

The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter



Issue No 9 August 2002

ABA MEMBERS EXAMINE SOME OLD BOOKS THAT THE BRONTËS MIGHT HAVE OWNED ... BUT DIDN'T

(Not in order) Brigitte LUCEY, Annette HARMAN, Susannah FULLERTON, Debbie WILLIAMS, Patricia STEBBINGS-MOORE, Deborah FRANCO, Michael LINKS, Gayle LINKS, Carol BOUGHTON, Catherine BARKER, Marloesje VALKENURG, Elisabeth COOPER, Jenny WATSON, Kelvin WATSON, Jan RODEN



STOP PRESS
WUTHERING HEIGHTS
adapted by Charles Vance
at the
GENESIAN THEATRE
420 Kent St Sydney
Performances Friday and Saturday
at 8pm and Sunday at 4pm
until 31st August.
Prices: \$20 (concessions \$16).
Tickets: 9645-1611

Don't Forget the BRONTE PICNIC AND SERVICE
at Ebenezer on Sunday 10th November
Picnic from 11:30am
Service and Readings 2pm
Details inside.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We've started to plan for next year. One major change is a change of venue. We are always experimenting to try to find the optimum place to suit our members. The Meeting Room at New College in the University of New South Wales has been very comfortable, especially after its refurbishment, but a number of members would prefer something more centrally located.

The venue we've come up with is the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts in Pitt St (near Bathurst St). It will be very appropriate to meet in a "Mechanics Institute" as the Brontë sisters made great use of the Mechanics Institute Library in Keighley.

Moreover the Sydney one was in existence at the time when Charlotte and Anne would walk the four miles from Haworth to Keighley, plus another four miles back, just to borrow some books.

The Sydney Mechanics Institute was operating from the present site some years before Sydney University began and at its inception, it was the only place of post-school education in Sydney.

Now this move, which is still experimental, will necessitate a change of time as well. The Institute is open on Saturdays only till 1pm. This will mean

that our regular meetings will run from 11am to 1pm.

Such a time change is bound not to suit some, but may well suit many others much better than the afternoon time-slot. Being right in the heat of the C.B.D. you'll be able to combine the Brontë meetings with city shopping.

The idea is that we'd begin at 11am with a quick cup of tea or coffee, get under way at 11:15 and finish just before 1pm. Then those of us who can will adjourn to a nearby coffee-shop for the usual post-meeting socialising. We'll see how this goes for 2003.

We thought we'd give the Bookshop Readings a miss next year. It's a lot of work to organise and we don't attract many bystanders. Moreover we've not been getting enough support for such events from our own members. It may be the time, it may be the locations, or it may be that not many members want to be read to.

We'll have our three regular meetings (at the Mechanics Institute), possibly a mid-winter special at my home, and the Christmas Lunch in December. And, being an "odd year" we're due to have another weekend away. The possibilities are to return to Katoomba, or possibly to go to Orange if we can interest a local literary group to join us.

But we're only just over half-way through 2002. Don't forget our next meeting on 14th September at New College. Because we had to swap Christine's talk with Jack Nelson's it will be Jack Nelson speaking on *Wuthering Heights*.

We've decided to make our November 10th (Sunday) "Church & Chapel" meeting into a picnic. There are picnic facilities right near the old historic Ebenezer Church so we'll assemble there from 11:30am. Everyone brings their own picnic. Then at 2pm we move into the church for a half-hour service in memory of the lives of the Brontës, such as they hold in Haworth every year. This will be followed by some dramatic Brontë readings on the theme of "Church and Chapel".

Deborah Franco has kindly offered to cater for the Christmas Lunch in her home at Westmead (Saturday 7th December). Being once again in a private home this will give a special family atmosphere to this function.

Thanks to Beryl Winter and Monica Massoud for their book reviews which you will find elsewhere in this newsletter. And thanks too to Ann Lock for telling us about her wonderful experiences in Haworth last Christmas.

