

THE HORROR, THE HORROR

Gothic Elements in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*

The text of a talk by Robyn Williams on 2nd September 2006

Exploring the Gothic elements in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* is rather a daunting task. But exploring can be fun. It doesn't have to have a limit and you can always go down side paths, turn odd corners, and perhaps find something different. So I set out to try to pin down the term "Gothic" and found myself in a forest of meanings and attitudes that have attached themselves to the word over time.

The Goths, of course, were the chaps who, along with Vandals, Huns and assorted barbarian invaders, sacked the Roman Empire and destroyed classical culture, replacing classical buildings with the more primitive versions of their own. So in that sense, 'Gothic' has decidedly negative connotations.

However, over the centuries the word came to be associated with a certain type of architecture which likely had its origin in basic huts made of tree branches, whose curving tops formed covered arches of intersecting boughs and leaves. From such crude beginnings came the magnificent medieval cathedrals with their pointed arches, ribbed vaults and clustered columns that soar upwards like tree-trunks. The term "Gothic" as applied to architecture resonates with ideas of grandeur, massive size and space, alongside intricate, delicate gardens of stonework, and light passing through windows whose stained glass fretwork imitates the spaces between leaves.

These cathedrals and churches built between the 12th and 16th Centuries reflect the desire to emulate a garden paradise, an Eden, if you like, to better direct men's souls to God. Those souls, however, were also given graphic reminders of the less pleasant alternative. Religious art and sculpture presented clear messages. Now, by the time we get to the 18th Century the word "Gothic" had acquired an accumulation of both negative and positive connotations as the term had expanded to apply to anything 'medieval' or rather, anything that came before the previous hundred or so years, and so anything remote, mysterious, complex, disordered and exaggerated.

The eighteenth century in Europe is referred to generally as the Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason. But it was also a century of oppositions and contradictions, particularly in the field of literature. For every Voltaire there would be a Rousseau. For every Augustan, “classical” poet like Alexander Pope, there would be someone wandering about a country churchyard meditating on the frailty of the human condition.

So, briefly, on the one hand we have the notions of a rational, ordered present world with clear rules and limits, a world of civilized men and women living a civilized way of life in civilized surroundings and on the other we have an increasing attraction to the world of the past, of the medieval or Gothic, where the boundaries could be broken to allow the wild, the excessive, the barbaric and indeed the horrific to invade. Anarchy is then opposed to order, tyranny to chivalry, usurpation to legitimacy and necromancy to Christianity. In English writing enlightened Protestantism won out over European Catholicism. Dan Brown wasn't the first to make money out of a mad monk!

The energy and tension inherent in such oppositions offered rich possibilities for writers with imagination and confidence. Horace Walpole, the son of the British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, was certainly one of these. In 1739 Horace and his friend Thomas (Graveyard) Grey took themselves off on the Grand Tour of Europe, hoping to enjoy to the utmost those sensations of “delightful Horror and terrible Joy” (p449 Schama) that one, John Dennis, had described when crossing the Alps in 1688. The two young men spent time in Paris and Rheims then went on a long excursion from Lyon to visit St. Bruno's famous, isolated monastery in the mountains between Chambéry and Grenoble. They had, I suppose, a wonderful time, being scared to death on the short mountain road with its “magnificent rudeness”, its torrent and its “monstrous precipice” and playing for a time at being monks (p449 Schama). This enjoyable experience of “agreeable horror” obviously stayed with Walpole, for around 1750 he began building himself a Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill, complete with every medieval embellishment possible, perhaps the first example of a fad among wealthy landowners for readymade Gothic ruins and follies, the most amazing of which was Fonthill Abbey, a

medieval construction sporting a huge tower that finally collapsed under its own weight.

But what started the fashion in Gothic literature was Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764, a best seller at the time and a work that has remained almost continually in print. It was, says the author "an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern", with "terror as its principal engine to prevent the story from ever languishing" (p6 *Otranto*).

