

The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter



Issue No 7 June 2001

THE BRONTË SISTERS' WICKED MEN

An Evening at Borders Bookshop, Friday 23rd February 2001



Susannah Fullerton, Marloesje Valkenburg and Brydie Maguire pace around the dining room table, reading from their novels about their "wicked" heroes.

Part of the audience at Borders Bookshop at Macquarie Centre.



REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT



This seems to be a newsletter of reviews. Perhaps I can begin by reviewing some of the things we have done so far this year.

The Borders Bookshop Evening was well attended and attracted attention from a number of passers by. Brydie Maguire (Anne), Susannah Fullerton (Charlotte) and Marloesje Valkenburg (Emily) portrayed the three sisters as they paced around the “dining room table” and discussed the “wicked men” of their respective novels.

This discussion included dramatic readings from the novels to highlight their differing attitudes towards the “wickedness” of their heroes. After a break for coffee I joined them, in the character of their old father, and we all read some of “our” poetry.

Then in March we focused on Emily. Beryl Winter, Kip Callender, Michael Links, Marloesje Valkenburg and Anne Harbers presented reviews of some of the Emily biographies. Edited versions of these reviews appear in this newsletter. Then Julie Dunesky and Deborah Franko did a double act. Julie presented a review and Deborah sang a couple of Emily’s poems that she had set to some “blues” music. Emily interpreted by a jazz singer? Crazy, but it worked wonderfully! You never know what to expect when you come to a meeting of the ABA

Now the Australian representative of the Brontë Society, Owen Loney, has resigned and we have been asked by Haworth to provide a replacement. In the interim I have been “holding the fort” and one of the things I have done is to respond to a letter from the New Zealand representative. They would like to establish contact with us. And as you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, they are helping to organise a “Sunday with the Brontës” seminar in conjunction with the University of Auckland’s Centre of Continuing Education.

Perhaps you might just happen to be in Auckland at that time! And, of course, we’ll invite them to our weekend in September.

Quite a number of people have already reserved their accommodation at the guesthouse, La Maison, and several others have indicated their intention of attending. You should find a registration form, for the purpose of our planning, inserted in this newsletter.

Did you see the small Brontë item in last week’s Time Magazine (May 28)? I get Time but failed to notice it. Luckily Ann Lock drew my attention to it.

It seems there’s a musical version of Jane Eyre playing on Broadway at the moment, and it got five Tony awards. But despite this, it hasn’t been a roaring box-office success and would have had to close this week.

However Paul German, the composer, happened to tell this to a friend, Alanis Morissette. She’d seen the show on opening night and loved it, so she said, “Listen, I have this idea. What if I gave you guys a chunk of money and we took a bunch of underprivileged kids who have never seen a Broadway musical before to come see the show?” Nice to have a friend like this!

She gave \$150,000 to keep Jane Eyre alive for another week and bought blocks of tickets for two children’s groups. I wonder what the tough kids from Haarlem thought of it all? Alanis hopes the publicity might help to keep the production running for a few more weeks. And then will it come to Sydney? Let’s hope so.

REVIEW: A. Mary Robinson: "Biography of the Writings and Life of Emily Brontë" first published in 1883

Republished in 1997 by Routledge Press

Reviewed by Beryl Winter.



Mary was better known in literary circles as Agnes Mary Frances Duclaux (née Robinson) 1857 - 1944, born in Leamington. She was a poetess and novelist.

According to Charles Lemon, the editor of *Emily Brontë*, Mary's book evoked contrasting comments. Sidney Biddell, friend of Ellen Nussey, wrote to Ellen deploring Mary's lack of knowledge of Emily. He felt that there was too much mention of Branwell Brontë, though he gave the work a cautious welcome.