Christopher Cooper

BOOK REVIEW

MORE PRECIOUS THAN RUBIES

Mary Taylor: Friend of Charlotte Brontë, Strong-minded Woman
by Joan Bellamy, Highgate Publications Ltd (Beverley) in 2002.

Reviewed by Beryl Winter

This book grew out of an earlier booklet published by Kinkles Cultural Services in 1997. The title of the 2002 publication is intriguing. The jewel known as the "RUBY" is a very rare and precious stone, of oriental origin, according to the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*. The RUBY is "DICHROIC", exhibiting two different shades when examined with a DICHROSCOPE, and the true RUBY has become very rare indeed and therefore "precious".

Joan Bellamy has revealed to the reader the "two different shades" of Mary Taylor's personality, at the same time indicating how "rare" and "precious" were her articulate comments and radical views on the situation of women in the nineteenth century.

Although Mary was sometimes "wonderingly silent" (Chapter 2, p.39), often towards her two friends, Ellen Nussey and Charlotte Brontë, she was affectionately concerned about their welfare. Mary urged Charlotte to extricate herself from the chains of convention and family ties; it was Mary who encouraged Charlotte to go to Brussels. She also attempted to persuade Ellen to join her in her journey to New Zealand, or, if

she could not "to read, read, read" (Chapter 2, p.35). Charlotte's letter to Ellen about Mary's help with her journey to Brussels is recorded by Joan Bellamy (Chapter 2, p.42) as follows:-

Mary's price is above rubies ... I have in fact two friends, you and her, staunch and true ..."

Mary's views of friendship are set out by Bellamy on page 39 of chapter 2, as follows:-

"...(those) who keep up our faith in mankind by giving proof of their goodness, and rouse the ever returning wish for their welfare and liking for their company."

The author describes these three women, Mary, Ellen and Charlotte, as follows (Chapter 1, p.8):

"Charlotte was poetic and dreamy, Ellen sentimental. Mary was passionately, even simplistically, practical, over-confident in her own judgement and tactless. her practical common sense led her early to recognise that if they did not marry, all three had to face the problems of earning a living or enduring poverty."

Thrown together at Roe Head Girls' School kept by Margaret Wooler, inevitably there were differences and arguments. But it was Mary who constantly urged Ellen and Charlotte to fight for better rights and recognition, not only for themselves, but for all women.

Joan Bellamy points out the differences, not only of their respective natures, but also the position in society to which each belonged financially. The period during which their lives intertwined was fraught with industrial trouble and religious dissent, giving rise to the LUDDITES and CHARTISM. Prior to the three young girls' meeting at Roe Head School in 1831, the industrial disturbances in England had been exacerbated by the wars with France (1795-1815).

As Bellamy points out, these wars affected the export trade with Europe upon which the woollen and textile industries of the East Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire were heavily dependant. Mary's family dated back to the sixteenth century, and apparently were able to profit from the introduction of steam-driven power and the factory system. "They were",

writes Bellamy, “(though radical) innovative and applied themselves to money-making and acquiring knowledge and skills by travel and education”.

It was this family trait which encouraged Mary to set out for New Zealand, assisted by the prospect of support from her brother, Waring, who had established a business and house in Wellington. Her other brothers, John and Joe, while generous towards her monetarily, would not have been, notes Bellamy, particularly congenial companions for Mary.

It seems clear from the author’s comments in Chapter 6, which deals with the publication and contents of *The First Duty of Women* (articles by Mary Taylor) published in 1870, that Mary had succeeded in her “challenge to women’s subordination. ... She had learnt to be economically and psychologically independent.”

In the case of Ellen Nussey even if Mary had been able to persuade her to emigrate to New Zealand – not only Ellen’s own attitude with respect to acceptance of the conventions imposed on women, but the fact that the Nussey family was not as affluent as were the Taylors, would have prevented such a move. The Taylors, because of their superior money-making skills, were in a better position financially than the Nussey family.

