

The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter



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VALE ANN LOCK

Ann Lock, our treasurer for the last eight years, died on 10th January this year after a short illness. She had suffered emphysema for some time and gave notice that she would step down as treasurer at this year's A.G.M. But events prevented this orderly hand over. When she went into hospital in January it was discovered that she had advanced lung cancer and she died not long after. The following is one of several tributes to Ann that appear in this issue of the newsletter.



Dear Ann Lock embroidered the replica of my Emily Brontë sampler for me. I know some of the money I gave her went to the Brontë Society. The sampler, dated April 22nd 1828, gives me so much pleasure. I have on some warm afternoons lay looking at it thinking of that cold house with its flagstone floors and the bitter wind roaring round the house I felt myself in Haworth. I wonder what Emily would have thought of an English/Australian woman treasuring it in a far off country in a room full of sunshine. Dear Ann I shall remember you. **Patricia Stebbings-Moore**

THE BRONTË WATERFALL AT TOWN HALL STATION



Those of us who went looking for somewhere to have lunch together after the last meeting stumbled on the Cascade Café adjacent to Town Hall Station (take the south west exit below ground level). We decided to rename it the Brontë Waterfall after Charlotte's favourite spot on the moors near Top Withens, and to make it our regular after-meeting eating place. That is



when we don't feel the need to visit an Irish pub. The food is good and not expensive and, being below ground level but open to the sky, it's an oasis in the city and an appropriate place to continue chatting about the Brontës and other things. Please join us after our next meeting.

THOUGHTS ON THE BBC *JANE EYRE*

by Roslyn Russell

I thought this version of *Jane Eyre* was excellent (although some of my colleagues would have preferred a more 'dark-and-brooding' Mr Rochester than the Toby Stephens characterisation). I would just like to mention two aspects of this version that impressed me.

I liked the fact that Adèle really looked French, and that she was a continuous presence at Thornfield Hall – teaching her was, after all, what Jane had been employed to do. Other versions have treated her role as very much a walk-on. And it was good to see her there in the final tableau.

I was also very pleased to see this version's sympathetic treatment of Bertha Mason. The

evidence of her psychosis was palpable, in Mason's wound and the torn veil, but I am glad that her mental illness was not caricatured in a visualisation of a madwoman with red-rimmed eyes and gnashing teeth – when we saw Bertha, when all was revealed after the aborted wedding ceremony, she was seated calmly, and her subsequent outburst of insanity was off-screen. Her action in burning down Thornfield Hall was pictured in all its dramatic intensity, but even then she evoked some sympathy. I realise that this treatment does depart from Charlotte Brontë's Gothicised version of Bertha Mason, but I liked it anyway.

DOES *JANE EYRE* LEND ITSELF TO ADAPTATION FOR TELEVISION?

by James Phillips, The School of History and Philosophy at
The University of New South Wales

Jane Eyre is a taciturn, but articulate heroine. As the narrator of a novel she is able to convey to the reader both these traits. A TV adaptation faces a dilemma in trying to do the same: were it to provide its audience with Jane's observant and passionate inner life via voice-overs, for many it would betray the specificity of the medium with its gift for showing rather than telling. The voice-over, if it is not to be redundant, would have to be at odds with the image. Jane is liable to exaggeration and misinterpretation. An asymmetry between an image and its accompanying voice-over would draw attention to this liability. But in the book Jane's observations are exaggerations and misinterpretations when compared with other people's observations, not when compared with the reality that the camera gives us.

Jane Eyre is a novel about not knowing how others view us and about not judging by appearances. A TV adaptation at once confronts us with appearances and therefore does not allow Jane's doubts and questions to guide us: presented with technologically reproduced images of real people, we can make up our own minds as to whether the actors playing Jane and Rochester are plain or good-looking. We can come to these judgements too quickly and thereby fail to follow Jane in the lesson she learns regarding the

negotiability of appearances. Jane is able to see Rochester as ugly and handsome, conventionally ugly and privately handsome. It is in this simultaneity and coexistence of opposed judgements that Jane finds the freedom from social norms in which to define herself and her world anew. Jane's relationship to Rochester's appearance is consistent with the theme in the book of reinventing the relationship to conventions (melodrama and marriage are the other major conventions that Charlotte sets about to rework).

Putting these general reservations about screen versions to one side, Sandy Welch's 2006 adaptation of *Jane Eyre* for the BBC is distinguished by a notable performance by Ruth Wilson in the title role (she is a considerable improvement on Zelah Clarke who in the BBC's 1983 version played Jane with a cut-glass English accent from which all traces of life and Yorkshire had been excised). Toby Stephens's Rochester was wooden and overblown: it was hard to credit him with a life and its regrets behind the stage gestures and histrionic poses. A number of liberties were taken with the book (why is the Cape substituted for India as St. John's destination?) that seemed unmotivated. But there were scenes in the countryside that were memorable for their lushness and evocativeness.

THE BRONTË ENCYCLOPEDIA

by Robert and Louise Barnard

Reviewed by Annette Harman.

Robert and Louise Barnard have written, illustrated and edited a useful and monumental encyclopedia of The Brontës. The timeframe of this encyclopedia covers the dates from 1777 (the birth of Patrick) to 1861 (his death). The focus is on the family, their writings and their lives, not a full social context of Victorian England, posthumous reception of any of the written works or adaptations of works of any of the Brontë families' lives.

The alphabetic presentation of data is accessible for general readers and scholars. Henry James, in my opinion, would have been pleased with the Barnards' non worshipping approach to the Brontës – no relic collectors here. Data such as:

Rivers, Mary: the other of St John Rivers' sisters. Diana and Mary are sometimes said to be portraits of Emily and Anne Brontë, but though there is the odd suggestive glimpse of a family at work and study together, the "portraits" are without savour or individuality. [Barnard, 2007, p.295]

and

Rivers, St John Eyre: the last of the triple character-pillars on which *Jane Eyre* is based. Rivers is a clergyman of good family, stern, charitable, just. He has a mission in life, which

soon comes to seem like a monomania: the spreading of the Christian religion in the East. How far the unfavourable view of Rivers' character which modern and feminist critics take would be endorsed by Charlotte's conscious mind is open to doubt: it is notable, and odd, that the novel ends with what sounds like a ringing endorsement of him and his work as a missionary.

Some of the circumstances of Rivers' quest for Jane's hand in marriage may have been suggested by Henry Nussey's business-like proposal of marriage to Charlotte (she was one of a series to whom he made proposals that were not accepted). It seems unlikely that there was any stronger connection between the fictional and the living character" (ibid, p295) reveal the Barnard's extensive anecdotal and written knowledge and understanding of the Brontës. Suggestions and opinions are made by the Barnards, but always with a scrupulous regard for fact and inference. What may be stated without doubt is so stated. What is open to speculation and inference is duly recorded. This work is a painstaking record of what is known of the Brontës up to 2007 and it is a monumental achievement.

I recommend this encyclopedia because it is well illustrated, thought provoking and cuts through the mythification of the Brontë family.

THE BOOKS THAT CHANGED ME

Every Sunday the *Sun-Herald* publishes a column entitled "The Books That Changed Me". It is interesting how often one of the Brontë novels comes up – well, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and occasionally *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – the others don't seem to have been heard of by the general reader. For example on 23rd March the author, essayist and short story writer Siri Hustvedt named *Wuthering Heights* as one of the five books that most changed her.

"The same summer I also read *Wuthering Heights*, but in some important way I was too young for it then [she was 13]. I loved it and was swept away but only later after re-reading it two or three times did I fully appreciate Brontë's beautiful English prose and the story's incredible structure that begins with a narrator who goes into this coffin-like tomb in the beginning of the story and emerges from it there. The other Brontë sisters'

work also has this gothic feeling but I feel *Wuthering Heights* is the greatest book."

The four other books that Hustvedt names are *David Copperfield*, *Crime And Punishment*, *The Turn Of The Screw* and *Nightwood*, an obscure book by Djuma Barnes.

DID YOU SEE WHAT SHE WAS READING?

For those who have seen the recent film

The Kite Runner:

Remember when the Afghan hero, now living in San Francisco, meets his future wife, also from Afghanistan. She is minding a stall in the markets and when he comes up to her she is reading which book? The cover is only visible for a split second, but it is clearly *Wuthering Heights*.

VALE ANN LOCK

Her last outing was to our Christmas lunch at the Forbes Hotel in December. She had indicated that she did not think she was well enough to attend, but on the morning she decided to give it a try. To a large extent it was her sense of duty, as treasurer, to make the effort. She did enjoy the event, catching up with her many friends including Wendy Hope who she had not seen since her early teaching days. But towards the end of the lunch she began to tire and had to be assisted to find a taxi home.