I'm just going to talk briefly about *Otranto*, so that we can make some connections between this first example and what Charlotte and Emily Brontë drew from the Gothic tradition, to re-invent the material nearly a hundred years later. The treatment of horror, and the supernatural in particular, undergo a metamorphosis not always 'agreeable' or 'delightful', but certainly fascinating.

Walpole's *Otranto* is set in Italy and has a fairly straightforward plot. The necessary horror is supplied by a super-sized ghost. A prophecy foretells that the usurper of the Castle of Otranto will be replaced by a descendant of the rightful owner and that this will happen at a time when the real owner "should be grown too big to inhabit it" (p17 *Otranto*). Now, this "real owner" was one Alfonso the Good, basely poisoned while in the Holy Land and it is Alfonso's armour-clad statue that provides the means by which the prophecy is fulfilled. As the tale of forced marriages, imprisoned princesses, flights through subterranean tunnels, and knights turned priest continues at a cracking pace, each turning point in the action is punctuated by a supernatural visitation of the larger kind.

Walpole was certainly into big body parts. At the very beginning, on page two, Conrad, son of the usurper Manfred, is about to be married to the beautiful Isabella when he is squashed to death by an enormous helmet "an hundred times more large than any casque made for human being and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers" (p2 *Otranto*). Of course, it is Alfonso's helmet, and, during the course of the story, other bits of his huge extremities appear to frighten the living daylight out of the inhabitants of the castle – a large leg and foot appear at one point, and at another, a huge hand in armour clatters down the stairs. This is the original Monty Python! And not only do we have the gigantic manifestations of Alfonso the

Good's revenge, but, to emphasise just how much he wants to restore the rightful heir to Otranto, his statue has a nose bleed when Manfred, the bad guy, is being particularly obnoxious. As well, we have an enormous sabre (to go with the armour), noises from a supernatural trumpet, thunderclaps, a portrait that detaches itself from the wall and walks around and even the fleshless jaws and empty eye sockets of a skeleton wrapped in a hermit's cowl, giving the usual grim warning in the usual hollow voice.

Finally, at the moment when the usurper's line has been extinguished, that is to say, when Manfred's children have all been killed off, the true heir to Otranto is discovered – not a poor peasant but the direct inheritor and the spitting image of Alfonso. We get the following supernatural endorsement of his rightful claim. A clap of thunder shakes the castle to its foundations, the earth rocks, “the clank of more than mortal armour” is heard, the castle walls collapse” and “the form of Alfonso, dilated to immense size”, appears, proclaims the true heir and ascends to Heaven, where St Nicholas “receives his shade in a blaze of glory” (pp98-99 *Otranto*). You can just see it!

No wonder the book was and remains so popular. While the characters are cardboard, the plot elements derivative, and the mock archaic language stilted, Walpole does succeed in giving the reader a good time. Contemporary reviews were mixed but Thomas Macaulay hit the nail on the head when he wrote that despite the shortcomings, Walpole's writings had an irresistible charm as he had the knack of “keeping the mind of the reader constantly attentive and constantly entertained” (p147 *Otranto*).

The cocktail of extravagant action, surprise, horror and supernatural interventions amidst medieval trappings appealed to the taste of later writers who went on to produce a whole spate of Gothic stories. The most notable of these was Ann Radcliffe, whose *Mysteries of Udolpho*, published in 1794, captured the public's imagination and popularised the genre. Her novels were adapted for the stage and Gothic drama became quite a force in London's theatres. Even Coleridge and Shelley had a go at writing a Gothic play and Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* also trod the boards. *Otranto* was adapted at least twice. It must have been sensational!



The recipe for Gothic fiction in general is found in *Otranto*. First of all you need an antiquated space such as a castle, an abbey, a crypt, or a graveyard. In fact, any space that is isolated and eerie enough to produce an atmosphere of strangeness and alienation from the normal world. (Science fiction, for example, likes a spaceship. Think of the Alien movies – in space no one can hear you scream.)