Charlotte’s situation financially was less than ideal and even less conducive to her deserting her sisters, father and brother. As the author so eloquently points out, Charlotte’s financial situation was not such as provided her with an escape route from her family. Charlotte’s own tendency to cling morbidly to the Church was encouraged by Ellen Nussey and deplored by Mary. What others applauded as admirable and noble in Charlotte’s apparent “self-suppression, self-sacrifice and patient endurance”, Mary attributed to the “selfishness” of her family which virtually made a prisoner of Charlotte.

When Mary returned from New Zealand, having made money from her own business efforts and the acquisition of property, the author points out that Mary found the situation for middle-class women virtually unchanged but that the women’s rights movement was slowly progressing. In June 1866 Mary’s first article to the *Victoria Magazine* appeared. In subsequent articles we learn that Mary advocated “that women should reject passivity, take independent action and work for what they aspire to. This is what constitutes their ‘first duty’”. Bellamy comments that Mary showed that the “rules which help women poor and ineffectually occupied have been broken by working class women in the industrial areas”, while

their middle-class sisters are suffering often because of their own apathy.

This fascinating and knowledgeable account of Mary Taylor’s life by Joan Bellamy opens up a great deal of history and food for thought. It is so clearly and eloquently written and presents any reviewer with a challenge. I have endeavoured to do it justice, in particular for those who have not yet read it.

In conclusion, one particular sentence (Chapter 6, p.98) caught my attention:-

“Taylor then looks to the future and suggests that domestic service will become an obsolete trade for women, a bold prediction when domestic service was the second largest category of employment after manufacturing!”

There are echoes of the rise and fall of domestic service – and its emergence again as a poorly paid “trade” for many women in our “global economy”.

JUVENILIA CONFERENCE
Austen, Brontë and others
Sunday 17th NOVEMBER
10am to 4pm
Cost \$35 including lunch and morning tea
UNSW
ENQUIRES: Susannah Fullerton (02) 9380-5894 or Christine Alexander
c.Alexander@unsw.edu.au
See the enclosed flyer

Brontë Christmas!

Don't be an Emily ... come and enjoy Christmas at the Brontë Parsonage Museum! ... Look what's on ...



I was met at Heathrow Airport by my friends on Friday 14th December 2001. As a Christmas present for me they had booked us into Haworth for the weekend. They found the booking extremely difficult as Haworth was practically booked out.

After a seven hour journey in the car we stayed in the Haworth Tea Rooms on Main Street, nearly opposite the Black Bull. Haworth is a pretty village at any time but at Christmas it sparkles. The shops were decorated in Victorian style with many Christmas gifts for sale. The main street was decorated with pretty Christmas light and I loved the greenery on the mantel shelves. I spent Saturday morning at the Parsonage and was thrilled to see the Brontë quilt on display. This quilt is rarely displayed because of its fragility. I also saw the original sampler worked by Aunt Branwell.

I came out of the Parsonage to crowds of people and all the activities in full swing. The

CHRISTMAS 2001 AT HAWORTH

by Ann Lock

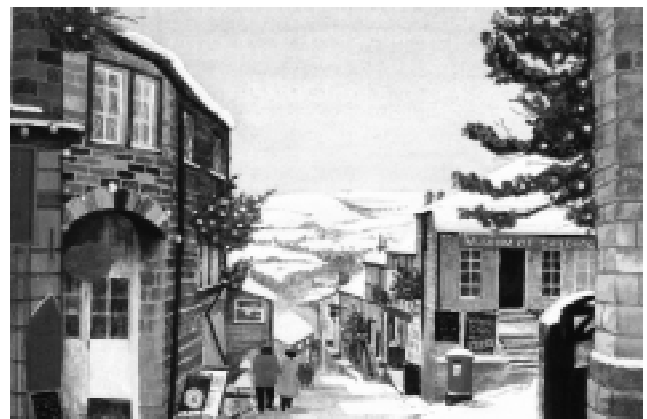
Morris dancers were performing and there were buskers and a concert in the church.