A number of the ABA members attended her funeral and flowers were sent on behalf of the association. We went back to Sarah Burns' unit and exchanged anecdotes about Ann over a glass of wine and lovely savoury platters.

At our March meeting we spent twenty minutes talking about Ann and were pleased to have, as visitors, her sisters Helen and Ann and her good friend and neighbour Pat.

Ann was born on 7th January 1936 and died just three days after her 72nd birthday. She had two sisters, Helen and Marie and a brother, Michael. Both Ann and Michael were unmarried and lived in the family home. For some time before he died Ann had the responsibility of looking after him.

Ann's sisters recalled Ann as a child as being extremely fond of reading. At sport, when she wasn't on the field, she always had her nose in a book. She did one year's internship at Mosman library but decided that librarianship was not for her. So she went to Teacher's College and trained as an infants teacher. She taught at Narrawena,

Barham (on the Victorian border), Cabramatta West, Glebe and Rose Bay. Then she became principal at Balmoral. When Balmoral closed a year before she was due to retire Ann served as deputy principal at Middle Harbour School.

Ann was a staunch Catholic, but was gracious enough not to hold Charlotte Brontë's anti-Catholic views against her. A few years ago the ABA organised a performance of a play by Angela

Barlow, *Reader I Married Him*. As treasurer, Ann was very busy for weeks sending out tickets and banking the money. She said she was bowled over at Mass the morning after the performance when her priest said, "I don't know how many of you know about Charlotte Brontë." Ann said she thought she must be dreaming it as a result of having had Charlotte so much on her mind for weeks. But the priest, in his

homily, went on to sketch some of the main events of Charlotte's life and drew from them an example of steadfastness and fortitude in the face of adversity.

Second to her passion for the Brontës was Ann's love of needlework. Among her many pieces were many replicas of the Brontë girls' samplers. She told her best friend and neighbour that the hardest part of doing the samplers was to make the same mistakes that the Brontës did. After all, they were only about seven years old. She also remarked on the fact that Emily made no reference to God in her sampler while the other two did. Perhaps Emily had unorthodox religious views even as a child.

Ann was extremely diligent as a treasurer. The cheques that came in a couple of days before she went into hospital were already written up in the deposit book ready for the day, which never came, when she would be able to bank them. But in addition she supported the association in many other ways. She spoke to us about the Brontë samplers, about Charlotte's debt to James Fenimore Cooper and about her research into the Australian descendents of William Smith Williams. Williams was a reader at Smith Elder and Company and it was on his very strong recommendation that Smith Elder published *Jane Eyre*. He became a good friend to Charlotte and they corresponded on literary matters. His son came to Australia and Ann spent many hours tracking down his descendents. She found a couple of elderly ladies who were part of



Sarah Burns & Ann at the Highland Weekend



From L to R: Christopher Cooper, Ann Lock, Wendy Hope Louise Ommundson, Elisabeth Cooper (at the 2008 Christmas Lunch)

Williams family tree and went out to Cronulla to meet them.

Ann left many books and videos and DVDs on the Brontës and Jane Austen to the ABA.

We will all miss Ann. She was one of the greatest supporters the association has had. Ann's

contributions to the newsletter and journal are as follows:

Brontë Samplers: Newsletter #8

Christmas 2001 at Haworth: Newsletter #9

William Smith Williams: Newsletter #17

Did Charlotte Brontë read James Fenimore

Cooper: Thunderer #1

ANN'S FUNERAL BISCUITS

In September 2000 several ABA members attended two Friday evening video screenings. (It was a two part documentary on the Brontë lives). We all brought something for supper and Ann produced some Funeral Biscuits that she had baked herself from an old Yorkshire recipe. She told us that such biscuits were traditionally given to mourners at a funeral, hence their name. Ann presented hers to us in a basket, each biscuit being individually wrapped in what looked like plain white paper and tied in a bow with a black ribbon. Upon opening these small packages however we found that each biscuit had been individually wrapped in Brontë poetry! Ann had copied out by hand several of the Brontë poems in black ink, had drawn a cross and written the words "In Memoriam" on each one. What a thoughtful gesture and so typical of Ann and her devotion to the ABA.

Catherine Barker

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's troubled sphere!
I see heaven's glories shine,
And Faith shines equal, arming me from fear

O God within my breast,
Almighty ever-present Deity!
Life, that in me hath rest,
As I, undying life, have power in thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thy infinity,
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of Immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and moon were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And thou wert left alone,
Every Existence would exist in thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void;
Since thou art Being and Breath
And what thou art may never be destroyed.
Emily Brontë 2nd January, 1846

YES THOU ART GONE

These lines were read at the March meeting by Marloesje Valkenburg

Yes, thou art gone and never more
Thy sunny smile shall gladden me;
But I may pass, the old church door
And pace the floor that covers thee;

May stand upon the cold damp stone
And think that frozen lies below
The lightest heart that I have known,
The kindest I shall ever know.

Yet though I cannot see thee more
'Tis still a comfort to have seen.
And though thy transient life is o'er
'Tis sweet to think that thou hast been:

To think a soul so near divine
Within a form so angel fair
United to heart like thine
Has, gladdened once our humble sphere.
Anne Brontë

GREAT EXPECTATIONS ... and the winner is ... BRONTE

This headline appeared recently in the *Sydney Morning Herald* over an item that claimed that the Sydney suburb of Bronte came top in a survey of the most desirable Sydney suburbs, nicely combining two of our favourite authors.

DYMOCKS BOOK LOVERS' BEST 101 BOOKS

Recently the Jane Austen Society of Australia conducted a survey among its members, asking for their top ten 19th century novels. They did not exclude Jane Austen so, not surprisingly, all six of Jane Austen's novels came in the top 20.

More recently Dymocks bookshop conducted a similar survey among its customers. There was no restriction as to century or genre, and this allowed the Bible to be included, though in position 23. Number 1 place went to *Pride and Prejudice*, as it did in the JASA survey. But *Jane Eyre* was placed number 10 and *Wuthering Heights* was 14th. Three other Jane Austen novels made the top 101, with *Persuasion* in 57th place, *Emma* as 69th and *Sense and Sensibility* as 72nd. (Numbers in parentheses indicate their position in the JASA survey.)