You also need a secret or secrets from the past that are hidden away somewhere within this space. The secret can produce a haunting, a ghost, or some seemingly supernatural manifestation that confronts the characters in some way, challenging their emotional and psychological stability. This element is absolutely essential. You also need a powerful, tyrannical and malignant protagonist, and an innocent maiden whose virtue is threatened – most usually by a forced marriage so the bridegroom can help himself to her inheritance. She must run away to be saved by the hero – preferably one who is young, handsome, and as virtuous as she. To this add any number of descriptive embellishments. And to make the mixture more appetising put in a large dose of the beauties of nature. Remember also the precepts laid down by Edmund Burke, who, in his *Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) wrote, “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger. Whatever is in any sort terrible ... is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (p11 *The Gothic*). To give an example, consider this description of the Italian Alps from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe. Emily, the virtuous heroine, in the company of her aunt who has married the duplicitous Italian, Montoni, is crossing the Alps into Italy.



“Emily, as she travelled among the

clouds, watched in silent awe their billowy surges rolling below ... Sometimes wholly enclosing upon the scene, they appeared like a world of chaos, and, at others, spreading thinly, they opened and admitted partial catches of the landscape - the torrent whose astounding roar had never failed, tumbling down the rocky chasm, huge cliffs white with snow, the dark summits of the pine forests that stretched mid-way down the mountains” (p159 *Udolpho*).

Here Emily’s responds to the natural world with the feelings of awe mixed with fear and delight, the engagement with intense emotions Burke characterised as sublime. As well, Radcliffe is as good with suspense and suggestion as she is with scenic description and although her gliding ghosts and black-veiled horrors are all rationally explained at the end, we can share with Emily the possibility of their reality.



So, again: “While Emily kept her eyes fixed on the spot, she saw the door move, and then slowly open, and perceived something enter the room. Almost fainting with terror, she had yet sufficient command over herself to check the shriek that was escaping from her lips and, letting the curtain drop from her hand, contrived to observe in silence the motions of the mysterious form she saw” (p247 *Udolpho*).

It’s no mystery that Radcliffe’s novels were so popular, or that they brought the Gothic genre into prominence, so much so that Jane Austen was able to satirise those horrid tales where such wild and outrageous goings-on could only happen in dark, Catholic, Mediterranean countries, and certainly not in civilized England. Her *Northanger Abbey* also implies that by the end of the eighteenth century the Gothic style was well and truly out of fashion and the social novel was in! It fell to Charlotte and Emily Brontë well into the nineteenth century to revive and reinvigorate it, and to do so in ground breaking fashion, particularly in the treatment of the essential ingredient.

There certainly were Gothic elements in the sagas of Gondal and Angria, the Brontë juvenilia, and all the children had come across poems and stories of the supernatural through their reading of literary annuals and Blackwood's magazine. Charlotte had even written a ghost story, *Napoleon and the Spectre* (1833) (p95 *The Gothic*) and, as Juliet Barker tells us, was always drawn to the mysterious and the magical. So how much of Jane Eyre's runaway success (p540 Barker) can be attributed to these influences?

Firstly, the heroine's personality contains many of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the Gothic mode. Placed in a number of difficult and often grotesque situations, she is capable of making logical and painfully thought out decisions which require enormous self-command. At the same time, however, her responses reveal a rich and powerfully Romantic imagination, an attraction to the violent and bizarre which is shown in her dreams and her drawings. She is a person likely to attract a haunting and it is in the treatment of the possibility of some unnatural or otherworldly intervention, in the creation of a credible suspense that Charlotte Brontë excels.