A second edition of the biography appeared in 1889, and a commentator in 1948 noted that she, Mary, had very little background information. Mary drew very heavily on Mrs Gaskell's stories and added others, even more patently improbable, that she had gleaned from Mrs Sugden, of 'The Black Bull', and from two ladies who helped out at the Parsonage. However, Charles Morgan's belated appreciation of Mary's *Emily Brontë*, which appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* commented that she studied her subject and wrote to it -- unlike some 'Brontë' writers who had often "hung their own coat or petticoat on a Haworth peg..."

As have other writers, Mary paints the picture of the early childhood of the Brontë sisters -- the deaths of Maria and Elizabeth and their mother, resulting in Charlotte becoming 'the little mother' to Emily and Anne, and to Branwell.

Upon Charlotte's return from Roehead, Emily and Anne were introduced to the rudiments of French, English and Drawing by Charlotte, but it was their afternoon walks on the moors which transformed Emily from an awkward girl into a happy and uninhibited one. She was at home talking to her friends -- the birds and animals -- telling them stories. Not for Emily the social graces and the (to her) pointless, empty conversations.

The only person with whom Emily felt comfortable was Ellen Nussey, Charlotte's friend. Otherwise, writes Mary Robinson, Emily's whole devotion was to Haworth, her home, the desolate moors and the wildlife. She felt secure cooking, cleaning and taking over the work of the parsonage -- helping the villagers when the need arose, hardly exchanging a word. Yet she knew these people, their histories and their language well.

Through all the sadness of her aunt's death, Tabby's illness and her father's failing eyesight, it was Emily who tolerated Branwell's self-pity and despair at being rejected by the woman whom he hoped would offer him a good, comfortable peaceful life, namely his employer's wife.

In this biography, as in many others, the reader's attention is drawn to the literary material available in the Brontë household. The children had access to the writings of Sir Walter Scott, Southey and Coleridge. Newspapers too brought tales of Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington, and they had their favourite magazine -- *Blackwoods*. It was hardly surprising that their fertile imaginations produced their own versions of the Tory politics of the day, which we find in their "Juvenilia" stories.

Mary was adamant that Branwell did not contribute to the writing of *Wuthering Heights*. She points out that various critics had said that the book "reads like a dream of an opium-eater", and that during the course of writing this work Emily had at her elbow an habitual opium-eater -- Branwell. There are certainly striking similarities between Branwell's language and that of Heathcliff. For example, in one of Branwell's own letters the following words appear:

My own life without her would be hell. What can the so-called love of her wretched, sickly, husband be to her compared to mine?

In *Wuthering Heights* Heathcliff is attributed with the following anguished cry:

Two words would comprehend my future -- death and hell; existence after losing her would be hell. Yet I was a fool to fancy for a moment that she valued Edgar Linton's attachment more than mine. If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love in eighty years as much as I could in a day.

Mary comments that Emily no doubt learned, from enduring Branwell's vices, the darker secrets of humanity necessary to her tragic incantation "They served her, those passionate outbreaks of her brother, even as the moors she loved, the fancy she courted, served her". Mary adds the following comments: "of the circumstances which assisted in Emily's masterpiece -- the neighbourhood where she lived, her own character, and the quality of her experience, there is a fourth -- her acquaintance with German literature, especially Hoffman's tales. Her study of German influenced and helped to shape the fashion of her thoughts.

Mary Robinson points out that Emily was surrounded by sadness and melancholy. To me, the wildness and darkness in Emily's writings were synonymous with the moors, which were to her a friend and a solace for her solitary spirit, as they were to Cathy in *Wuthering Heights*. I believe Mary Robinson has portrayed the vibrant, talented, free spirit of Emily Brontë that existed beneath that austere exterior, even though her sources were meagre and sometimes inaccurate.

In conclusion, I leave you with a quote from *To The Hilt*, by Dick Francis, one-time national steeplechase champion jockey and for many years a prolific writer of excellent mysteries. Dick writes: "Solitary people are never alone". Certainly, Emily Brontë was not.