At 2 o'clock there was a procession from the church steps down to the Christmas tree at the bottom of the main street.

The Candlemas procession was led by the Town Santa Claus, the Holly Queen and attendants, the Morris Dancers and the Brass Band, followed by the people. The sound of the Brass Band playing Jingle Bells accompanied by the Morris Dancers jingling their bells created a very happy atmosphere. The Holly Queen handed out holly from a basket. This holly had been gathered by the children on the 'Scroggling The Holly' weekend.

Some people held torches and lit torches in front of the shops as they went down the old historic cobbled main street. Some people were dressed in period costume.

It was dark at 4 o'clock and the main street absolutely sparkled. We had to go to Keighley for dinner as everywhere was booked out in Haworth. Apparently Haworth is a popular place for holding Christmas functions. It was amusing watching ladies in evening dress and very high heeled shoes struggling down the steep cobbled main street. We finished the day by having drinks in the Black Bull.



On Sunday morning after having an interesting conversation with members of the English Brontë Society at breakfast we set out for my friends home in Hampshire.

"Christmas in Haworth is known for its traditional family atmosphere with beautiful street decorations, Victorian dress and old world charm." For me it was the perfect Christmas present.

THE HISTORY OF THE PRINTED BOOK

A talk give on Friday 2nd August 2002 to members of the ABA

by Christopher Cooper

The ultimate ancestor of the book was the epic tale that passed from generation to generation through oral tradition, but the earliest books that used some sort of physical medium used papyrus rolls. Prior to this there had been writing on bark and on stone but these media don't lend themselves to an extended work.

Papyrus is a coarse paper which, like all papers, is made from plant fibre. What makes it different to paper, as we know it, is that the beating of the central pith of the papyrus plant only partially de-fibres it. Papyrus was first made in Egypt where the papyrus plants grew in abundance along the Nile. Of course our word "paper" comes from the word "papyrus".

A typical papyrus roll was perhaps 40cm wide and 10 to 50 metres long. It was made by joining many pieces of papyrus together. These rolls were called "volumes" because they revolved around the central of wood or ivory.

The writing ran parallel to the long side and so was divided into columns. Because only one side of papyrus can be used the writing was on the inside.

The writing tool was a brush and the inks were made from carbon or red ochre. These substances were mixed with

water and dried into small cakes. They were used the way we used to use water-colour paints. The brush would be dipped into water and rubbed over the cakes. Being water soluble the inks could be washed off if you wanted to re-use the papyrus.



The obvious advantage of papyrus technology over stone tablets was the fact that they were much more portable. A less obvious advantage is that it allows a cursive form of writing. Letters chipped into stone have to be made up of pieces of straight lines. And cursive writing is very much quicker.

But the Greeks introduced an innovation which was able to double the writing speed over the reed brush. They replaced the brush with a pen, made by splitting a hard reed. The Greeks imported papyrus from Egypt but when it became hard to get they experimented with

using animal skins – parchment and vellum.

Vellum is a particularly high quality parchment made from calfskin. The word "veal" for the meat of young calves, and "vellum" are probably related. Vellum gradually took over from papyrus and by the 6th century had completely replaced it. It would be the medium of books for the next thousand years. One particularly important advantage of parchment over papyrus, apart from its durability, is that it can be used on both sides.

But around 100 to 200 AD another major development took place that completely changed the shape of the book. The roll gave way to the *codex* format. The codex book is the style of book that we know today, where there are pages joined along one edge.

About two thousand years before this a thing called a "polyptych" was used as a notebook. It consisted of two or more wooden plates, in each of which a large rectangular recess was made and filled with wax. It was possible to write on this surface with a stylus. The other end of the stylus was flattened out to provide a tool for smoothing out the wax to erase what had been written and prepare the surface for new writing.

