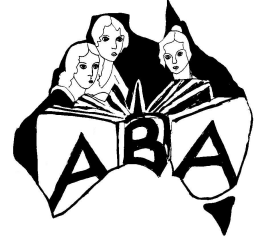


# The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter Issue No 14 Dec 2004



## Our Gala Event for 2005

# “READER, I MARRIED HIM”

A one-woman show about Charlotte Brontë by Angela Barlow

**Friday February 25<sup>th</sup> 2005 at 6:30pm**

**In the Auditorium of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts**

**280 Pitt St Sydney (just around from Town Hall station)**

**Performance + Champagne Supper = \$20**

**Tickets available from Ann Lock, 2 Levick St CREMORNE NSW 2090 (9953-4669)**

**This is a very suitable event to which to bring friends – how many tickets can you sell?**

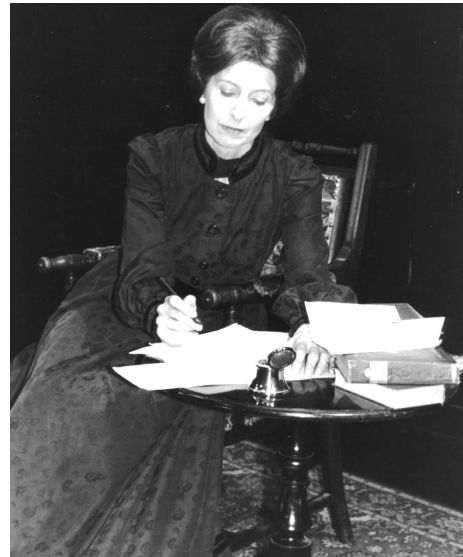
In “Reader, I married Him”, Angela Barlow plays Charlotte Brontë. In Victorian costume, she portrays Charlotte on the eve of her wedding to the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, a man who is poles apart from Mr Rochester, her best-known romantic hero.

Using the letters and novels as a springboard, Angela brings Charlotte vividly to life in a unique and imaginative reconstruction of the night of June 28<sup>th</sup> 1854, seven years after her whirlwind success with “Jane Eyre”. As Charlotte prepares for tomorrow’s wedding, she reflects on her past, and wonders what the future will bring.

- Where will her musings on past loves lead her?
- Will she go through with the ceremony?
- What lies behind the demure façade of this shy Victorian woman?

Angela was commissioned to write *Reader, I Married Him* in 1995. Since then she has played it in many venues around the UK and Ireland. She has appeared in it at the Theatre Royal, Bath, at the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham, and with notable success at the Edinburgh Festival. It has been seen at several literary festivals including the Westport Festival in County Mayo and the Wells Literature Festival in Somerset.

Angela will also be performing *Character in Jane Austen: An Actor’s View*, written especially for her trip to Australia, at 2pm on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2005 at the Jane Austen Society of Australia’s meeting in the Roseville Uniting Church. For further details contact Susannah Fullerton (9380-5894) or email JASA at [info@jasa.net.au](mailto:info@jasa.net.au).

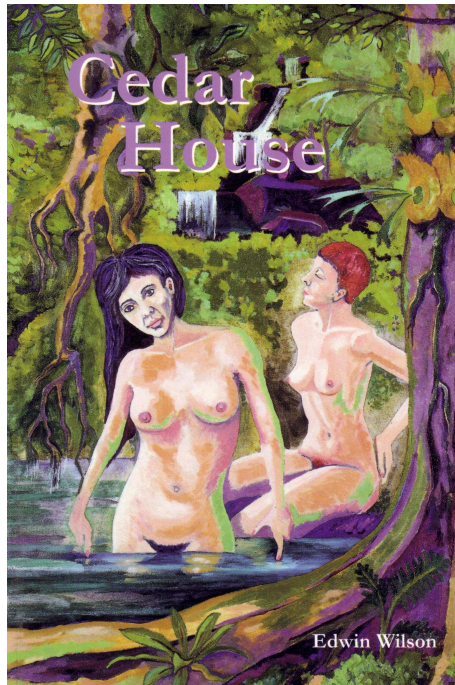


# AN AUSTRALIAN WUTHERING HEIGHTS?

(Cedar House by Edwin Wilson, Woodbine Press (2001), PO Box 32, Lane Cove NSW 2066, RRP \$22.00) Telephone 9231-8128 (work) 9437-4770 (home)

This description of his novel was provided to us when Edwin talked to us in May 2004.