Secondly, *Jane Eyre* introduces Gothic themes from the very first sentence. The opening chapter deals with imprisonment, fear and isolation, rejection and alienation, the idea of escape and flight, together with verbal and physical violence. Because it deals with interaction between children – the victim, Jane, and the monstrous and tyrannical John Reed – the opening sequence is doubly horrific and Brontë keeps the tension going when Jane is unjustly sent to the Red Room, because, as an outcast in the social unit of the Reed family, she has no rights and merits no compassion.

The Red Room is a Gothic space in miniature (p11 *Jane Eyre*) containing a massive four-poster bed shrouded with deep red damask hangings, giving the effect of a tomb and, indeed, it is the bed where her uncle died and was laid out. The red theme is continued in the curtains, carpet and tablecloth, in dramatic contrast to the snow-white mattress and pillows, which seem to rise and glare at Jane, as does the bed itself. In Jane's mind the Red Room takes on a life of its own, a menacing, monstrous creature, split and refracted by the mirror panels on the wardrobe. The room is claustrophobic, with its eyes, the windows, muffled so that no glimpse of the outside world is possible.

Jane is emotionally crushed by the atmosphere emanating from the room – a small child dwarfed by the overpowering redness, the intimidating furnishings and their associations with death, loss of love and place within the family.

As evening falls, Jane, whose fertile imagination has been fed on fairy tales told by the servant, Bessie, as well as her own extensive reading, feels the horror of a presence invading the room, and is overcome by terror. Like Radcliffe's Emily, Charlotte Brontë's Jane thinks she sees a ghost, but here the treatment is far more complex, more psychologically apt and detailed.

Shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room: at this moment a light gleamed on the wall. Was it, I asked myself, a ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind? No; moonlight was still, and this stirred; while I gazed it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head. I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by someone across the lawn; but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. (pp14-15 *Jane Eyre*)

The grown up Jane recalling the impact of this ghost on her child's sensibilities understands that it was probably only the light from a lantern that produced the "ghost", but there is no mistaking her aunt Reed's cruelty in subjecting a child to such mental torture. "I shall be killed ..." cries Jane as Mrs Reed sends her back into the room (p15 *Jane Eyre*).

Lowood Institution, where Jane is sent following her collapse, keeps up the Gothic atmosphere of loneliness, deprivation, and mental and physical abuse. Mr Brocklehurst, "the treasurer and manager of the establishment" (p53 *Jane Eyre*) is a tyrant, a hypocrite and, as far as the welfare of the pupils is concerned, a miser. Jane's inner strength helps her to cope with the cold, hunger and strict routine, but it takes all the kindness of Miss Temple, the superintendent, and of her friend, Helen Burns, to comfort her when Mr Brocklehurst calls her a liar.

Helen is really too good to live long and so, in a most touching scene, she dies of consumption. But her gentle stoicism and confident belief in a benevolent heavenly father provide Jane with a model to

follow in trying to control her strong emotions. To a degree Jane succeeds, but the tension between the necessity to conform and the desire for self-expression create an outwardly calm but inwardly restless spirit who will inevitably at some stage break free.

The outbreak of typhus effectively puts an end to Brocklehurst's control and to the privations suffered by the pupils. And eight years later the young teacher, Jane Eyre, escapes the place in search of "Liberty, Excitement and Enjoyment" (p94 *Jane Eyre*). No passive heroine, she, Jane, takes charge of her destiny which leads her to Thornfield Hall as governess to a little French girl whose background provides the required touch of the exotic and the dissolute to the story.

Jane's new home is also Gothic enough to contain a grim and grotesque secret. Set in a pleasant but fairly isolated spot, Thornfield is a large manor house, three stories high, the top being crowned with battlements, just like a castle. Jane finds this feature picturesque but is less at home in the wide hall, the long and matted gallery, the dark, spacious staircase and the general grandeur. The housekeeper takes her on a tour and while the lower rooms are beautiful, those on the third story contain furnishings "a hundred years old" (p116 *Jane Eyre*), giving the impression of a "home of the past with their old English hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers and stranger birds and strangest human beings" (p116 *Jane Eyre*). If ghosts were to haunt Thornfield, it would be in these rooms – but, of course, says Mrs Fairfax, none has ever been heard.