THE 2000 CHRISTMAS LUNCH

An extract from the report of our activities as contained in the Brontë Society's Annual Report

Probably the high point of our year was our Christmas lunch in the historic parish rooms next to St Jude's church in Randwick (not far from the suburb of Bronte). We watched a re-enactment of the proposal scene from *Wildfell Hall* where Helen throws the rose out of the window after Gilbert fails to realise its significance. Gilbert made the pretence of jumping out to retrieve the rose but as we were on the second floor he did not quite carry it through!

A happy coincidence of times was the fact that while sipping our pre-lunch drinks a new set of bells from England arrived accompanied by a community procession with many people in Victorian costume. After joining in the excitement outside we returned to our lunch while one of our members read Anne's poem *Music on a Christmas Morn* which tells of the sound of the bells "upon the wintry breezes borne".

SUNDAY WITH THE BRONTË SISTERS

at Old Government House, Auckland NZ
Sun 8 July 10am – 4pm
Cost \$NZ55, inc. lunch
To be held by the Brontë Society in NZ and the University of Auckland Centre for Continuing Education. Talks are: Beverley Hicks: "The Brontës and their world in a New Zealand

perspective", Kirsty Webb: "Reflections on Villette and "The Brontës' relationship with their Publishers", Rose Lovell-Smith: "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" and "Wuthering Heights".

**REVIEW: Robert Barnard
"Emily Brontë"**

Reviewed by Anne Harbers



This biography is one of the series of "Writers' Lives" from the British Library. It is richly illustrated with many pictures of people, places and scenes around Haworth and concludes with a chronology, a good index, and a brief "Further Reading" section.

The Author is Robert Barnard, ex-chairman of The Brontë Society and a writer of crime novels. He is also author of a number of works of literary criticism, including *A Short History of English Literature*, and books on Charles Dickens and Agatha Christie.

This biography could be described as light and easy to read. At 112 pages it aims to offer a comprehensive view of the details of Emily's education, family circumstances, and limited travel. It seems to me to be a good basic book for a high school student or one wanting some background on Emily without too much in-depth analysis.

The writer aims to be light and conversational, though I sometimes found the book somewhat awkward and had to reread a passage to get the point. For example: "At the beginning of November Aunt Branwell put an end to Emily's Brussels months as surely as she had enabled them to take place, this time by dying."

The author draws from a wide variety of sources -- writings from Emily as well as Charlotte, Anne, Patrick and Branwell, comments from the various servants and from friends (Mary Taylor commented that the close, near-exclusive upbringing of the children could be described as "potatoes in a cellar".)

He refers to previous biographies, especially Juliet Barker's. Whilst he acknowledges her careful scholarship, he several times presents a differing viewpoint. Also crucial to this biography are recent discoveries concerning the Brontës' studies of the classics, glimpses of Emily through Branwell's recently published juvenilia and little known writings from her year in Brussels.

One account of Emily that is quoted is that of the Haworth stationer John Greenwood, who Barnard describes as a "

man clearly in the grip of a crush and seeing through double-strength rose-tinted spectacles." Greenwood's comment about Emily on one occasion when she was returning home from the moors, acknowledging him with "sweetness of manner", his comments that "her countenance was lit up with a divine light" shows him responding to something in Emily that other more educated and sophisticated observers were blind to.

Barnard looks at M. Heger's view of Emily. He, like her father, believed her to have had the more exciting and challenging mind of the two sisters, and said: 'She should have been a man -- a great navigator ... her strong imperious will would never have been daunted by opposition or difficulty.'

But he also perceived the darker side of that strong will, and commented on the relationship between the two sisters, noting that Charlotte allowed Emily "to exercise a kind of unconscious tyranny over her".

Emily, it seems, used her peculiarities and jagged edges as a weapon to get what she wanted, and to push her sister into the position of subordinate and apologist.