The separate plates were hinged together to make the whole collection easier to carry around. And they were only used for temporary records. These were the Palm Organisers of the day! Sometimes they were hinged so that they folded up like a concertina, but often they were all joined at one edge like a book. A polyptych with two parts was called a “diptych” and one with three parts was called a “triptych”. These formats were used right up into the middle ages for religious art.

At some stage some unknown person decided that one could use papyrus sheets, or better still parchment, in place of the plates of wax. But despite the obvious advantages of the codex form of the book, it was used only for ephemera – things that had only a temporary significance. It was unthinkable to use it for a book, and especially for sacred writings!

To get some idea of their attitude to the codex you could imagine being in a cathedral, watching the reader walk

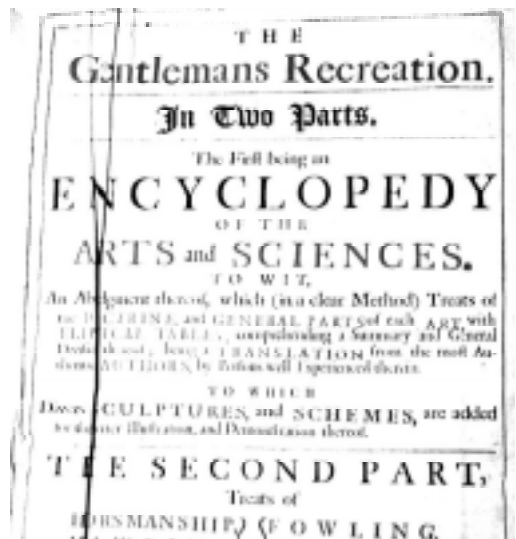
solemnly up to the lectern, and read from what appeared to be the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. The newspaper format is appropriate for today’s news but tomorrow it’s used to wrap up the scraps. One would never dream of using it for the Holy Scriptures. Such was the general attitude towards the codex format for the first few centuries A.D.

The group of people who latched onto the codex book with great enthusiasm was the early Christian Church. Perhaps fuelled by the influence of Greek culture and its emphasis on rational thought the early Christian Church was characterised by disputes and discussions, and the codex format for the scriptures and other sacred writings made it easier to find the chapter and verse with which to squash one’s opponents argument. I don’t mean to imply that the early Christian Church squabbled unduly – but you must remember that it was as yet a young movement and had many important theological matters to hammer out.

Certainly it’s the case that up to about 400 AD the vast majority of codex books were Christian writings of one form or another. The Christian Church embraced this new technology wholeheartedly while everyone else took much, much longer to warm to it. In fact it wasn’t until about 600AD that the roll

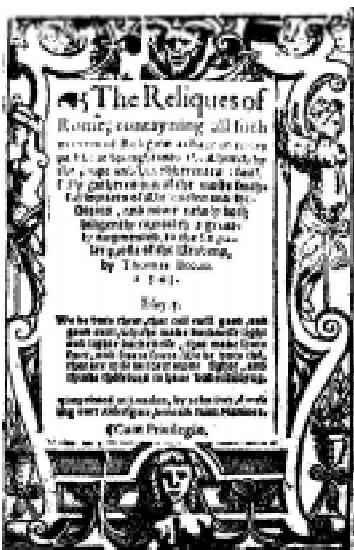
gave way completely to the codex.

It was from about this time that the practice of illuminating manuscripts began to be practiced. As more and more monks dedicated their lives to copying the scriptures and other works the practice of embellishing texts became more highly developed. The *Book of Kells* from about 800 AD is perhaps the best known production of this era. It and the Lindisfarne Gospels are huge books weighing about 10 kilograms and they necessitated better binding techniques. Books continued to be



illuminated long after the introduction of printing in the 15th century.