*Cedar House* is a Gothic novel, a story about environment and Aboriginality and reconciliation, set in subtropical north eastern New South Wales from the time of early European settlement/invasion to the present day. Cedar House is a pioneer mansion built on Cedar Island by Peter Woodburn, alias Diamond, alias Duke, the founder of the Woodburn dynasty. This house becomes an Australian 'Wuthering Heights', he winter storms of



Yorkshire are replaced by the cyclonic storms that sweep down in the summer from the Coral Sea.

The first line of this book comes directly from *Wuthering Heights*, Darcy Doyle (quite literally the 'dark' child from his name) is the 'Heathcliff' character and narrator. He grew up on Cedar Island after World War II in the shadow of Mount Goyabah and Cedar House. Cedar Island is a subtropical Paradise and backwater, cocooned from change by the protective moat of the slow-flowing Lawrence river. A patch of rainforest, Cedar Brush, had been left on the island, and becomes a focus of the story, and is the equivalent to Heathcliff's moor. Mount Goyabah and a volcanic plug in Cedar Brush (called Blue Knob or The Castle) become the crags.

Darcy falls in love with Clare Woodburn, the 'Catherine' character in the book who lives in the grand house. Clare has an older brother Matthew, or Mat. The ever-changing relationship between Darcy and Mount Woodburn is developed as the novel progresses. Intimacy between young

Heathcliff and Catherine is implied in *Wuthering Heights*. Darcy and Clare's special place is a rock pool in Cedar Brush. Their 'smell of heather' equivalent experience is fleshed out here.

Darcy discovers his Aboriginality at high school. Clare subsequently rejects him because he is both black and poor. Darcy sublimates his anger into sport, and escapes from rural poverty through Rugby League. His anger is exacerbated by the English class system, where

he makes a vow to try to 'beat the bastards at their own game' by getting rich. A character flaw enables him to make some quick cash. Unlike in *Wuthering Heights* the way he makes his fortune is explained.

Wealth gives Darcy the choice to go to university in later life. Education gives him the means to research the story of the patriarchal Peter Woodburn, which helps Darcy find out who he really is. While volunteering at the Australian Museum he meets the poet Cynthia Mason who becomes his social mentor and life Muse.

Circumstances enable him to return to his island where he buys Cedar House and tries to reclaim the wilderness, and reconcile past wrongs. Sub themes include aspects of the environmental debates, poetry/art/Feminism politics, the problems of Fundamentalism, and Aboriginal politics up to the time of Mabo and beyond, and white reactions to this fundamental change.

The mature Darcy finds consolation in a sense of spiritual connection to his place, and a core of peace and calm amid the hubbub of a brittle and apocalyptic age.

# THE BRONTË AUTOMATONS

Christopher Cooper

In the book *Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers and Secret Writing* by Paul B. Janeczko (Candlewick Press) one code is described whereby a particular edition of a particular novel is agreed upon and words are referenced by giving the page number, line number and the number of the word on that page. Of course this assumes that all the words one wants to use can be found in the particular novel. You wouldn't find the word "automaton" in any of Jane Austen's novels, for instance. But in the novels of the Brontë sisters it is quite another thing.

In a review of Janeczko's book the example given is the word "automaton" which is coded as the number 3271904 because it appears as the 4<sup>th</sup> word on line 19 of page 327. "All you have to remember is which of the Brontës' novels we're using and what edition."