Another issue discussed is the account of Emily's opposition to publication, which Barnard comments has been seen by other biographers as a romantic scorn for literary success. He comments that this is nonsense as every line of Emily's that came before the public in her lifetime came through a form of vanity publishing.

He also feels that the influence of the sisters on each other's works should be a consideration, despite Charlotte telling Mrs. Gaskell that the comments of her sisters seldom affected the work she was engaged in.

He feels that the influence that one sister had on the others was incalculable, or served as a stimulus to do something very different. *Agnes Grey*, he says, for example, which seems to hark back to Austen and Maria Edgeworth, could have influenced *The Professor* and stimulated Emily's contrary instinct to have nothing to do with such alien fictional ideals.

In his final chapter, Barnard says: "Emily's peculiarities -- her ruthlessness, her social boorishness, her shying away from all but one or two relationships -- can generally be put down to a careful protectiveness towards her own creative work. She instinctively knew her genius would only flourish in congenial conditions, and she single-mindedly set about ensuring that she got those conditions."

Mrs Gaskell, in a passage she deleted from the *Life*, talked of Emily's "stern selfishness". Barnard comments that Mrs. Gaskell and others may have had problems accepting conduct in a woman that in a male genius would not cause such remark.

One finishes reading this biography feeling a little uncertain about how the author viewed Emily Brontë herself. You do not get the impression that he particularly liked Emily, he does not draw particular attention to Anne, whereas he seems to champion Charlotte. He does however acknowledge that "Emily produced before she was thirty the one English novel that in

scope, grasp and dramatic force begs comparison with the greatest plays of Shakespeare.

On that note, ripe for debate amongst ourselves, I recommend this biography for a good overview and starting place for your exploration of Emily Brontë.

NO MORE BRONTË SOCIETY TRANSACTIONS

There are major changes afoot planned by the Brontë Society that will see the end of the *Brontë Society Transactions* after 107 years. But they will be replaced by a new journal *Brontë Studies: The Journal of the Brontë Society*. It will "have a fresher look and be more attractive to Universities and Libraries" and its frequency will increase from the current two issues per year to three or possibly four per year.

A major change will be that it will be no longer bundled with the Brontë Society membership subscription.

WINTER SCENES OF HAWORTH

Photographs taken by Christopher Cooper in February 2001



THE MANY "LIVES" OF EMILY BRONTË

Reviews of Emily Biographies, Saturday 7th April 2001



L to R: Beryl Winter, Kip Callender, Anne Harbers, Michael Links, Marloesje Valkenburg, Julie Dunesky, Deborah Franco



Some of the audience



Julie reviews *Emily Brontë: A Chainless Soul*



Marloesje reviews Chitham's *Life*

REVIEW: Marianne Thormahlen: "The Brontës and Religion" **published by Cambridge University Press 1999** **Reviewed by Annette Harman**

Marianne Thormahlen claims the fundamental purpose of writing this book is "to open up new and richer channels of perception to Brontë readers unfamiliar with the religious dimensions in the novels". In my opinion, she amply achieves her stated purpose.

The "religious dimensions" are attentively presented by a researcher who has in mind the secular age we inhabit. She is a pioneer in exploring each of the female Brontë writers (with the emphasis on Charlotte and Anne) in regard to their treatment of religion in their works (poetry, novels, letters, prefaces and diary entries.)

The importance of religion in the Brontë Parsonage and the attached Church, religious

discussion and disputes by denominational clergy and lay people and early Victorian Christian society are aligned to four fundamental perspectives to examine the religious dimensions, predominately in the novels. These are the denominational, doctrinal, ethical, and clerical dimensions

On denominations she has chapters on "A Christian home in early nineteenth-century England", "Evangelicalism", "Dissent and The Brontë Family" and "Charlotte Brontë and the Church of Rome".

The doctrinal perspective is presented with four chapters entitled: "The Brontës in the



Theological Landscape of Their Time”, “God and His Creation” and “Faith and Redemption”.