1(1)	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen	51	Rebecca	Daphne du Maurier
2	<i>Lord of the Rings</i>	J.R.R. Tolkien	52	<i>River God</i>	Wilbur Smith
3	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Harper Lee	53	<i>Wild Swans</i>	Jung Chang
4	<i>The Da Vinci Code</i>	Dan Brown	54	<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>	George Orwell
5	<i>Gone With the Wind</i>	Margaret Mitchell	55	<i>Midnight's Children</i>	Salman Rushdie
6	<i>The Hobbit</i>	J.R.R. Tolkien	56	<i>The Mists of Avalon</i>	Marion Zimmer Bradley
7	<i>Harry Potter</i>	J.K. Rowling	57(2)	<i>Persuasion</i>	Jane Austen
8	<i>The Power of One</i>	Bryce Courtney	58	<i>The Shipping News</i>	Annie Proulx
9	<i>Magician</i>	Raymond E. Feist	59	<i>War and Peace</i>	Leo Tolstoy
10(6)	Jane Eyre	Charlotte Brontë	60	<i>The Wind in the Willows</i>	Kenneth Grahame
11	<i>The Time Traveler's Wife</i>	Audrey Niffenegger	61	<i>Birdsong</i>	Sebastian Faulks
12	<i>Cloudstreet</i>	Tim Watson	62	<i>Possession</i>	A.S. Byatt
13	<i>Cross Stich</i>	Diana Gabaldon	63	<i>We Need to Talk About Kevin</i>	Lionel Shriver
14(8)	Wuthering Heights	Emily Brontë	64	<i>Love in the Time of Cholera</i>	Gabriel Garcia Marquez
15	<i>The Kite Runner</i>	Khaled Hosseini	65	<i>My Family and Other Animals</i>	Gerald Durrell
16	<i>Tuesdays with Morrie</i>	Mitch Albom	66	<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	J.D. Salinger
17	<i>Memoirs of a Geisha</i>	Arthur Golden	67	<i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i>	Helen Fielding
18	<i>The Alchemist</i>	Paulo Coelho	68	<i>Dane</i>	Frank Herbert
19	<i>Mao's Last Dance</i>	Li Cunxin	69(3)	<i>Emma</i>	Jane Austen
20	<i>Catch 22</i>	Joseph Heller	70	<i>Marley & Me</i>	John Grogan
21(17)	<i>Little Women</i>	Louisa May Alcott	71(7)	<i>Middlemarch</i>	George Eliot
22	<i>The Bronze Horseman</i>	Paulina Simons	72(5)	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	Jane Austen
23	<i>The Bible</i>		73	<i>The Count of Monte Cristo</i>	Alexandre Dumas
24	<i>Eragon</i>	Christopher Paolini	74	<i>The Secret History</i>	Donna Tartt
25	<i>The Poisoned Bible</i>	Barbara Kingsolver	75	<i>Chocolat</i>	Joanne Harris
26	<i>The Hitchhiker's Guide To the Galaxy</i>	Douglas Adams	76	<i>Dirt Music</i>	Tim Winton
27	<i>The Book Thief</i>	Markus Zusak	77	<i>Looking for Alibrandi</i>	Melina Marchetta
28	<i>Tomorrow: When the War Began</i>	John Marsden	78	<i>My Brilliant Career</i>	Miles Franklin
29	<i>Ice Station</i>	Matthew Reilly	79	<i>The Ancient Future</i>	Traci Harding
30	<i>Ann of Green Gables</i>	L.M. Montgomery	80	<i>The Belgariad</i>	David Eddings
31	<i>The God of Small Things</i>	Arundhati Roy	81	<i>The English Patient</i>	Traci Harding
32	<i>Life of Pi</i>	Yann Martel	82	The Eyre Affair	Jasper Fforde
33	<i>Perfume</i>	Patrick Suskind	83	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>	John Steinbeck
34(13)	<i>Great Expectations</i>	Charles Dickens	84	<i>The Shadow of the Wind</i>	Carlos Ruiz Zafon
35	<i>A Fine Balance</i>	Rohinton Mistry	85	<i>The Stand</i>	Stephen King
36	<i>The Lovely Bones</i>	Alice Sebold	86	<i>It</i>	Stephen King
37	<i>Twilight</i>	Stephanie Myer	87	<i>Northern Lights</i>	Nora Roberts
38	<i>Angels and Demons</i>	Dan Brown	88	<i>The Diary of Ann Frank</i>	Ann Frank
39	<i>The Pact</i>	Jodi Picoult	89	<i>The Memory Keeper's Daughter</i>	Kim Edwards
40	<i>A Suitable Boy</i>	Vikram Seth	90	<i>The Outsider</i>	Albert Camus
41	<i>Angela's Ashes</i>	Frank McCourt	91	<i>The Riders</i>	Tim Winton
42	<i>April Fools Day</i>	Bryce Courtney	92(47)	<i>Treasure Island</i>	Robert Louis Stevenson
43	<i>Captain Corelli's Mandolin</i>	Louis de Bernieres	93	<i>Across the Nightingale Floor</i>	Lian Hearn
44	<i>Pillars of the Earth</i>	Ken Follett	94	<i>Atonement</i>	Ian McEwan
45	<i>Shantaram</i>	Gregory David Roberts	95	<i>Circle of Friends</i>	Maeve Binchy
46	<i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i>	C.S. Lewis	96	<i>Seven Ancient Wonders</i>	Matthew Reilly
47	<i>Tully</i>	Paulina Simons	97(21)	<i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i>	Thomas Hardy
48(18)	<i>Anna Karenina</i>	Leo Tolstoy	98	<i>The Godfather</i>	Mario Puzo
49	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	F.Scott Fitzgerald	99	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Margaret Atwood
50	<i>A Fortunate Life</i>	A.B. Facey	100	<i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i>	Phillipa Gregory
			101	<i>The Red Tent</i>	Anita Diamont

OFTEN DATELESS BUT FAR FROM DESPERATE

Unmarried women now outnumber married ones in Australia for the first time. In the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* of 14th March 2008 the History feature was devoted to single women who have made their mark on history. After discussing Elizabeth I, “the most famous single woman in history”, Troy Lennon focuses his attention on literary single women:

... painful shyness was probably the reason why Emily Brontë, author of *Wuthering Heights*, never married. Born in 1818, the daughter of an Irish curate, she was educated for only one year at the Clergy Daughters’ School at Cowan Bridge in Lancashire. In 1835 she went to Miss Wooler’s School at Roe Head, but returned after three months because of homesickness. In 1842 she spent six months as a teacher but resigned in exhaustion and again stricken with homesickness.

She jointly published a volume of poems with her sisters Charlotte and Anne in 1846 and her

novel *Wuthering Heights* was published in 1847. She died of tuberculosis in 1848. Her sister Anne, born in 1820, was also unmarried, when she died of tuberculosis in 1849. The author of *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Anne also found few chances for love. She formed an attachment to curate, William Wightman, but there is no proof that romance flourished. He died from cholera in 1842.

Although there is nothing here that Brontë fans would not already know it is an accurate and well-written summary for the general reader. It is refreshing to hear Charlotte described here as Emily’s sister rather than the other way round. Of course Charlotte is passed over because her brief marriage in the last months of her life disqualify her. But surprisingly Lennon completely overlooks Jane Austen. He goes on to mention Helen Keller, Dorothy Mackeller and Miles Franklin.

THE BRONTË BUILDING BUSINESS

A little known fact about the Brontës is that they supplemented their literary income by setting up in the building trade! At least that what it would appear from a couple of advertisements that have appeared recently. Emily created the Weathering Heights Roofing Company, a branch of which is flourishing in the Hawkesbury area of NSW.

WEATHERING HEIGHTS ROOFING P/L
A.B.N. 68 118 656 116
Specialising in All Types of COLOURBOND
Domestic — Commercial — Industrial
ROOFING — GUTTERING — FLASHINGS
PERGOLAS — CARPORTS — WHIRLYBIRDS



BRONTE ATTIC
Creating Your Space

Charlotte set up a sister company called Bronte Attics.

BRONTE ATTIC is Malaysia's leading attic ladder and roof access specialists. We introduced the concept of creating an attic with access with our stainless steel 3 section retractable ladders to Malaysia for over a year. Isn't it great to have another sleeping room, study room, maid room or even play room! It could even be a store room, to keep all your wanted goods but seldom used.

Would Bertha Mason have qualified as such a seldom used treasure?

CHARLOTTE AND HELEN DEMIDENKO

The Good Weekend supplement of the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently published an article on Helen Darville (Demidenko), the controversial author of *The Hand That Signed The Paper*, bringing readers up to date with what she is doing now. This reignited debate about the fact that

Darville wasn't the Ukrainian Demidenko as she claimed to be. Writing in her defence Guy Cox of Balmain in N.S.W. reminds us that “we don't seem to hold it against Charlotte Brontë and Miles Franklin that they pretended to be what they were not”.

JANE EYRE ON STAGE IN AUSTRALIA

There have been three recent stage productions of Brontë Novels in Australia.

***Jane Eyre* in Sydney Guild Theatre (Rockdale)**

The Guild Theatre's season of *Jane Eyre* has just finished. The script was by Constance Cox, whose version was performed at the Henry Lawson Theatre in 2006. It is interesting to compare the two productions – this was made particularly easy by the fact that I had a DVD of that production which I watched again the morning after seeing it at Rockdale

Clare Mason, as Jane, was very good – as good in fact as she was in the Henry Lawson performances. (The rest of the cast were different to that of the earlier production.) My only problem was the choice of black, as if she was in mourning, rather than the dull grey that is Jane's usual colour.

Paul Newton was quite credible as Rochester, but seemed to lack a bit of energy. Mrs Fairfax couldn't seem to make up her mind whether to be severe or girlish and she wasn't as old and homely as I imagine her to be. At least Blanche wasn't blonde, as she invariably seems to be portrayed, but then she wasn't as dark and Mediterranean as Charlotte described her.

The best performance of all was Adèle. The recent BBC production was marred by the most irritating Adèle I have ever seen – much too old and with constant pirouetting to emphasise her coquettishness. But the Guild Theatre's Olivia Regueira Garcia was excellent. She was about the right age and height and had the most deliciously authentic French accent (she was actually born in Australia of Spanish parents). Her acting struck just the right balance. One could see that she was spoilt and vain, but she still came across as lovable. It must be remembered that Jane was fond of Adèle. And thankfully she only pirouetted the once!

Christopher Cooper

***Jane Eyre* in Brisbane Harvest Rain Theatre Company (Sydney Street Theatre, New Farm)**

I have to admit it, and it's a big crime. I was a Charlotte Brontë virgin. Upon going to see Polly Teale's stage adaptation of this Brontë classic, I had never picked up a single novel penned by the 19th century English writer.