But there is a haunting of some kind – the occasional sound of a goblin, demonic laughter, unsettling, elusive, hinting at a mystery, as does the enigmatic nature of her employer, whose first appearance in the novel is as dramatic as any reader could wish. Jane, taking a walk to the post, finds herself responding to the calm atmosphere of the winter evening and the beauty of the natural surroundings. The sudden, unexpected din of horse's hooves breaks the moment and as her imagination recalls stories of spirits in animal form, a large lion-like dog glides out of the darkness, followed by his master, whose fall dispels any notion of enchantment.

Superbly created supernatural suspense is abruptly undercut, a technique Brontë exploits effectively throughout the novel. From here it is inevitable that this apparently ill-assorted couple will fall in love,

but there are barriers to be broken down, tests to be passed, dangers to be faced and mysteries to be hushed up before any marriage can take place.

For, just as the child, Jane, had a mind prepared for horror when locked in the Red Room, so the mind of the young woman is prepared for the horror she encounters on the night before her wedding. The words used to describe Jane's wedding clothes prepare the readers for it as well. The "vapoury veil", the "strange wraith-like garments", giving out a "ghostly shimmer through the shadow" of her room (p306 *Jane Eyre*) hardly inspire confidence that the marriage will proceed normally. Besides, the night is cloudy and windswept and Jane is anxiously waiting for Rochester who has been away attending to some business concerning a small farming estate. So, not "without a certain wild pleasure" (p307 *Jane Eyre*) she sets out to meet him, braving the "measureless air-torrent thundering through space" (p307 *Jane Eyre*). She passes the wreck of the chestnut tree, split by lightning the night that Rochester proposed. The weather worsens. The rain and wind increase and Jane fears for Rochester's safety. But horseman and rider arrive unhurt. He sweeps her up into the saddle and they return to Thornfield where Jane finally tells him the reason for her anxiety. She has had a dream, or rather, two, followed by a terrifying visitation. On the previous night, when the wind blew with an "eerie, mournful, mocking sound" a feeling of "anxious excitement" (p313 *Jane Eyre*) came over her, together with a longing to be with Rochester. Falling asleep at last, her dream intensified the sense of a barrier dividing them as she wandered down a lonely road carrying a small, wailing child, trying yet failing to reach him. Her second dream saw Thornfield Hall fallen into ruin. Again, striving to catch sight of her lover and still burdened with the clinging child, she struggled to climb a thin wall, falling as it crumbled and the child rolled from her knee.

Jane is now in state of mind well prepared for horror, and it comes in the shape of a dark form emerging from the closet, examining the wedding clothes, throwing the veil over a bloated face, and, in ghastly imitation of a bride, admiring its reflection in the mirror.

To Jane the face resembles “the foul German spectre”, “the vampyre”. Ominously, the creature tears the veil in two, trampling upon it and, turning on Jane, “thrusts the candle into her face so that in the brief second before it is extinguished, Jane sees in close up the lurid, savage visage. For the second time in my life, says Jane, remembering that time in the Red Room, “I lost consciousness” (p316 *Jane Eyre*).

But again, the visitation was not supernatural. Come morning Jane finds the two halves of the veil lying on the carpet – reality has proven more terrifying than any ghost.

The identity of the intruder is revealed as Jane and Rochester are in church before the altar. We are now even deeper into Gothic territory leading to the discovery of the madwoman in the attic – the prisoner in that mini labyrinth leading to the battlemented roof of Thornfield Hall.