I first came across the word "automaton" as a synonym for "robot" and later as a technical term in a computer science text so I was somewhat surprised that it would appear in a nineteenth century novel. But then I remembered that it was used to describe those mechanical figures that were very popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The first use of "automaton", according to the Oxford Dictionary, is 1611 and by 1796 it was being applied to human beings who acted mechanically in a monotonous routine. Jane Austen moved in a circle where she would be likely to have seen one of these clockwork figures and it is surprising that she never felt the need for such a metaphor to describe a certain form of human behaviour. On the other hand all three of the Brontë sisters used the word, although it is likely that they never saw one. They probably picked up this

metaphor from their reading, but from which writer?

Charlotte uses it three times in *Jane Eyre*. (1) Rochester is stunned by the appearance of Mason at the wedding. He repeats his name "in the tone one might fancy a speaking automaton to enounce its single words". (2) In response to Rochester's attempts to persuade Jane to stay she replies: "Do you think I am an automaton? – a machine without feelings?" (3) St John Rivers "spoke almost like an automaton".



In *Shirley* the word is put under the spotlight. The young child, Jessy Yorke has trouble with the word. She says to

her mother "... Rose there is such an aut -- aut -- I have forgotten the word, but it means a machine in the shape of a human being. However between you, you will drive every soul away from Briarmains --". Rose replies "I am an automaton? Good! Let me alone then."

In *The Professor* Hunsden accuses Crimsworth of sitting at his desk in his uncle's counting house "day by day and week by week, scraping with a pen on paper, just like an automaton." And later Sylvie is described as having a "pale, passive automaton air".

Emily describes Hareton and Joseph as a pair of automatons – "they sat like automatons, one on each side of the fire".

In Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* Huntingdon accuses Helen of having reduced little Arthur "to little better than an automaton". And in *Agnes Grey* Rosalie, now mistress of her own establishment, refers to the footmen as "mere automatons".

# A FABLE FOR THE FEMALE SEX

The following is one of 16 anonymous fables published as “Fables for the Female Sex” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (my copy is a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, printed in 1766). In his preface the author gives the following as his reasons for remaining anonymous:

*My intimates are few, and I am not solicious to increase them. I have learnt, that where the writer would please, the man should be unknown. An author is the reverse of all other objects, and magnifies by distance, but diminishes by approach. His private attachments must give place to public favour; for no man can forgive his friend the ill-natured attempt of being thought wiser than himself.*

In this particular fable the author reminds his fair reader that her looks will decay with time, a thought that Patrick Brontë put much more brutally in one of his poems.

## THE PANTHER, THE HORSE, AND OTHER BEASTS

The man, who seeks to win the fair,  
(So custom says) must truth forbear;  
Must fawn and flutter, cringe and lie,  
And raise the goddess to the sky.  
For truth is hateful to her ear,  
A rudeness, which she cannot bear.  
A rudeness? Yes. I speak my thoughts;  
For truth upbraids her with faults.

How wretched, Cloe, then am I,  
Who love you, and yet cannot lie!  
And still to make you less my friend,  
I strive your errors to amend!  
But shall the senseless fop impart  
The softest passion to your heart,  
While he, who tells you honest truth,  
And points to happiness your youth,  
Determines, by his care, his lot,  
And lives neglected and forgot?

Trust me, dear, with greater ease  
Your taste for flatt'ry I could please,  
And similies in each dull line,  
Like glow-worms in the dark, should shine.  
What if I say your lips disclose  
The freshness of the opening rose?  
Or that your cheeks are beds of flow'rs,  
Enripen'd by refreshing show'rs?  
Yet certain as these flow'rs shall fade,  
Time every beauty will invade.  
The butterfly, of various hue,  
More than the flow'r resembles you;  
Fair, flutt'ring, fickle, busy thing,  
To pleasure ever on the wing,



Gayly coquetting for an hour,  
To die, and ne'er be thought of more.