This play was my introduction to the author and I think it is safe to say I will be hitting the library tomorrow, if only to see if Charlotte has done as good a job with her story as Polly Teale. (Mind you, as my very wise editor said, there's a

good case for seeing a play with an entirely fresh perspective, as I would not be spending the night judging the production against a remembered version of the novel.)

Orphaned Jane (Tanya Dougherty) is a timid girl with a hidden passionate inner self — Bertha (Kathryn Marquet) — whose presence acts at times as a friend to Jane and at others as a menace. At the tender age of 10, Jane lives with her cruel, unloving and oppressing auntie who happily carts her away to Lowood Institution, a harsh and unfeeling school where her only dear friend dies of tuberculosis.

As an adult she becomes the English teacher of a delightfully peppy French girl (Elizabeth Gibney) at Thornfield Hall, a house in the countryside, where she meets the man who is destined to change her life forever — the master of the house, Mr Rochester (Edward Foy).

Foy's performance is enthralling and commanding. He exudes a confidence and extremely strong presence which roots him firmly to the stage.

The sexual tension between Mr Rochester and Jane is thick and palpable. It rolls across the audience in a thick mist — an anticipated and longed for tension reminiscent of Darcy and Elizabeth. With speeches, spiels and tenderness that'll make your heart skip a beat, their chemistry underlines the fact that this was the 19th century equivalent of our romantic comedies and chickflicks.

The onstage dynamic between Jane and her alter ego Bertha is brilliant; opposite in all aspects of their characters, they yet combine with a fluid and transcendent unity. Dougherty embodies Jane as a strong yet unstable, vulnerable young woman whereas Marquet's alter ego is rampant, emotional and fantastically physical and unhinged.

Joanna Butler's choreography and direction are precise and dramatic, timed to perfection and working well with the script. The lighting is subtle yet effective in setting a number of scenes, and the soundtrack appropriate and mood changing.

Josh McIntosh's set is sparse but extremely successful. The Van Gogh-esque galvanized copper shrunken room on the left-hand wall of the stage acts as a wonderful visual tool in giving us an open window into Jane's psyche. A constant caged animal through vexation, anger and pain, a light is always shone on this inner sanctuary. Or is it a dark and macabre prison?

This production amazes in its variety. It's witty, it's dry, it's high brow, it'll have you laughing out loud and gasping in disbelief.

With exuberant and fresh performances spun into an old worldly air of rich, classical and gifted portrayals from the entire cast this play is a success. Dynamic direction ensures this show is a wonderfully entertaining way to spend an evening.

— **Grace Naug** (Performance seen: 9th May, 2008)

DIRECTOR: Joanna Butler

DESIGNER: Josh McIntosh

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: Naomi Price

FEATURING: Julie-Anna Evans, Edward Foy, Elizabeth Gibney, Jeni Godwin, Cameron Hurry, Kathryn Marquet, Kylie Morris, Leigh Walker and Tanya Dougherty as Jane Eyre.

***Wuthering Heights* in Fremantle**

(adapted by Charles Vance)

Directed by Nicola Bond

Emily Brontë's classic tale of passion and revenge *Wuthering Heights* is Harbour Theatre's second production for 2008. *Wuthering Heights* is the classic story of Heathcliff's and Catherine's all-encompassing yet thwarted love and how this unresolved passion eventually destroys both themselves and many around them. This gripping

tale is brought to life in an adaptation that retains all of the integrity of the original novel.

Director Nicola Bond recently stated, "It has always been my dream to direct this wonderful story and to have an extremely strong cast of actors able to handle the depth of emotion that this play demands. I have not been disappointed – the actors have had to dig deep within themselves to discover the many facets of the individual characters they portray. They do so brilliantly."

Cast (in alphabetical order):

Isabella Linton: Michelle Berg

Catherine Earnshaw: Janine Brammal

Edgar Linton: David Bruce

Hareton Earnshaw: Adam Dear

Hindley Earnshaw: Jason Dohle

Cathy Linton: Danielle Gilseman

Lockwood: Alan Kennedy

Ellen Dean: Susan Lynch

Joseph: Tom Rees

Heathcliff: Travis Vladich

ANNE AND BRANWELL AT THORP GREEN

[From *Bronte Country*, published by Jarrold Publishing – text by Juliet Barker]

In May 1840 Anne secured a post as governess to the two daughters and young son of the Reverend Edmund Robinson, a wealthy, invalid clergyman, at Thorp Green Hall, Little Ouseburn, near York. It was the furthest away from home that she had ever

been and Anne, like her sisters, did not find her employment congenial. She was perpetually



The Monks House at Thorp Green

yet one of the servants. Despite this, and despite the fact that she noted in her diary paper on 30 July 1841 that she disliked the situation and wished to change it for another, Anne was to stay with the Robinsons for five years – the longest that any of the Bronte children was to hold employment. The

others were aware of her unhappiness at Thorp Green and Charlotte wrote to Ellen Nussey:

I have one aching feeling at my heart ... it is about Anne ... she has much to endure – far more than I have – they always see her as a patient, persecuted stranger – amongst people more grossly insolent, proud and tyrannical than your imagination unassisted can readily depict – I know what concealed susceptibility is in her nature ... She is more lonely – less gifted with making friends, even than I am.

It was Anne's resolution in keeping her post that enabled Charlotte and Emily to go to Brussels to study at the Pennsionnat Heger; without her income they would not have been able to afford



Branwell's drawing of the Monks House

homesick, she disliked the lack of privacy and free time and she was made miserable by the anomalies of her position – neither a member of the family nor

to go. In January 1843 her loneliness was somewhat lessened when she was joined by Branwell, having successfully persuaded her employers that young Edmund had outgrown her tuition and needed his own tutor and that her brother was ideally suited to the post.

At first Branwell seems to have given complete satisfaction. He lodged at the Monks House, all that remained of a medieval monastic guest house for monks travelling



Lydia Robinson

between Fountains Abbey and York, and therefore enjoyed a less menial position than Anne. In July 1845 Anne suddenly announced her resignation and returned home. A month later she was followed by Branwell who had once again, been



Thorp Green

dismissed in disgrace. Branwell, always inclined to exaggeration, declared that he had embarked on a passionate love affair with Mrs Robinson which had been discovered by her husband. Even though her husband died soon afterwards, Mrs Robinson refused to see Branwell again, so the truth of his story was never tested.

BRANWELL AND THE GRADUATE

By B.J. Tanke

Every Brontë book I have ever read about Branwell and his alleged affair with Lydia Robinson, for some reason, makes me hum the Simon & Garfunkel tune "Mrs. Robinson" from the 1967 film *The Graduate*, starring Dustin Hoffman. I thought about this further and while investigating, found some strange similarities.

The script from *The Graduate* was written by Buck Henry and Calder Willingham, and adapted from Charles Webb's popular novel. My guess is that Charles Webb was a Brontë fan – and used elements for his story from Branwell's life. No, Benjamin Braddock was not a drug and alcohol abuser, but check out these similarities below.

Branwell Brontë – Benjamin Braddock? Even the name choice makes you wonder. Lydia Robinson was supposedly in her 40s, as was Mrs. Robinson in *The Graduate*. WHY use the name Mrs. Robinson as the main character? Benjamin was asked at the beginning of the film "What are your plans for the future Benjamin?" and he said "It's a little hard to say. I'm disturbed about things in general." This sounds all too well like Branwell.

Branwell was rumored to have affections for Lydia Robinson's daughter. Did he turn his affections then to the mother, Lydia? Lydia's daughter ran off and married an actor and was disowned by the family. In comparison, Benjamin turned his affections from Mrs. Robinson, to the

daughter, Elaine. Elaine was marrying a medical student towards the end of the film, but ran off with Benjamin...who was not "good enough."

On Branwell's deathbed he stated "I have done nothing good or great with my life". Benjamin said to Elaine Robinson, "My whole life is such a waste, it's just nothing" after telling her he had had an affair with a married woman.

Mr. Robinson found out about Branwell's "proceedings bad beyond expression" with his wife, and was promptly dismissed. Mr. Robinson in *The Graduate* found out about the affair and confronted Benjamin with "I think you are scum. I think you are a degenerate."

Mr. Robinson supposedly withdrew all financial inheritance to Lydia if she had any further contact with Branwell. Mr. Robinson in *The Graduate* told Benjamin that "I think I can get you behind bars if you even look at my daughter again."

Branwell was encouraged that his future was in "the railroad". Benjamin was told that his future was in "plastics."

In *The Graduate*, at the bottom of the aquarium tank is a model of a diver – symbolizing Ben's "drowning" and foreshadowing the scene in which he shows off scuba gear and hides from everyone by sinking to the bottom of the swimming pool. And Branwell...wasn't he drowning in his own inner despair and sinking into his infernal world of drugs?