Charlotte Brontë has brought together all the elements of traditional Gothic horror – together with the fear and guilt attendant on the repression of forbidden desires. The dreams, the hauntings create suspense, which climaxes in the revelation of Rochester’s secret – the wife he married fifteen years before in Madeira, now a maniac hidden away behind the tapestried room on the third story of the secluded house. Her frenzied attack on Rochester emphasises her violence and savagery. Bertha is a wonderfully Gothic plot device and, as we know from an earlier attempt that she is given to pyromania, we are not surprised when she burns Thornfield, kills herself and leaves the way open for Rochester, who has been suitably punished for his former sins, to marry Jane at last.

Note that our heroine is also required to expiate her sin of making Rochester “her idol” (p305 *Jane Eyre*) so, in doing the right thing and running away from Rochester’s proposal that she live as his mistress, Jane is first reduced to beggary then rescued by the Rivers family who, by a very, very happy coincidence, turn out to be her cousins.

Following the maiden’s flight and rescue, comes her transformation from penniless orphan to rich heiress. Along the way she recovers “a remembrance of God” (p329 *Jane Eyre*), resists St. John River’s repeated pressure to join with him in a loveless marriage,

and, in response to a heavenly but politically correct twist on the idea of supernatural intervention, rushes to Thornfield to be reunited with her lover, now maimed, blind and thoroughly chastened.

With the conclusion “Reader, I married him” (p498 *Jane Eyre*) all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds for Jane, who has made her spirited way through all the required stages of Gothic and Romantic fiction.

While making use of Gothic and Romantic conventions, *Jane Eyre* demonstrates a quantum leap from Radcliffe’s novels, just as her works are streets ahead of *Otranto*. Brontë’s novel is character driven rather than being dominated by the what-happens-next cliff-hanger effect. Jane’s thoughts, feelings, actions and choices are all minutely observed, and carry even more impact because the story is told in the first person. And even though she is talking to the reader from the security of a happy and fulfilled present life, she switches from the past to the present when describing those moments of falling in love with Rochester, inviting us to participate in her emotions. Jane’s psychology is fascinating. Her time at Lowood and the example of Christian stoic fortitude provided by Helen Burns help her to control her passionate, independent nature. But the enormous tension between the rational, analytical aspects of her mind and the romantic, imaginative impulse reveals itself not only in her dreams but in her drawings, which are decidedly Gothic in inspiration and subject matter.

As Rochester looks at her paintings, she describes them to the reader.

The pictures were watercolours. The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground; or rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam; its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems, ... Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn. (p139 *Jane Eyre*)

Jane’s subconscious mind is a treasure trove of Gothic imagery. The rational Jane may dismiss the “goblin laughter” coming from Thornfield’s third floor as belonging to the servant, Grace Poole, and

not to any ghost. She can put out a fire and dress vampire bites but the romantic Jane can fall so deeply in love as to forget the very foundations of her religious faith. “My future husband was becoming to me my whole world, and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven ... I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I had made an idol” (p305 *Jane Eyre*).

Always, however, Jane struggles to achieve and assert a self-hood independent of accepted social and moral imperatives. When Rochester teases her rather cruelly about his marriage to Miss Ingram, she stands up to him, maintaining her equality, “I am a free human being” she cries, “with an independent will” (p283 *Jane Eyre*). To St. John’s selfish insistence on a marriage that would benefit him, she replies, “I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer” and “I scorn you when you offer it” (p455 *Jane Eyre*).

Jane Eyre is a subtly drawn, many faceted character. To Rochester she is a fairy. She is an ‘elf’, a ‘sylph’, a ‘sprite’, having the look of another world. Fairy she may be, but a feisty one, certainly.

While Jane’s character soars above her Radcliffian predecessors, there are enough touches in the novel, apart from the plot, to keep it well within the Gothic mould.

The hero, Rochester, is dark, brooding and Byronic, with a “devious, deceptive mind” (p292 *Jane Eyre*) and a chequered past. Like Montoni, he keeps a woman locked up, but that was the only solution he could find to the problem of a lunatic wife, and he did have her looked after. Can we forgive him for this? Can we forgive him for arranging a bigamous marriage? Jane does. We do.