Would you the bloom of youth should last?  
'Tis virtue that must bind it fast;  
An easy carriage, wholly free  
From sour reserve, or levity;  
Good-natur'd mirth, an open heart,  
And looks unskill'd in any art;

Humility, enough to own  
The frailties, which a friend makes known,  
And decent pride, enough to know  
The worth, that virtue can bestow.

These are the charms, which ne'er decay,  
Though youth, and beauty fade away,  
And time, which all things else removes,  
Still heighten virtue, and improves.

You'll frown and ask to what intent  
This blunt address to you is sent?  
I'll spare the question, and confess  
I'd praise you, if I lov'd you less;  
But rail, be angry, or complain,  
I will be rude, while you are vain.

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Beneath a lion's peaceful reign,  
When beasts met friendly on the plain,  
A Panther of majestic port,  
(The vainest female of the court)  
With spotted skin, and eyes of fire,  
Fill'd every bosom with desire.  
Where e'er she mov'd, a servile crowd  
Of fawning creatures cring'd and bow'd;  
Assemblies every week she held,  
(Like modern belle) with coxcombs fill'd,  
Where noise, and nonsense, and grimace,  
And lies and scandal fill'd the place.

Behold the gay, fantastic thing,  
Encircled by the spacious ring.  
Low-bowing, with important look,  
As first in rank, the Monkey spoke.  
"Gad take me, madam, but I swear,  
"No angel ever look'd so fair:  
"Forgive my rudeness, but I vow,  
"You were not quite divine till now;  
"Those limbs! that shape! and then those  
eyes!  
"O, close them, or the gazer dies!"

Nay, gentle pug, for goodness hush,  
I vow, and swear, you make me blush;  
I shall be angry at this rate;  
'Tis so like flatt'ry, which I hate.

The Fox, in deeper cunning versed,  
The beauties of her mind rehears'd,  
And talk'd of knowledge, taste, and sense,  
To which the fair have vast pretense!  
Yet well he knew them always vain  
Of what they strive not to attain,  
And play'd so cunningly his part,  
That pug was rival'd in his art.

The goat avow'd his am'rous flame,  
And burnt --- or what he durst not name;  
Yet hop'd a meeting in the wood  
Might make his meaning understood.  
Half angry at the old address,  
She frown'd; but yet she must confess,  
Such beauties might inflame his blood,  
But still his phrase was somewhat rude.

The Hog her neatness much admir'd;  
The formal Ass her swiftness fir'd;  
While all to feed her folly strove,  
And by their praises shar'd her love.

The Horse, whose generous heart disdain'd  
Applause, by servile flatt'ry gained,  
With graceful courage, silence broke,  
And thus with indignation spoke.

When flatt'ring monkeys fawn, and prate,  
They justly raise contempt, or hate;  
For merit's turn'd to ridicule,  
Applauded by the grinning fool.  
The artful fox your wit commends,  
To lure you to his selfish ends;  
From the vile flatt'rer turn away,  
For knaves make friendships to betray.  
Diminish the train of fops, and fools,  
And learn to live by wisdom's rules;  
Such beauties might the lion warm,  
Did not your folly break the charm;  
For who would court that lovely shape,  
To be a rival of an ape?

He said; and snorting in disdain,  
Spurn'd at the crowd, and sought the plain.

## VERSES SENT TO A LADY ON HER BIRTHDAY. by Patrick Brontë

These lines were sent by Patrick Brontë on the occasion of Mary Burder's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. "However hackneyed the theme and despite the quite appalling verse it was nevertheless such a poem as a young Nonconformist woman of the early nineteenth century would not feel insulted to receive" (*A Man of Sorrows* – John Lock & Canon Dixon 1965, Thomas Nelson).

THE joyous day illumines the sky  
That bids each care and sorrow fly  
To shades of endless night:  
E'en frozen age, thawed in the fires  
Of social mirth, feels young desires,  
And tastes of fresh delight.

In thoughtful mood your parents dear,  
Whilst joy smiles through the starting tear,  
Give approbation due  
As each drinks deep in mirthful wine  
Your rosy health, and looks benign  
Are sent to heaven for you.