Now up to about the 12th century reading was only ever an oral activity. A book was simply a script to be read aloud. Even an 11th century monk or scholar, reading alone, could only do it by reading aloud. Silent reading began to appear in the 12th century among scholars but it took another century or two before it became



widespread amongst the upper middle class and the nobility. It took till the 19th century for silent reading to become widespread among working class people

The advent of silent reading changed the interior design of libraries. In the early monastic communities libraries were simply storage places for books. You had to do your reading in your own cell so as not to disturb others. Some libraries began to include small enclaves for private reading. But once silent reading had taken hold libraries began to be built on a much more open plan.

Another significant development in the history of the book was the invention of eye-glasses in 1280. Although life expectancy wasn't what it is today a large majority of those who had learnt to read were unable to continuing reading after about the age of 45. The invention of eye-glasses was a significant factor in increasing the demand for books.

While it's true that the printed book really helped literacy to take off the opposite is also true. There was, during the 1300's and early 1400's, a gradual increase in literacy. The increasing demand for books put such a load on the scribal industry. Prior to 1200 a few centres of copying were sufficient to satisfy the demand for books. But by 1440 the demand was so great that many monasteries were undertaking copying on a factory scale. The

invention of printing came, as most inventions do, at exactly the right time.

Copying was a joy to some scribes but sheer drudgery to many others. The conditions under which they worked has been compared to the oppressive factory conditions in Victorian factories. It was the practice of a scribe to add a colophon at the end of his work that gave the name of the scribe and perhaps stated when the work of copying was completed. But often they would add their own commentary on the job they were required to perform. One said, "Writing is excessive drudgery. It crooks you back and dims your sight, it twists your stomach, and your sides." Another wrote "Now I've written the whole thing: for Christ's sake give me a drink".

With the advent of printing the details of where, when and by whom the book was printed began to appear in this place – on the last page. Less often the title of the book and the name of the author might appear too.

However a *title page* at the front of the book, giving the name of the book, author, place and date of publication didn't appear till 1470 and didn't become common until the 1530's. Prior to this works were generally known by their opening words and this is how they were usually indexed in library catalogues. The King James Bible, had it existed in the 14th century, would have

been catalogued under the letter I for "In the beginning ..."

Books printed before 1500 are known as *Incunabula*. A few of these had numbered pages, but these were the exceptions. At first only the folios (sheets) were numbered, on their recto side (the right-hand page). If you had to refer to a page of folio 42 you referred to it as 42 recto (front) or 42 verso (back). Eventually this gave way to numbering every page, but it wasn't until the end of the 16th century that most books numbered their pages in the modern fashion. Running heads, that is having the title at the top of every page, first appeared in 1490 but, as with pagination, only caught on slowly.

Now it's commonly held that printing was invented by Gutenberg. Of course that's not true. Like every invention it seems, printing was first invented by the Chinese thousands of years before it was rediscovered in the West. But the only use that was made of it was for decorative purposes so it never developed beyond a primitive level.

Printing from woodcuts was known and practised in Europe for some centuries before Gutenberg. One of the most widespread use of the woodcut was in the manufacture of playing cards. But the Church objected to the way this encouraged gambling and urged printers to print *pieties* instead. These were devotional cards, rather like cigarette cards

except that pieties depicted saints rather than famous sportsmen. Pilgrims would purchase these when they visited the holy shrines much like we buy postcards. Of course they couldn't mail them home. Instead they took them back and used them as devotional objects.

Of course these aren't books, but a little before Gutenberg "block books" were developed. These consisted of a book with pages of woodcuts. The woodcuts generally had some picture with a couple of lines of text underneath. Since the work of carving out the text



was considerable it was never used for works with large amounts of text. Generally block books were printed one copy at a time on demand.

Many say that Gutenberg is famous for inventing printing by *movable type*. Even that, as we shall see, is not strictly true. A Dutchman, William Coster, attempted printing books from movable type carved from wood a few years before. However his endeavours weren't wholly successful because of the difficulty of

getting the wooden type to have a consistent height. Also while in principle the wooden type could be reused, in practice, after being used once they were too worn to be used again. Gutenberg's genius lay in his invention of printing from *movable metal type*.