REPORT TO THE BRONTË SOCIETY

Each year, as Australian Representative to the English Brontë Society, I report on our ABA activities of the previous year for inclusion into their Annual Report. It is reproduced here as a reminder of what we did in 2007.

The year 2007 was a very full one for Brontë lovers in Sydney, with more events than ever. We began in February with a wonderful talk by Susannah Fullerton. Susannah is probably the most active and well-known literary lecturer in Australia. She spoke on Daphne du Maurier and explained the tremendous influence the Brontës had on her writings, and in particular the influence of *Jane Eyre* on *Rebecca*.

This year St Patrick's Day was the 230th anniversary of Patrick Brontë's birth and we celebrated it in Sydney by a talk by Catherine Barker about the life of this extraordinary man and the influences he had on his unique family. Following the talk we cut a special birthday cake decorated with his image and went out to lunch at the P.J. O'Brien's Irish pub, where appropriately we sat in a corner decorated with a portrait of Oscar Wilde and some of his writing.

In April a select gathering assembled in a dank and musty dungeon, under an old terrace house in Pymont. As we sat around in this sandstone cellar, lit only by a few flickering candles, we listened to readings of the Brontë Dungeon poetry. All three girls seemed to have been obsessed by imprisonment. *Wuthering Heights* is full of imprisonment and escape and *Jane Eyre* too. But it is their poetry, especially Anne's, where this obsession is most notable. After being released into the "exercise yard" for supper we listened to Edgar Allan Poe's graphic story *The Pit and the Pendulum*.

We are fortunate in having Professor Christine Alexander from the University of New South Wales as one of our local members. She is at the forefront of world Brontë scholarship, and in May she told us of her recent discovery of some Brontë relics in Canada.

In June I gave a talk on the Brontës and the seaside – Charlotte's visits to Bridlington and Filey and in July we had several characters from *Jane Eyre* being interviewed in a Parkinson manner. They were asked many searching questions that do not get answered in the novel. Those members who took part showed great ingenuity and imagination and entered into their characters in an amazing way.

Another great anniversary in 2007 was the 175th anniversary of the death of Sir Walter Scott on 21st September 1832. On 21st September 2007 a group of us assembled in the Highlands to

commemorate this event. They weren't the real Scottish Highlands, but rather the Southern Highlands of NSW at a place called Robertson. The guest house wasn't quite Abbotsford but it did have wonderful stained glass windows and a baronial sort of feel to it. Naturally, as well as highlighting Walter Scott and Robert Burns, we devoted some time to explore Charlotte's love for Sir Walter and her very brief excursions north of the border.

In the grounds were some peacocks. When we conducted some outdoor readings of Burns at several spots in the extensive gardens the peacocks followed us. They must have an ear for Scottish poetry! We were also reminded what Charlotte said, in *The Green Dwarf*, of the vanity of peacocks and how they avoided looking down at their ugly feet.

Among the many literary societies in Sydney is the NSW Dickens Society. We have many members in common and in October we joined them for a talk by Dr Virginia Lowe. She spoke on the similarities between Esther Summerson from *Bleak House* and Lucy Snowe from *Villette*.

In November I spoke about Greenland, having become interested in that distant land from having spent some days there in the summer of 2006. The Brontë connection, of course, was the reference to Greenland in *Jane Eyre* where the young Jane is looking at Bewick's engravings. Many British birds spend a good part of the year in the arctic regions and Bewick shows them in their arctic environment. Jane describes these drawings in great detail and rattles off a long list of places in Greenland and Spitzbergen. She refers to the region as "that reservoir of frost and snow". Charlotte often used the frozen world as a metaphor for emotional coldness and it is a pity that in the recent BBC production of *Jane Eyre* the frozen wastes in the opening scenes were replaced by desert and jungle in young Jane's imagination!

The year was rounded out by a Christmas Lunch at an old pub (well, old by Australian standards) – at least it was built while Charlotte was still alive. Finally I would like to invite any Brontë Society members who might be coming to Sydney to contact me at chris@maths.mq.edu.au if they would like to meet some of our local members.

Christopher Cooper

BRONTË/DICKENS CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Saturday 6th December 2008, 12 for 12:30

Hughenden Boutique Hotel, Woollahra

The combined Brontë and Dickens Christmas Lunch will be held at 12 for 12.30 at the Hughenden Boutique Hotel, 14 Queen Street, Woollahra on Saturday 6th December 2008. The cost is \$60 per head which includes a 3 course Christmas Lunch, a drink on arrival, and tea and coffee afterwards (additional drinks may be purchased at the bar).

To reserve your place, please complete the enclosed booking form and send \$60 per person to our treasurer, Michael Links or to the Dickens Society treasurer, Nerida Richards by 17th November.



THERE WILL BE A QUIZ

Extract from an Essay in The New York Times by Joe Queenan – spotted by Meghan Hayward.

Freelance writers are always looking for ways to scare up a few extra bucks, so recently I tried my hand at writing some of those “Questions for Discussion” that appear at the back of many paperbacks.

For example, the Barnes & Noble Classics edition of *Anna Karenina* contains this question: “Can Anna Karenina be read as a cautionary tale, warning against adultery?” A follow-up question runs: “Would divorce and remarriage have helped Anna Karenina? If Anna had lived in our time, how might her story have been different?”

To their credit, the folks at Barnes & Noble make a habit of challenging readers’ assumptions and sometimes getting right in their faces. For example, their edition of *The Picture of Dorian Grey* included the intemperate question “Is sin ugly or beautiful?”

I soon discovered that a number of Web sites list proposed questions for book discussion groups, and that on these sites, a kind of down-home, no-holds-barred irreverence rules. On ReadingGroupGuides.com, readers who may not initially have grasped all the nuances of *The Diary of Ann Frank* are confronted by this brain-stumper: “Nazi Adolf Eichmann was asked how he could explain the killing of six million Jews. He answered, ‘One hundred dead are a catastrophe, a million dead is a statistic.’ Have we become more or less tolerant of murder since he made this observation?”

Often the questions drift away from the book itself, as in one I read vis-à-vis *Pride and*

Prejudice: “Have you ever seen a movie version in which the woman playing Jane was, as Austen imagined her, truly more beautiful than the woman playing Elizabeth? Who doesn’t love Elizabeth Bennett?!”

Or this about *Moby Dick*: “Captain Ahab’s obsession with the white whale leads to complete nautical disaster in the novel *Moby-Dick* as the vengeful protagonist finally bites off more than he can chew. Do you think Ahab should have taken a page out of Jaws and gotten a bigger boat?”

On *Wuthering Heights*: “If Heathcliff had fallen in love with Jane Eyre or Elizabeth Bennett instead of Cathy, do you think his house would have burned down?”

I decided to bag the whole enterprise. I was a dwarf among giants. These people were totally out of my league.

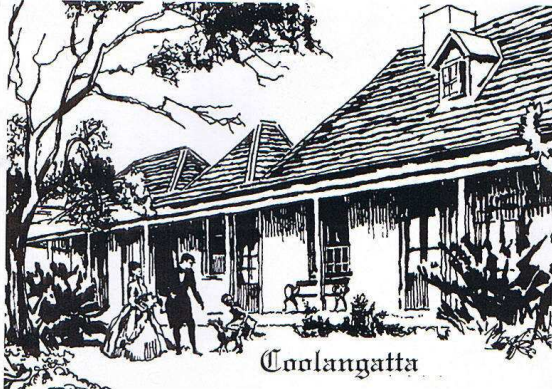
[Perhaps we should have a competition in which readers of the newsletter compose tongue-in-cheek questions “for discussion” about the Brontë novels. For example: “Compare the Austrian father, Josef Fritzl, who kept his daughter in his cellar for 20 years with Edward Rochester. Is it worse to confine a close relative to a cellar or an attic?” By the way, according to an article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, tales of confinement of close relatives in cellars was a popular literary genre in Austria in the nineteenth century and many of these stories were based on true life.]

2009 WEEKEND CONFERENCE

Combined with the N.S.W. Dickens Association

Coolangatta Estate, Shoalhaven

29th – 31st May 2009



Once again we are combining with the N.S.W. Dickens Society (with whom we have many members in common) for a great event. We haven't yet decided on a theme but we want to find something that can unite the two authors. Charlotte never met Dickens, though she expressed interest in doing so, and came close to it but circumstances prevented it. Though they wrote about quite different worlds, and had quite different styles, there are more things in common than one might think – there must be for so many of us to belong to both societies.