Then follow two ethical chapters: “Forgiveness and Revenge” and “The Christian Life”.

The clerical perspective has two chapters entitled: “Clergymen in the Brontë novels” and “The Enigma of St John Rivers”.

By listing the above chapter headings of this book in this review, I am hoping to not only encourage people to consider reading this book, but also to realize how accessible Thormahlen has made the religious dimensions for her audience.

Thormahlen claims, “... I do not offer complete readings of the novels from religious perspectives, merely possibilities for readers to assimilate or reject as they see fit”.

In her Introduction she also states that ... “Fearlessness characterises the Brontës' handling of religious issues, too; though entirely typical of and in tune with their time in their concern with religion, and in the issues they raise, they are unusual in the courage and independence of their explorations To me, they express the heroism of the pilgrim rather than the wrath of the rebel”. Unlike many writers, notably Stevie Davies, who wrote “Emily Brontë: Heretic” with partial and selective understanding of the dynamic Christian community of which Emily was a part; Thormahlen traces the pervasiveness of Faith in early nineteenth century England for the Brontë writers.

It is not until the second half of the nineteenth century that Matthew Arnold wrote in *Dover Beach* (generally assumed to be written in 1851):

The Sea of Faith was once, too, at the full, and round Earth's shore lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled. But now I only hear it's melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, retreating, to the breath of the night wind, down the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world.

The fullness, roundness and brightness of Faith is likened to a beautiful enveloping garment, with the withdrawal of Faith dreariness, bareness and nakedness, and what emerges is a dark world of “ignorant armies” who “clash by night”.

Thormahlen's discussion of “Faith and Prayer” in chapter six outlines belief and faith in the novels and locates “the anguish of doubt” occurring in the letters and poems of Charlotte and Anne. Interestingly Emily's poem, ‘No coward soul is mine’ rejects the possibility of doubt. Nineteenth century theologians' emphasis on the childlike simplicity of faith and the struggles of nineteenth century Christians to achieve and maintain their Faith and acquiesce in God's will is discussed. But what I enjoyed the most in this part was the wise and well-chosen quotation from Baumber with which Thormahlen chooses to conclude her book.

“One may argue about whether the source of Emily's inspiration was Christian, but I doubt whether her father would seriously have quarrelled with her view, that God lies within us. He would simply have suggested that the trappings of formal religion played a larger part in fixing Him there than she was willing to concede”.

In my opinion, this is a very useful book.

DO YOU RECOGNISE THIS VILLAGE?

This photograph appeared in a travel publication London 2001. The accompanying article describes some of the literary shrines that one can visit in England, and it describes this as “**the village of Haworth, nestling in the Yorkshire Moors**”. But I can't reconcile it with the Haworth I know. Is it really Haworth, taken from an unusual angle, or is it some other place entirely?



published by Country Life 1929
Reviewed by Kip Callender



**BOOK REVIEW: Charles Simpson:
“Emily Brontë”**

Simpson gets his information concerning the character and appearance of Emily from her contemporary, Ellen Nussey and acknowledges that Nussey provided “the best description of Emily that anyone has written”. The description begins with Emily’s physiognomy and then continues with an account of her character. Simpson notes that “Emily drew her vitality from the moors”. I have read that sentiment so often, I wonder who first expressed it?

There is considerable discussion of the two schools, Law Hill and Roe Head, as well as the location of the buildings, at the time when Emily and her sisters were there. I received the impression that both were in dales and moorland country in Emily’s time but have since been surrounded by the closer settlement. Now there are old factories and close-packed, blackened houses.

The most outstanding characteristic I observed in this work is the remarkable detail recorded. The considerable detail about Emily and Branwell’s schools and jobs is typical. There is also some history of a real-life character, Jack Sharp who built Law Hill and devastated the lives of the associated Walker family.