Johannes Gutenberg had two important special skills – he was a jeweller and goldsmith. This meant that he was a precision worker in metals. He not only had the skills to mould his type very precisely, but he also had metallurgical skills.

One of his ventures, before he turned his attention to printing, was the making devotional mirrors. There was to be an exhibition of sacred garments of the Virgin and Christ in Aachen and Gutenberg manufactured a large stock of metal mirrors to sell to the pilgrims. There was a belief that the small circular mirrors would capture the magical powers issuing from the garments.

The mirrors were made of speculum metal which was traditionally 75% copper and 25% tin with a dash of antimony. But Gutenberg found a way of replacing the copper with lead – very much cheaper and easier to work with.

He used a similar alloy for type – mostly lead, a certain amount of tin and just enough antimony for hardness. Virtually the same proportions were used in the printing

industry right into the 20th century.

Until the beginning of the 19th century books were always bought unbound. You sent them off to be bound in a uniform style to match your other books. That's why old libraries have such a tidy uniform appearance. The pages came in signatures, generally a group of pages that were printed on one sheet and folded. To assist the binder a "signature" identified each group. These were usually the letters A, B, C, ... and were often accompanied by initials of the book title. So the book *Wuthering Heights* would identify the signatures as WHA, WHB, etc. This arrangement is still used in many modern books. But another device which was very common in the 15th and 16th centuries was to reproduce the first word of each page (or the first part of that word) at the bottom of the previous page. This was done even if, as was often the case, that this fragment was "CHAP-" because the next page began a new chapter. While this may have assisted the binder it was probably designed to provide a smooth passage from one page to the next, especially if the book was being read aloud.

The most famous old book is surely the *Gutenberg Bible*. In the early years of printing, various translations of the Bible were the most frequent books to be published. It can be said that the fact that the scriptures became available to the common people in their own

language helped to set off the Reformation. However the situation is more complicated than that. It could equally be said that the forces that were leading up to the Reformation created the demand that made the invention of printing inevitable. It's interesting too that the staunch Protestant monarch Elizabeth I was against the wide-spread dissemination of the Bible and placed strict controls on their production and importation.

Another very famous book was the *Liber Chronicarum*, better known as the *Nuremberg Chronicle*. This was a work containing historical and geographical information by Hartmann Schedel and illustrated by Michael Wolgemut. It was printed in 1493 by Anton Koberger. Koberger's printing and publishing establishment in Nuremberg was the largest such enterprise during the 15th and 16th centuries. He had 24 presses and a staff of over 100 compositors, proof-readers,

press-men, illuminators and binders. In the period 1473 to 1513, when he died, Koberger published over 200 titles.

The *Nuremberg Chronicle* is profusely illustrated with about 1800 woodcuts. A large number of these illustrated famous historical figures or the skyline of important European towns. These were only notional illustrations however and bore no relationship to the actual appearance of the person or place. Indeed many of the woodcuts were used to illustrate different people or towns on other pages. For example there were 96 blocks illustrating emperors, kings and popes. These were used to represent as many as 598 different individuals, suggesting that on average each of these illustrious leaders was one of half-a-dozen clones.

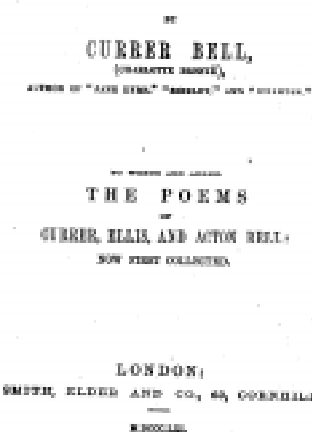
A number of changes took place in the typefaces over the next couple of centuries. Gothic typefaces were used at first but in England these had

given way to the Roman style and its many derivatives by about 1600. The letter "f" or "long s", as in "confessions" was used up to about 1800. (Note that the "s" that we know was used as well.) For her talk on the Roe Head Album in July, Christine Alexander displayed some pages on the overhead projector, and it was interesting to see that well into the 19th century the "long s" was still sometimes being used in manuscripts even though it had disappeared in print.