Coolangatta Estate is the site of the first European settlement on the South Coast of New South Wales, settled by Alexander Berry and Edward Wollstonecraft (nephew of Mary Wollstonecraft, wife of Shelley and author of *Frankenstein*) in 1822. They obtained a grant of 10,000 acres and 100 convicts and built their settlement on the foothills of a mountain named 'Coolangatta', an Aboriginal word meaning 'fine



view'.

The Estate today comprises a 300 acre resort including a village complex (accommodation and restaurants), golf course, recreational facilities, vineyards and the surrounding countryside. There is so much to do we are planning to provide a bit more free time than has been our practice. There is a 9 hole golf course, a tennis court, a solar heated swimming pool, a croquet and bowls lawn and, of course, the opportunity to go wine-tasting on the estate. One of the planned activities is a guided tour of the estate where we can learn of its extensive history.

The accommodation is in several cottages,



each comprising several self-contained bedrooms. They are mostly the original buildings but have been extensively renovated and are very comfortable.

There is The Cottage with 6 rooms, The Stables with 6 rooms, The Blacksmith Shop with 4 rooms, The Dairy with 3 rooms, The Servants Quarters with 5 rooms, The Harness Room with 1 room, the Plumbers Shop with 3 rooms and The Lodge with 6 rooms. We have booked 30 rooms.

The 2 night package including room, breakfasts, one dinner and all facilities is approximately \$315 per person twin/share (\$95 single supplement) and all rooms have en suite facilities.

If you are interested please complete the enclosed "Expression of Interest" form and send it to one of the two treasurers. We are not asking for a deposit at this stage.

BRONTË FILMS IN THE PIPELINE

News from the Brontë Blogspot

ANDREW LINCOLN AS LINTON (28th Apr)

We read in *The Independent* about a new name for the new *Wuthering Heights* film project. We had a writer: Olivia Hetreed, a director: John Maybury and a Cathy: Natalie Portman. Now we have a Linton: Andrew Lincoln.

It has been reported that Andrew Lincoln has been chosen to be Linton. but in the Mammoth Screen three-part TV *Wuthering Heights* adaptation for ITV.

Like many British actors before him, Andrew Lincoln finds plying his trade across the pond can be a demanding experience.

The blokeish star, best remembered for his role in cult series *This Life*, is currently working on an as-yet untitled TV series with *Men In Black* creator Barry Sonnenfeld.

"It was very difficult though, I have to admit," he told me at a recent party in aid of Barnados.

"It's not just the accent, it's completely different culturally. It's like playing baseball. You are under so much pressure to get the take right – three strikes and you're out. It has been more like controlling one's own fear rather than acting."

No matter, since Lincoln will be back working on these shores soon. He informed me he's just been cast as Edgar to appear alongside Natalie Portman in the latest big-screen adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*. [Harry Deeds]

ELLEN PAGE TO PLAY JANE EYRE (7th May)

Many thanks to Kyung for sending us in the direction of this. Many websites report the news that Ellen Page, Oscar nominee for *Juno*, is set to be the new *Jane Eyre* in the big screen. The news all seem to come from a *Variety* article:

Ellen Page is set to play one of English literature's most famous characters, the eponymous heroine of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Alison Owen of Ruby Films, who most recently produced *The Other Boleyn Girl*, is working with BBC Films to develop the new adaptation of Brontë's classic 19th century romance. It's the story of a mousy governess who softens the heart of her surly employer Mr. Rochester, only to discover that he's hiding a terrible secret.

Moira Buffini has written the screenplay. No director is yet attached, but the producers are aiming to set the project up to shoot this fall.

Jane Eyre is one of the most adapted novels in English literature, with at least 20 previous film or TV versions. Most recently, the BBC made it into a miniseries that won three Emmys last year. The last big-screen adaptation, in 1996, was directed by Franco Zeffirelli and starred Charlotte Gainsbourg.

The Hollywood Reporter adds:

Miramax Films is said to be in discussions to board *Eyre*. (Steven Zeitchik)

Still, though, we are finding it rather weird that they should be filming a new *Jane Eyre* so soon after the miniseries *Jane Eyre 2006*, also produced by another branch of the BBC. If the film does start shooting in autumn 2008 that would set it for release by mid to end 2009, which would be a gap of merely three years between the two productions.

Interesting to see what will come from this. We could be having a very Brontë season if the new *Wuthering Heights* and the biopic Brontë also see the light at about the same time.

BYE, BYE, NATALIE (9th May)

Frantic days for the Brontë film adaptations. Some weeks ago we reported the attachment of Natalie Portman to a new *Wuthering Heights* film project and a few days ago it was Ellen Page who was presented as the new *Jane Eyre* in another BBC Films project. And now it seems that finally Natalie Portman won't be Cathy after all. Michael Fassbender (in the picture) has been approached to play Heathcliff. *The Daily Mail* reports:



Hollywood star Natalie Portman has walked out of a big-screen version of *Wuthering Heights*, throwing the production into chaos.

Her decision to withdraw from the British film has infuriated its backers because, far from being wooed for the role, she actively pursued the plum part of Emily Brontë's tragic heroine Cathy Earnshaw.

The movie's director John Maybury and producers Ecosse Films and HanWay were blinded by Portman's dazzling "come-on". Neither film company would comment yesterday.

Portman pursued the part vigorously and was so passionate about it that she asked for and received casting approval for Heathcliff.

An insider on the film said: "It's fair to say we were seduced by her and we should have been on our guard."

Frankly, many (particularly this column) doubted Portman's suitability to play one of the most fascinating characters in English literature.

In fact, before Portman arrived on the scene, Maybury had told me he preferred a British actress to play the part, because he felt an American wouldn't get the accent right.

Indeed, a British accent has never been Portman's strong suit — as evidenced by her peculiar pronunciation in *The Other Boleyn Girl*, where she sounded, to my ears anyway, distinctly colonial.

Portman's decision to walk away from *Wuthering Heights* will teach British filmmakers a valuable lesson, principally that they shouldn't just go after a "name" for commercial reasons.

Interestingly, Ellen Page, of *Juno* fame, has just landed the title role in a BBC Film version of *Jane Eyre*, as much for financial reasons as artistic. But I happen to sense that Page is right for *Eyre*, whereas Portman would have been dodgy for *Wuthering Heights*.

There are plenty of quality British actresses who can play Cathy, from Andrea Riseborough, who is brilliant as the young Margaret Thatcher in the forthcoming BBC drama *The Long Walk To Finchley*, to Emily Blunt (so good in *The Devil Wears Prada*), Sienna Miller and Keira Knightley. Miller and Knightley, by the way, star in Maybury's movie *The Edge Of Love*, which opens next month's Edinburgh Film Festival. The director has coaxed the best screen work to date — particularly in the film's last third — from these two often underrated actresses.

Cameras aren't due to roll on *Wuthering Heights* till the autumn, so there's still time to cast the right person for Cathy (which rules out Scarlett Johansson).

The job will require tact, though — will Ms Knightley, for instance, want to take Natalie Portman's leftovers? Meanwhile, actor Michael Fassbender is being talked about to play Heathcliff. (Baz Bamigboye)

By the way, remember the Mammoth Screen *Wuthering Heights* project? We have received some hints that the production is quite alive and well. They're planning to shoot in Yorkshire in five weeks. The ITV airing will be probably around the end of year. Let's wait and see.

ITV'S WUTHERING HEIGHTS CAST (11th May)

The Telegraph publishes new details of the ITV's Wuthering Heights three-part TV project and

the parallel Ecosse Films Wuthering Heights film project. Some aspects become clarified. The Mammoth Screen production for ITV casts Tom Hardy (in the picture) as Heathcliff, Katie Riley as Cathy, Andrew Lincoln as Edward Linton (who was previously reported to be the Linton of the other version!) and Sarah Lancashire (maybe as Nelly Dean?). And Michael Fassbender seems to be the chosen Heathcliff for the film project.



Now, two of the hottest stars around will cast their spell as Heathcliff in rival versions of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*.

Tom Hardy, 30, who won huge acclaim in *Stuart: A Life Backwards*, is being tipped to star in a three-part television version for ITV.

Michael Fassbender, 31, the star of *Hex and 300*, is being lined up by the producers of a British film version.



The competing adaptations, which will begin shooting later this year, will offer radically different takes on the classic 1847 novel.

The ITV drama will co-star newcomer Katie Riley as Cathy, and feature Andrew Lincoln and Sarah Lancashire in other key roles.

The production is being described as "edgy cool and raw" by sources close to the project.

In this version a distraught Heathcliff will kill himself on hearing the news about Cathy's death.