But let me whisper, lovely fair,  
This joy may soon give place to care,  
And sorrow cloud this day;  
Full soon your eyes of sparkling blue,  
And velvet lips of scarlet hue,  
Discoloured, may decay.

As bloody drops on virgin snows,  
So vies the lily with the rose  
Full on your dimpled cheek;  
But ah ! the worm in lazy coil  
May soon prey on this putrid spoil,  
Or leap in loathsome freak.



Fond wooers come with flattering tale,  
And load with sighs the passing gale,  
And love-distracted rave:  
But hark, fair maid ! whate'er they say,  
You're but a breathing mass of clay,  
Fast ripening for the grave.

Behold how thievish Time has been!  
Full eighteen summers you have seen,  
And yet they seem a day?  
Whole years, collected in Time's glass,  
In silent lapse how soon they pass,  
And steal your life away !

The flying hour none can arrest,  
Nor yet recall one moment past,  
And what more dread must seem  
Is, that to-morrow's not your own--  
Then haste ! and ere your life has flown  
The subtle hours redeem.

Attend with care to what I sing:  
Know time is ever on the wing;  
None can its flight detain;  
Then, like a pilgrim passing by,  
Take home this hint as time does fly,  
"All earthly things are vain."

Let nothing here elate your breast,  
Nor, for one moment, break your rest.  
In heavenly wisdom grow:  
Still keep your anchor fixed above,  
Where Jesus reigns in boundless love,  
And streams of' pleasure flow.

So shall your life glide smoothly by  
Without a tear, without a sigh,  
And purest joys will crown  
Each birthday, as the year revolves,  
Till this clay tenement dissolves,  
And leaves the soul unbound.

Then shall you land on Canaan's shore,  
Where time and chance shall be no more,  
And joy eternal reigns;  
There, mixing with the seraphs bright,  
And dressed in robes of heavenly light,  
You'll raise angelic strains.

# PATRICK AND MARY

The mother of the Brontë sisters was Maria Branwell and Patrick married her on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1812, having met her six months earlier. He was 35 at the time, and Maria was certainly not his first love.

In October 1806 Patrick, at the age of 29, moved to Wethersfield as curate. He lodged in the house of Miss Mildred Davy, conveniently right opposite the church. It was a fine house, with oak panelling and old oak beams. Miss Davy was an educated woman of seventy and made Patrick welcome.

Early in 1807 Patrick came home to find a young girl busy in Miss Davy's kitchen. Mary Burder was her favourite niece and she was busy winding the roasting-jack over the fire. She was eighteen and had dark brown curls and the most exquisite blue eyes. Patrick exclaimed to her, "Heaven bless thee! Thou hast the sweetest face I ever looked on!"

She probably forgave his impertinence, putting it down to him being a fiery red-headed Irishman. Certainly they became good friends and Mary was making more frequent errands to the home of her aunt. They went for many walks together throughout 1807. Just before Christmas he was ordained in the Chapel Royal of St James in Westminster.

Patrick knew that he loved Mary but permission for anything more than friendship had to be given by Mary's uncle Burder (her own father had died earlier). One stumbling block was that he spoke very little of his humble background in

Ireland and this prejudiced Uncle Burder against him.

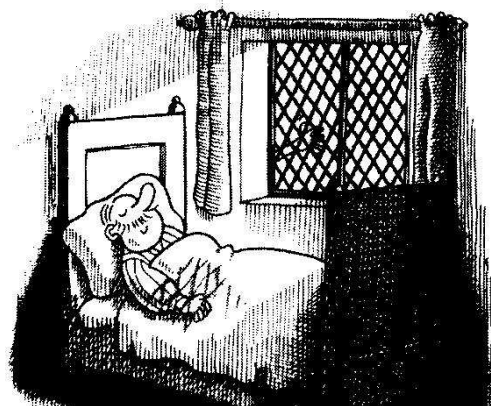
Patrick would often send verses that he wrote for Mary, and the lines he composed for her eighteenth birthday were designed to caution her against vanity. Good looks would decay while inner virtue would remain for the whole of her life.