Simpson asserts that Jack Sharp was “the prototype of Heathcliff”. Amongst the detail of the unfortunate members of the Walker family is the observation: “It was the story, among others that Emily heard at Law Hill; and deep in its roots lay the tyranny and unscrupulous ways of Jack Sharp that ruined the family fortunes.”

Simpson points out that the stories from the Southowram (Law Hill) location are more like those in *Wuthering Heights* than any related to Haworth. Simpson also mentions that there was a servant, Mr Earnshaw, at Law Hill when Emily was in residence.

The accuracy and detail in Emily’s research is praised. There is considerable discussion about the date 1500 that Emily puts above the front door at *Wuthering Heights*. Simpson asserts that the date is in error and that this was “one of her very few mistakes”. Is this not fiction? Does inaccuracy about dates matter? It is at this point that Simpson’s detail is somewhat excessive and causes him to deviate from his subject a little.

At this stage I was getting to the point where I was tempted to scan rapidly seeking any snippet of interest. But I could hardly flip through a chapter entitled “The Moors”. After three pages of irrelevancies it examines “moors”, “Sladden Brook” leading to the relationship between Sladden Brook, Ponden Hall and the flood of 1824. Simpson notes that Ponden Kirk is the “Pennistone Crags” of *Wuthering Heights*.

The common claim that “Top Withins” is really “*Wuthering Heights*” is dismissed since the size of the former would not “merit any connection with the house of the novel”.

Finally, he quotes a comment on the family tree in *Wuthering Heights*: “in actual life I have never come across a pedigree of such absolute symmetry – it is a remarkable piece of symmetry in a tempestuous book.”

**BOOK REVIEW: Winifred Gérin “Emily Brontë – A Biography”
Oxford University Press 1971**

Reviewed by Michael Links

The biographer begins by telling of the birth of Emily. She was born on 30th July 1818, the fifth child of a family whose eldest was only four years and three months old. The old servant said that she was the prettiest of the children. Then Gérin takes us through the death of her mother and her school days at Cowan Bridge.

Gérin goes on to discuss the childhood circumstance that made up her

personality. She mentions the juvenile writings, Emily’s admiration for famous people of the time such as the explorer Captain Edward Perry and the young Victoria.

We read of the Gondal Chronicles and the stories and sense of humour of Mr Brontë’s parishioners, all of which is reflected in *Wuthering Heights*. Further



ideas were inspired by Emily's time at Law Hill when, in 1837, Emily took a teaching position.

One of the few people that Emily took notice of was Willie Weightman, one of her father's curates. His conduct towards the entire female population of the district was mercurial. But Emily really preferred animals. She loved her dog Keeper, she being the only one who could control him.

In chapter 10 Gérin follows Emily to Brussels for further schooling. Emily did not like her time there, but she developed a remarkable knowledge of French. Her French essays from this time were preserved and are a "triumph for teacher and pupil".

We come to the discovery, by Charlotte, of Emily's poems and the decision, despite Emily's reluctance, to publish them. The self-published book of

poems sold only two copies. But Emily did find a publisher some time later, for her novel *Wuthering Heights*. She was fundamentally a poet, however, and the poet's eye for meaning pervades this novel. For her, the love that could unlock the most imprisoned heart sprang from a full communion with nature.

Gérin concludes with an account of Emily's final illness. She describes how Emily refused to see a physician and reflects on the cause. As she declined physically, Emily grew stronger mentally and spiritually and had many of the characteristics of a mystic. Charlotte never referred to her as such though, possibly to protect her from accusations of paganism. Emily's mysticism followed in a different direction to the spirituality of conventional religion.

REVIEW: Edward Chitham: "A Life of Emily Brontë" published by Blackwell 1987

Reviewed by Maria-Louise Valkenburg

Chitham describes his book as an "investigative biography", with himself as the investigator. He points out that some facts about her life are well-known while others have been substantiated through research in the last few years. But this leaves many questions that, unfortunately, have yet to be answered.