The film version, which has yet to cast the central female role of Cathy, is likely to stick more closely to the idea of Heathcliff and Cathy being teenagers.

Its script has been written by Olivia Hetreed, who wrote the screenplay for the acclaimed film adaptation of *Girl With A Pearl Earring*.

Robert Bernstein, a producer with Ecosse, said: "Heathcliff is an immigrant thrust into a family, a social experiment gone wrong. It goes haywire.

"He's not domesticated enough to control his passions, which bubble out of control. Cathy can't let go of him — although he represents all the things she's scared of."

Patsy Stoneman, a Bronte specialist and the author of several books on *Wuthering Heights*, welcomed the new adaptations but said she doubted whether either project would capture the essence of the novel.

“There has never been a definitive visual adaptation and there never will be,” she said.

“They are all partial perspectives on the novel, and it's not like you can add them all together to make a whole.” [Chris Hastings and Beth Jane]

SO WHAT IF THE CANADIAN ACTRESS ELLEN PAGE HAS BEEN CAST AS JANE EYRE? (11th May)

We published some days ago a post trying to cover some of the reactions caused by the casting of Ellen Page as Jane Eyre in a BBC Films/Ruby Films film project. Today, The Independent devotes an entire article to the question that acts almost as a summary of the arisen controversy. Nina Gold, acclaimed casting director, has a clear view on the subject:

All the fuss about Ellen Page being cast as Jane Eyre for a BBC film is misplaced. I think she's got the part because she's a really good actress and the producers must think she's the best person for the part. Not to cast on the basis of her being the wrong nationality would be mad. Page has shown her range not only in *Juno*, but also in her breakout role in *Hard Candy*, where



she played a young girl with an internet stalker who is not as innocent as she seems.

I think we, the British, feel very proprietorial about *Jane Eyre*, and the fact that people associate Page with a very young culture is another hurdle for them to get over to allow her to be a classical heroine – but I reckon she's got a lot more than just the *Juno* string to her bow. She can really act.

In terms of casting for major films, the world is a tiny place these days and the film industry is international. For casting directors, it's natural to look wider than just within Britain.

It maybe easier to play Jane Eyre than a contemporary British character because there's a cultural foundation. It's not just about the accent; there's a whole culture to absorb and put into the character. However, there are challenges for any actor playing a 19th-century character, whether it's Ellen Page or Emma Thompson.

Perhaps there is something else going on with the casting of Page. Film producers want stars that can “open” a film, and it's a hard fact of movie-making that economics are important. Even if you want to make the film with a little-known

but brilliant British actress, if no one will give you the money to do that, then the film just doesn't get made. But having said that, luckily Ellen Page is very much up to the task, as well as being a name.

[Nina Gold]

THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Los Angeles Times reviews Laura Joh Rowland's *The Secret Adventures of Charlotte Brontë*:

At least *The Secret Adventures of Charlotte Brontë* (Overlook: 380 pp., \$24.95) – Laura Joh Rowland's first stand-alone novel after a slew of mysteries featuring 16th century Japanese detective Sano Ichino – delivers almost exactly what its title promises. Flush from the success of *Jane Eyre* but battling writer's block, as well as the envy of her younger sisters, Charlotte takes an impulsive trip to London to clear up a case of literary misunderstanding and soon finds herself a witness to the murder of a fetching maid with ties to a

conspiracy that would bring down the British monarchy. The plot spins out of control merrily enough and in suitably thrilling fashion, and it's great fun to watch sparks fly between Charlotte and the handsome spyman Mr. Spade, but poor, consumptive Emily gets a bad rap as a vindictive shrew who cares little for others, except on rare occasions.

Perhaps this is an instance when greater attention to the facts would have made the fiction seem more kind?

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE REAL JANE EYRES

The Wall Street Journal reviews *Governess: The Lives and Times of the Real Jane Eyres* by Ruth Brandon, the slightly adapted American title of the *Other People Daughter's*

Today we have nannies, but in the 19th century they had governesses. If the word calls to mind a person forlorn and severe, the reason may well be Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel, *Jane Eyre*. Most of us can conjure up a mental picture of governess Jane.

By design, she is outwardly unremarkable. Small, quiet, with pulled-back hair and a dress of subdued gray, she's a plain Jane indeed. Internally, though, she's volcanic. As a 10-year-old orphan foisted on malign relatives, Jane can be filled with rage and an eerie imagination. As a 20-year-old governess, she feels an idolatrous love for her master, Edward Rochester. We chart Jane's maturity by watching her channel her passions. Ultimately, she emerges triumphant over her awful cousins, her tall blonde rival, the mad wife who is revealed living in the attic, and even over the still loving but chastened Mr. Rochester. Jane ends up independently wealthy with the man she wants. How realistic can this portrait possibly be?

In *Governess*, Ruth Brandon considers the case studies of six governesses – *The Lives and*

Times of the Real Jane Eyres, as the subtitle has it. Taken together, their lives span a generous century from 1750 to 1860 and suggest that, between the fiction and the reality, there are many alarming points of similarity and a few quietly tragic differences.

Most of the melodrama in *Jane Eyre*, it turns out, mimics upper-middle-class social dynamics of the era. A sudden reversal of fortune, such as the death of the male head of the family, could push a gently bred and moderately educated girl out of the lady-of-leisure class and into the mass of workers. (That's some ignominy, we working women might say.) But along with social demotion, the young woman would forfeit any chance of marriage. Even worse, she would be a silent but suffering witness to the life she had lost: She was neither mother nor wife, neither servant nor mistress – although she took on some duties of all these. The governess might be scorned by the mother she was substituting for, insulted by the children who capitalized on her lack of authority and seduced – or simply seized – by the men of the family.

CHARLOTTE AND J.K. ROWLING

We recently heard that Harry Potter has been incorporated into the A-level syllabus. There were a few articles unfavourably comparing J.K. Rowling to the Brontës. Today Kate Bevan looks further into the matter on her Guardian blog.

The news that the first Harry Potter book had made it on to the A-level syllabus has prompted the inevitable sneering about dumbing-down. J K Rowling is, of course, no Charlotte Bronte and her school stories are no *Jane Eyre*.

But one thing she does have in common with Brontë is that she understands narrative drive and knows how to hook in a reader, especially a young reader. And surely reading should be about enjoyment and pleasure, not about toil and despair, as wading through something like a fat Dickens can be?

But Rowling is more an Enid Blyton than a Charlotte Brontë. Her vocabulary is limited, her plotting is linear, her character development is

ponderous and two-dimensional. The boarding-school story trope is a well-worn one: Rowling is neither the first nor the most inventive author to play with it. She's been criticised for her dearth of non-white characters; and there aren't many shades of grey in her stories, which are clunky in their depiction of good and evil.

In the opinion of this half of BrontëBlog the matter is not so atrocious after all. Whatever gets the children in the way of actually reading books is fine by us. And Rowling may well pave the way for other novels.

JOAN FONTAINE'S FAVOURITE WRITERS

Du Maurier, Shakespeare, Dickens, the Brontës and Gwendolyn Brooks.

[from *Vanity Fair*, March 2008]

MANNING CLARK AND THE BRONTËS

By Roslyn Russell

Most Australians think of Manning Clark principally as a historian, famous (or indeed infamous) for outspoken pronouncements on Australian society, and a view of the nation's history that has provoked criticism and allegations of left-wing bias. They do not usually think of him as a person deeply in love with literature, who often found inspiration in the lines of a poem or in the pages of a novel. Nevertheless, he did turn to these literary sources for comfort and illumination, and they in turn furnished him with an effective means of expressing the inner feelings of a complex and passionate individual.

On 7th November 1938 the young Manning Clark, then a graduate student of history at Balliol College, Oxford, wrote to his fiancée, Dymphna Lodewyckx, who was also a graduate student, at Bonn University in Germany. Beginning the habit of a lifetime, he told her all he had been doing from day to day, his plans for the future and his hopes and fears, joys and pains. On this day he had been reading Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and announced to Dymphna that he had 'decided to make a separate study of the novel in 19th century England—as a side-line, which should help me with my appreciation of English history, and also instruct me in the techniques of novel writing'. He was to find a great deal more than this in the pages of 19th century literature.

After some flattering words on the subject of Jane Austen and *Pride and Prejudice*—'well worth reading, as a faithful mirror of the lower gentry of the time'—Clark unveiled his larger plan for acquainting himself with 19th century British novels and novelists: 'After Jane Austen I intend to read Scott, then the Brontës, then Dickens, then G[eorge] Moore, then Meredith and Gissing'.

