Gilbert realised that she'd come into the money and was a real proper lady. She'll think I'm after her money. I'd better go. No, I'll just look at the outside of the house and then I'll go. Lucky for him he couldn't make up his mind on this occasion or he'd have missed Helen coming by in her coach. Won't you come in? I'm not sure whether you wish it. He comes inside. I'd better go. But you've only just

come. Sounds like something the travelling players put on at the fair last year. But it was like that, at least what I overheard. Mrs Maxwell really summed him up when she said "Mr Markham is over modest" just as I might have said of a jelly that didn't set properly.

Well then you get that comic bit about the Christmas rose. I'd have thought that this was just stuff made up for the story except that I happened to be outside near the window when Helen threw the rose. I got such a fright when Gilbert jumped out and picked it up. He didn't see me and when he jumped back in he left the window open, so I was able to see and hear all that nonsense about the rose being the something or other of her heart. It seems just like something out of some chapbook but this part happened exactly like that.

So she married him. Thank goodness he's so very different from Mr Huntingdon. Huntingdon was like a piece of hard stone with deep cracks and she soon realised that she couldn't make her sculpture out of him. But Gilbert was much more like soft clay. Having been a farmer I suppose he was manly enough. But in many ways he's like an old woman. Think three times before acting and then forget to act. He nearly lost her at the end because of his indecisiveness. But they seem to be happy enough together. She makes him dance to her tune like she used to do with her dolls when she was a girl and he seems to like it.

But what about the time when he thrashed Lawrence? Isn't that the act of a man of action? You know, I don't think that really happened. My guess is that Lawrence was

really thrown off his horse like he said he was and Gilbert came across him. Will I help him, won't I help him. Ride off and come back. Will I help, him, won't I help him? He was so relieved when he came back the third time and Lawrence was gone. Nothing to decide. Beat him with his whip? No, Gilbert would never have acted quick like that. And if he had why would Lawrence have kept quiet about it? To protect Helen? Lawrence could've made up some other reason for the fight and there's no way Gilbert would have gainsaid it.

No, if I'd been clever enough to write the story I would've made it much more of a true history and left out some of the fancy made-up bits. It's a good enough story the way it happened. And also I wouldn't have made this nonsense of writing it all to Halford. Why has every story these days got to be told in letters? They think we won't believe it otherwise do they?

But who could believe that someone writes letters about things that happened twenty years ago and not say things like "it's been very wet for this time of the year" or "how's your mother?". And why of all people write these things to Halford? It's as if Halford is someone Gilbert hasn't seen in twenty years. But Halford was his brother-in-law, married to Rose, and he sees him every year! I don't know, these educated folk might be very clever but sometimes they really overlook the obvious!

For information about The Australian Brontë Association contact Dr Christopher Cooper 31 Epping Ave EASTWOOD NSW 2122 02-9804-7473 (home) 02-9850-8920 (work) chris@maths.mq.edu.au
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