The author states that the reason we know anything at all about Emily Brontë is through the letters of Charlotte, Anne and Ellen Nussey, through eyewitness accounts from Haworth residents and servants at the parsonage, and through Charlotte's biographical introduction to *Wuthering Heights* and her portrayal of Shirley.

There's plenty of evidence from the children's juvenile writings, says Chitham, that the children often quarrelled between themselves. And Emily was up there with the best of them. The author quotes a poem by Branwell which, although it refers to a fictional Emily, nevertheless gives some insight into his sister's fiery personality. Oddly, most Emily biographers fail to mention it. It comes from *The Foundling* and describes Emily in a temper. We can see the potential here for the future creation of Cathy and Heathcliff.



*Eamala is a gurt bellaring bull,
Shoo swilled and swilled till she drank her full;
Then shoo rolled abaat
Wi' a screeaam an' shaat
And aat of her pocket a knife did pull.
An' wi' that knife shoo'd a cutt her
throat
If I hadn't gean her a strait waist-coit;
Then shoo flang and jumped
and girmed and grumped,
But I didn't caare for her a doit
A sooin shoo doffed her mantle of red
Shoo went an' shoo ligged her daan aent
bed,
An' theare shoo slept
Till the haase wor swept
And all the goid liquor wor goan fro her head.*

The poem seems to tell of a day when Emily screamed in temper and perhaps threatened to stab herself. The poem has a fictional element in it but the biographer relates a story told by one of the servants that tells of the children running riot in the house and one of the servants having to call for help from the village.

As a teacher, I can't help quoting from a letter Charlotte wrote about what she thought of the students at Roe Head. Chitham was

discussing the time when Emily was a student there and Charlotte was a teacher.

“I had been toiling for nearly half an hour with Miss Lister, Miss Marriott and Ellen Cook striving to teach them the distinction between an article and a substantive ... The thought came over me that I am to spend the best part of my life ... forcibly suppressing my rage at the idleness, the apathy ... and the most asinine stupidity of those fat-headed oafs.” Emily was very much alone at Roe Head and there was very little communication between the two girls.

Chitham believes that the setting for *Wuthering Heights* is not Haworth but Halifax. Emily was thoroughly familiar with the landmarks in the Shibden Valley, Halifax, where Law Hill (the school at which Emily taught) was located. There was the chunky stone-cased house called High Sunderland located along one of Emily’s walks and another old house along the valley to Shibden. In the Brontë Society Transactions No 34 the Halifax historian T. W. Hansen noted similarities with High Sunderland and *Wuthering Heights*. In the Brontë Society Transactions No 67, Hilda Marsden noted that Emily couldn’t just have relied on engravings she’d seen but described the landscapes of the Shibden Valley and district as though she had actually seen them.

At Lockwood’s first visit, we are told that *Wuthering Heights* faces south and is located below the brow of a hill over which the north wind blew. The main door to the house had the year 1500 engraved above it. There is nothing historical about the farms such as Top Withens in Haworth. The windows of High Sunderland were deep-set as in a castle. Like *Wuthering Heights*, it was also the second most imposing building in the area, the first being Shibden -- Emily’s inspiration for Thrushcross Grange. Shibden, like Ponden Hall, was surrounded by large parks and green trees.

Only in one respect does Emily depart from the geography of Shibden -- her distances are too great. The novel mentions a distance of 4 miles between *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange but running this distance non-stop as mentioned in the novel would seem to be quite a feat. But Shibden can be seen from High Sunderland and the distance from Top Withens to Ponden Hall is about 2 miles.

Another interesting fact about Emily that I didn’t know was her pistol shooting. Her father gave her lessons.

“She knew she had gratified him, and she would return to him the pistol, saying “load again papa,” and away she would go to the kitchen, roll another shelf-full of teacakes, then wiping her hands, she would return again to the garden, and call out, “I’m ready again, papa.”