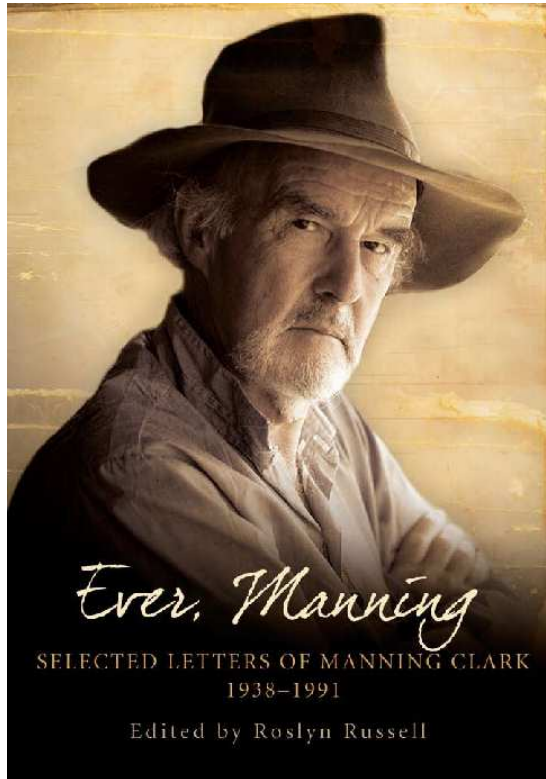
Apart from stray references to more reading of Jane Austen, Clark does not describe his exploration of 19th century British novels any further. There is, nevertheless, no doubt that he did carry out at least some of his intentions in this

regard, and the fruits of his youthful reading are evident in what he wrote throughout his life. His later writing, including his letters, abounds in literary references, incorporated in his prose in the same way as he peppered his works with (unattributed) quotations from the King James Version of the Bible. There is one reference in particular that will resonate with Brontë enthusiasts—his adoption of a phrase used by Emily Brontë to describe the intensity of Catherine Earnshaw Linton's passion for Heathcliff.

In Chapter 9 of *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine declares to her nurse, Nelly, that:

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished and he remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger....

The last clause of this passage, either in full or shortened to 'turn to a mighty stranger', became a kind of shorthand message from Clark that an event, or a troubled passage in a relationship, had plunged him into the same kind of existential alienation as Catherine predicted, were she to be deprived of Heathcliff. It recurs frequently in his writing, especially in his letters. Perhaps the most vivid example of this is a telegram to a friend that is in itself a masterpiece of compression. In the space of just over 20 words, Clark managed to invoke both Emily Brontë and Thomas Hardy, when he pleaded:



'Please come to library today and tell me why you are angry without you my world turns to a mighty stranger
Ever,
Clym Yeobright of Egdon Heath' (15 December 1972)

Clark could also deploy a Brontë reference more playfully. Writing to another friend some years later, he demonstrated his familiarity not only with the novels of the Brontë family, but with their biographies as well. Addressing her as 'the Charlotte Brontë of the Cambridge fens', Clark continued:

Could Charlotte, for sheer compassion's sake, give M. Héger, late of Brussels, a telephone number where he can ring her when he spends the night of 10 April in Manchester?

Those who think of Manning Clark as simply a historian and controversialist can therefore find new insights into the intellectual life and the highly charged emotions of one of Australia's best known writers—often expressed in his letters through quotations from the works and lives of the Brontës.

All quotations from Roslyn Russell (ed.), *Ever, Manning: Selected Letters of Manning Clark 1938–1991*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2008.

Roslyn Russell is a historian and also a fan of the Brontës, Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. Her book, *Ever, Manning: Selected Letters of Manning Clark 1938–1991*, will be published by Allen & Unwin in August 2008.

MARTINA COLE – The Books That Changed Me

The author, Martina Cole, was asked by the Sun Herald for the five books that most changed her.

Wuthering Heights: At convent school I had read everything available but there was a lovely nun who would bring books for me to read. I had read Shakespeare and loved his stories but at nine years old *Wuthering Heights* blew me away with its windswept melodrama. I love big, passionate



books, that whole style of writing. I love big-characters and Heathcliff was bad but you liked him. Of equal importance is that a story encompasses the era it's set in, and Brontë did that magnificently.

[The other four books she mentioned were *Hatter's Castle* by A.J. Cronin, *The Round Tower* by Catherine Cookson, *American Tabloid* by James Ellroy and *Devil In A Blue Dress* by Walter Mosley.]

Mr Charlotte Brontë The Life of Arthur Bell Nicholls

by Alan H Adamson

A biography of Charlotte Brontë's husband that highlights his protection of her literary reputation.

FROM THE BRONTË BLOG, extracted by Stephanie Rigby

Few people seeking to avoid the glare of publicity have had more of it turned on them than Charlotte Brontë's husband, Arthur Bell Nicholls. Some critics have implied that he not only put a stop to her writing but might even have inadvertently caused her death. Alan Adamson's biography takes recent scholarship into account and adds new material about Nicholls' family, education, and early life in Ireland to give a more balanced view. The book explores why Brontë, cool and often


hostile towards Nicholls in the early days of his curacy at Haworth, came to respect and love him, and how Patrick Brontë, her difficult father, grew to rely on him after her death. Drawing on Nicholl's correspondence with, among others, Elizabeth Gaskell, Ellen Nussey and Harriet Martineau, *Mr Charlotte Brontë: The Life of Arthur Bell Nicholls* presents a compelling picture of Nicholls' efforts to emphasize Brontë's literary reputation and curtail speculation about her private life.

BRONTË COLLEGE

When a place is named Bronte you can tell whether it is named after one or all of the three sisters or after Lord Nelson. Nelson was created Duke of Bronte and many places bear his name. But if the dieresis appears over the "e" you know it relates to the literary family. So Brontë College was

definitely named in tribute of Charlotte and her sisters. But where is it? Not in Cambridge, from where Patrick Brontë graduated, but in Oxford – not the real Oxford, but in Dorothy L. Sayers' Oxford in her Lord Wimsey novel, *Gaudy Nights*.

PROGRAM FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 2008


Meetings indicated by  are held at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt St Sydney (just around the corner from Town Hall station), with a meeting charge of \$4.

 **Sat 26th JULY Mandy Swann – THE DESTROYING ANGEL OF TEMPEST
The Sea, Imaginative Excess and Extremes of Passion in the Fiction and Poetry of
Charlotte and Anne Brontë**

In my discussion I will explore key sea images from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. In both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Charlotte's heroines experience the frightening and delightful consequences of passion and imaginative freedom. In these novels, images of the sea become emblems of emotional intensity and imaginative excess. I will argue that for Charlotte Brontë the sea is a symbolic space where social and psychological anxieties about boundaries, female passion and the imagination are played out.

 **Sat 13th SEPTEMBER James Phillips – MARRIAGE IN *JANE EYRE*: FROM
CONTRACT TO CONVERSATION**

Charlotte Brontë's first novel contends that marriage is irreducible to a contract; it must be sustained by the conversation of equals. Yet equality cannot survive without legal recognition and, in early nineteenth-century Britain, this means legal reform: Jane cannot be Rochester's equal if she is simply his mistress and she also cannot be his equal if the laws concerning marriage are not reformed. Jane and Rochester come together in conversation, inventing each other for themselves, and reinventing marriage as the social form of such freedom.

 **Sat 8th NOVEMBER Annette Harman – TRADE AND *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*:
SPECULATIONS CONCERNING MR EARNSHAW'S BUSINESS IN LIVERPOOL**

In *Wuthering Heights*, why does Mr Earnshaw travel to Liverpool? What business does a farmer have there? What is he really trading? By examining evidence in *Wuthering Heights* there is a case to be made for justifying a journey of "sixty miles each way, that is a long spell!" (Mr Earnshaw)

**Sat 6th DECEMBER JOINT CHRISTMAS LUNCH WITH THE NSW DICKENS
SOCIETY**

12 noon for 12:30 pm at the Hughenden Boutique Hotel, Queen St Woollahra
Bookings must be made by 17th November.

JUNE 2007 – THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF *THE PROFESSOR*

In June 1857 *The Professor* was published, posthumously, as a two-volume set. Arthur Bell Nicholls had edited it, erasing a few expressions which he considered might be open to misinterpretation, though to modern eyes it is difficult to see what he considered inappropriate. There were no ecstatic reviews, and no ruthless or cruel ones. It sold reasonably well and Arthur was satisfied. He had done what he had set out to do – his duty to Charlotte. Only 2500 copies were printed, two-thirds were sold within a month. The first cheap edition did not appear until 1860. [From *The Brontës Day By Day* by Geoffrey Palmer.]