Uncle Burder decided that Patrick was not a suitable friend for Mary, let alone husband material. So Mary was moved away to live with a relative and the budding romance came to an abrupt end. Had he married her the world of literature might have been somewhat poorer.

Five years later he married Maria Branwell and after she died, leaving him with six young children, he wrote to Mary. Mary was still unmarried and Patrick had hoped to pick up from where they had left off all those years ago. But Maria's reply was quite chilly. She had blamed Patrick for having accepted her uncle's rejection far too readily all those years ago, and for not having fought for her as one might expect from a passionate Irishman!




*'Reader, I married him!*



*The double-glazing at Wuthering Heights ensured a good night's sleep for Lockwood.*

# ABA PROGRAM FOR 2005


Normal meetings (with the symbol ) are held on level 1 of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt St Sydney (just around the corner from Town Hall station), with a meeting charge of \$4.

**Friday FEBRUARY 25, 6:30pm**

**Angela Barlow: "Reader, I Married Him"**

**Performance by UK actress Angela Barlow in the auditorium of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts. The cost of the show and champagne supper is \$20.**

Angela has appeared in well over 100 stage plays - classical, modern and experimental - with theatre companies all over the British Isles, including the Bristol Old Vic, the Liverpool Playhouse, London's Soho Poly, the Redgrave in Farnham, and the Nuffield at Southampton. She created the role of Leila in "The Short-Sighted Bear" by Andrew Davies, she toured with "The Lady's not for Burning" and she played the mother in "The Railway Children" at Ipswich. Her many television credits include "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", "Casualty", "Inspector Morse", "Bergerac" and "The Chronicles of Narnia".

 **Saturday APRIL 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am (includes a short AGM)**

**Kurt Lerps: "Wuthering Heights on the Stage".**

In June 1996 the Gold Coast Little Theatre performed Charles Vance's stage adaptation of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Kurt Lerps was the director and Lee Bowers the assistant director. They said that they were attracted to Vance's adaptation because it "covers more than just the romance of Heathcliff and Catherine". The production received favourable reviews in the Gold Coast press. Kurt is coming today to tell us about the production, the problems he encountered in putting such a unique novel on the stage and the insights he gained into the novel in the process.

 **Saturday JUNE 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am**

**Alison Hoddinott (University of New England): References to Literature and Art in the Brontë Novels**

The Brontës were deeply influenced by their wide readings of British and European literature. Charlotte became further acquainted with European art during her stay in Brussels. This talk will examine the ways in which the novels of the Brontës reflect their interest in literature and art. It will explore the significance of references in their fiction to other writers and artists.

**Friday JUNE 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm: Brontë film evening (details later)**

at the home of the President, 31 Epping Ave Eastwood (no charge).

 **Saturday AUGUST 6<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am**

**What might Jane Austen have thought of the Brontës?**

**Catherine Barker, Beryl Winter and Irene Mannering**

The Jane Austen Society of Buenos Aires has, as the subject for its 2005 writing competition, *What would Jane Austen have said or written if she had been able to read 'Jane Eyre' or 'Wuthering Heights'?* Three of our members will share their thoughts.

**Friday SEPTEMBER 16<sup>th</sup> to Sunday SEPTEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Three Sisters Weekend at La Maison Guest House, Katoomba**

This will be the third time we will have held the ABA weekend at the La Maison guest house. We had considered finding a new venue, for the sake of variety, but it suits our needs so well that we decided to go there at least one more time. You book the accommodation directly with La Maison (tell them that you are part of the group). Their address is 175-177 LURLINE ST KATOOMBA and their phone number is 02-4782-4996. You can also visit their website at [www.lamaison.com.au](http://www.lamaison.com.au) Day visitors on the Saturday are welcome. A small registration fee will cover the cost of the morning and afternoon teas and other expenses.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Christmas Lunch (details later)**