And so they would go on until he thought she had had enough practice for that day. “Oh!” he could exclaim, “She is a brave and noble girl. She is my right-hand, nay the very apple of my eye.”

I enjoyed reading about the mundane chores she did every day, when she got up in the mornings and what she did, where and how she read her books, her bread-making etc -- and, of course, how she spent her last day on earth. But the most interesting part of this biography I found was the discussion of the novel itself.

Edward Chitham says that the fabric of *Wuthering Heights* was oral -- the story was intended to be spoken aloud and heard, regardless of whether the speaker is Nelly, Lockwood, Joseph or Catherine. Throughout her life, Emily heard stories told as well as read, especially from her father, who told of the Irish rebellion for instance. Ballad forms and speech underlie the novel.

Emily was influenced by writers such as Byron, Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth and Shakespeare. There is the theme of duality or ambiguity throughout the novel -- Maria and Elizabeth, Anne and Charlotte, Catherine and Heathcliff, Hareton and young Catherine; there is the theme of separation and reunion also. Gondal themes such as infidelity and nature also make their appearance.

I’ll finish by referring to some reviews of *Wuthering Heights* as reported by Chitham. *The Examiner* said that “the book had considerable power”. Quite an understatement I think. *The Britannia* said it was “strangely original”. *The Atlas* said it had a sort of rugged power. And an unidentified reviewer said it was “a work of great ability” and that “the talent concerned was of no common order”.

But, to my mind, the best quote of all was that of Douglas Jerrold whose review compared Emily’s novel to *Jane Eyre* and said that “Emily’s word was unfortunately not equal in merit but had a fresh, original and unconventional outlook. The writer wants but the practiced skill to make a great artist”.

PROGRAMME FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR

FRIDAY 22nd JUNE 7:30pm

THE MUSIC OF “WUTHERING HEIGHTS”

At the home of the president,
31 Epping Ave EASTWOOD

An informal evening where we relive the story of *Wuthering Heights* through musical versions of the book. We'll follow pieces of the librettos and discuss how each of the versions deals with the narrative.

There is no charge, but if you can, please bring something for supper.

SAT 1st SEP 2pm

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF AN UNPROTECTED FEMALE

At our usual venue:

The Meeting Room, New College, UNSW
Anzac Parade Kensington

Dr Tim Dolin from the Uni of Newcastle will explore *Villette*'s indebtedness to the Punch Series *Scenes in the Life of an Unprotected Female* that ran from November 1849 to April 1850.

FRI 21st to SUN 23rd SEP

THE THREE SISTERS WEEKEND

La Maison Guesthouse,
Lurline St, Katoomba

An informal and relaxing weekend, just a short walk from the Three Sisters at Echo Point. There will be a couple of talks and a few informal activities but there will also be some opportunity for “free time”.

Accommodation and meals are your own responsibility. A registration fee of \$15 (\$10 for pensioners/full-time students) covers morning and afternoon tea and other incidental costs. A registration form is inserted in this newsletter.

SAT 8th DEC 12:30pm

ABA CHRISTMAS LUNCH

At the Ultimo Community Centre.
Opposite the Powerhouse museum,
**enter from Willian Henry St
or Bulwara Rd**

Although this new venue doesn't have the 19th Century atmosphere of our previous venue, it is clean, bright and modern – and, importantly, it has plenty of space.

The lunch will be professionally catered for and the meal will be interspersed with Brontë entertainment. The cost will be announced later.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE AN ICON FOR “SPOOKY” TV

The TV series referred to here is set in various “haunted” locations around Australia and has nothing whatever to do with Haworth. But such is the reputation of the Parsonage it must have seemed appropriate to the *Sydney Morning Herald* to use it as an accompanying illustration!



British horror
novel
author
Emily
Brontë
has
written
the
novel
Wuthering
Heights
at
this
place.

Psychic chat a screaming success for TV series