Charlotte Brontë has also succeeded in bringing the Gothic conventions to bear on the ordinary and everyday. Jane is not a princess, Rochester not an evil Italian count. Thornfield is not a castle in the remote mountains of Italy. There are no mysterious nuns, mad monks or sinister spectres. But the atmosphere is certainly there, more effective because it is more subtle – often in a touch, a detail, such as in Eliza Reed’s decision to become a nun and, wall herself up in a French convent, in the references to Madeira, or to Bertha Mason’s ancestry. The themes of identity and power are there, but given an innovative treatment in that it is Jane who triumphs, both in

achieving self-realisation and moral advantage over her husband and most of the others in the story. When first published the book was thought shocking, but not because of a ghost.

Jane Eyre, then, domesticates the Gothic. No mountains, no torrents, no precipices. The action is confined to a small part of England. The hero is not handsome and the heroine is just a small, plain governess. In this novel the ordinary is successfully “made strange”.

Stranger still is Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* which gains its astonishing power by contracting the field still further to the two contrasting households of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange – an extraordinarily narrow sphere, where nature is neither sublime nor picturesque, but a harsh, flinty landscape of crags and moors.

As well as the action, the number of characters is reduced, while, inversely, the level of emotional intensity expands and explodes. The Gothic elements of the story are heightened by this extreme concentration on two families whose lives are turned upside-down, not only by the cuckoo-stranger Heathcliff, but by their own intractable and selfish desires.

In line with the Gothic tradition, the tale harks back to the past, as the story unfolds like a series of frames within frames. The grotesque carving over the door at the Heights reads ‘1500’ and the name ‘Hareton Earnshaw’, introducing the ideas of ancient lineage and identity. Names add to the strangeness and the almost incestuous atmosphere of the story – Earnshaw, Linton, Hindley, Hareton, Heathcliff and Catherine – these names shared and echoed by the characters emphasise the familial ties and the themes of patriarchal power and dispossession, and this tale of love, betrayal and revenge sees the restoration of a rightful inheritor, not to a kingdom or a castle, but to two adjoining estates, significant only to the families who inhabit them.

The Gothic mode, as we have seen, challenges the accepted notions of what is ordered, rational, civilized. So, when Heathcliff, a no-one from nowhere, acquires ownership of the Grange as well as the Heights, through means as amoral as they are barbaric, he is overturning centuries of social practice, where members of the landed gentry passed on their holdings to legitimate heirs. Heathcliff out

Byrons Byron and it is his fiery character as well as the sheer energy and brutality of the book that strike the first-time reader.

Throughout the novel *Grand Guignol* effects of cruelty and sadism multiply. The 'horror' here is anything but delightful. Heathcliff is portrayed as a "fiend", a "devil", an "unredeemed" creature who will stop at nothing. In her book, *Sexual Personae*, Camille Paglia has listed some of the "outbreaks of violence and lurid imaginings which permeate the novel. She goes on to say "we witness or hear of whipping, slapping, thrashing, cuffing, wrenching, pinching, scratching, hair-pulling, gouging, kicking, trampling, and the hanging of dogs. Hindley hopes his horse will kick out Heathcliff's brains. Catherine, bitten by a dog, would not cry out even 'if she had been spitted on the horns of a mad cow.' Isabella shrieks 'as if witches were running red-hot needles into her.' Heathcliff ponders 'flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the house front with Hindley's blood.' He throws a tureen of hot applesauce in Edgar's face. Hindley shoves a carving knife between Nelly's teeth and threatens to push it down her throat. Nelly fears Heathcliff 'smashing Hareton's skull on the steps.' Heathcliff says of Edgar, 'I'll crush his ribs in like a rotten hazel nut!' The moment Catherine ceased loving Edgar, 'I would have torn his heart out, and drunk his blood!' 'I have no pity!' Heathcliff cries. 'The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails!' Isabella says Heathcliff is adept at 'pulling out the nerves with red hot pincers'; he seized her heart, 'pinched it to death', and flung it back to her. He hurls a dinner knife at her, cutting open her neck" (pp449-450Paglia). And you could go on to find more examples. But for all that, Heathcliff is a villain-hero who excites some sympathy for his years of suffering. Even considering the influences of the mass of Gothic heroes who preceded his creation, Heathcliff is an amazing literary achievement. His attraction is as fascinating as the mysteries with which Emily Brontë surrounds him.