Since the days of the Brontës the main innovations in the history of the book have been the introduction of the paperback in 1935, desk-top publishing in the 1980's and the electronic book of the 1990's. However time doesn't permit any discussion of these and since the Brontës would probably not have approved of any of these last three innovations it's best to leave our discussion here.

The workshop that was conducted on 2nd August consisted of the above lecture, followed by an opportunity to handle a large number of old books from my collection, ranging from a page of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* and many from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Participants would have learnt that the world can't possibly go round the sun, how to treat a wound that one of your prize cocks incurred in cock-fighting (suck out the wound and administer a mixture of wine and urine) and how to turn lead into gold. There was also a very early edition of Currer Bell's *The Professor*. The evening finished with refreshments, courtesy of the many participants, and an examination of my large collection of pop-up books. The slightly risqué ones *The Naughty Nineties* and *The Roaring Twenties* proved to be the most popular!

THE PROFESSOR.



BOOK REVIEW

CEDAR HOUSE

by Edwin Wilson (Woodbine Press 2001)

Reviewed by Monica Massoud

Cedar House is much more than an Australian version of *Wuthering Heights*. It is mainly a story about the dispossession of Aborigines from their native land by the white settlers.

Darcy Doyle, being part-white and part-aboriginal, shares with the reader his struggle to come to terms with his cultural identity in a world that is racist and hostile to the indigenous way of life.

By forming an attachment to Cedar Island, his place of birth, Darcy is able to develop and nurture his aboriginal identity and learn to be proud of it. Unlike *Wuthering Heights*, of which the main theme is the turbulent love between Catherine and Heathcliff, it seems romance is only one of a number of features of *Cedar House*. That is, although the relationship between Darcy and Clare Woodburn (the daughter of Darcy's distant ancestor Peter Woodburn), has clear parallels with Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship in the Brontë epic, it is not nearly as passionate or as desperate as the love between the latter couple.

This is clearly shown through Darcy's contentment to pass the rest of his life with Cynthia Mason (a poet he met at a museum where he worked) after Clare's eventual self-destruction and death.

It seems that the most significant part of this novel is the question of mortality that it deals with. For instance, we observe Darcy eventually reject religion in favour of his increasing attachment to Cedar Island and thus the environment in general. This is demonstrated by his last years spent in restoring and developing the island, showing that his love for the land is more than merely material and a sign that he hopes to have an everlasting link with it.

The book has a lot to offer to readers not just because it has a link to the Brontë classic *Wuthering Heights* but because it deals with difficult and often controversial issues such as racism, religion, politics and love. Thus the novel is suited to all tastes and is definitely worth a read, if only to gain a wider understanding of these issues and perhaps more open mind.

OUR NEXT MEETING

Saturday 14th September 2002 at 2pm at New College

UNIQUE WOMAN – INIMITABLE NOVEL:

Emily Brontë and *Wuthering Heights*

Some new insights by **Dr Jack Nelson**, former Senior Lecturer in the School of Information, Library and Archive Studies at the University of New South Wales. Jack will cover the known biographical details of Emily Brontë and will summarise contemporary and current critical work on *Wuthering Heights*, offering his own personal interpretation.

FROM THE LADY'S NEWSPAPER

Saturday January 22nd 1853

DR. CUMMING'S EXPOSITION OF GENESIS.
SCRIPTURE READINGS on the Book of GENESIS;
being a Continuous Commentary on the chapters read on Sunday mornings in the Scotch National Church, Crown Court. By the Rev. JOHN CUMMING, D.D. Foulcaup Str., price 3s. cloth.

SCRIPTURE READINGS ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS.
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