Betrayed by the one he loves, his twin soul, he returns to the Heights after a three year absence, during which he has transformed himself from an ignorant, degraded brute to a sophisticated man of wealth. How? We are not told. Does it matter? No. What does

matter is the way in which he takes revenge on those who have wronged him, pursuing it into the second generation.

His marriage to Isabella Linton is driven by revenge, and Isabella's story of her experiences and her escape from her prison at the Heights is a mini-Gothic tale in itself, one echoed later when young Catherine temporarily escapes from her forced marriage and virtual imprisonment, by means of the latticed window in the room that had once been her mother's, and the fir tree nearby. This is the window that figures spectacularly in Lockwood's dream, which introduces the essential 'supernatural' ingredient in a Gothic tale.

Lockwood is the 'stranger come to town', whose incursion into the enclosed world of the Heights provides the framework for Nelly Dean to tell the story of Catherine and Heathcliff and the events leading up to the situation in which he now finds himself. As Heathcliff's tenant he has foolishly tried to establish what he thinks is a normal, social relationship with the inhabitants of the Heights. But they want to be rid of him and he only stays because the harsh weather conditions won't let him leave. After what is clearly a dreadfully humiliating experience, Lockwood is finally shown a bedroom in which he finds a large oak case with squares cut out near the top and a couch inside it. Although lacking the ostentation of *Jane Eyre's* Red Room, it is in this simple space that the determining event of the novel takes place. On the window ledge there are a few mildewed books and a name scratched over and over in all kinds of characters, large and small – Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, Catherine Linton. Exhausted, he spells the names over and over until his eyes close.



But he tells us, they had not rested five minutes before “a glare of white letters started from the dark” (p20 *Wuthering Heights*) unexpected and terrifying to the reader as well as to the narrator. Because Emily Brontë uses the word 'rested' instead of 'slept', we can imagine that he has not, in fact, slept, but has entered that trance like

phase between sleep and wakefulness, that state of vulnerability where the possibility of a haunting is not unlikely.

The language here is brilliant. Using 'glare' not as a verb but as a collective noun gives the impression of a horde of malevolent, bee-like eyes spiralling out from the dark in a sudden violent attack. The air 'swarms' with Catherines, an image packed with surreal energy, completely unnerving in the context of the homely, old-fashioned room which has not been used for years.

Lockwood rouses himself from this nightmarish experience to find the candlewick burning the leather binding of one of the old books. Curious, he opens the testament of Catherine Earnshaw and reads, written in the blank spaces between the text, the diary of a child. It records "an awful Sunday" (p20 *Wuthering Heights*) spent in a stultifying domestic atmosphere following the death of the master of the house. The children, Catherine and Heathcliff, have allied themselves against the new master, her brother Hindley, who has clearly made the most of his power over them. The household described in the diary simmers with frustration and latent violence, constantly stirred by the servant Joseph's fanatical religiosity. Lockwood leaves off reading at the vital point where Hindley swears he will reduce Heathcliff to his rightful place (p22 *Wuthering Heights*).

What Lockwood has read is crucial to the development of the plot, introducing the motifs of place, inheritance, identity and the abuse of power. Like Lockwood, we ask ourselves, who were these people? And what has happened to bring about the present bizarre circumstances at the Heights where Heathcliff is now clearly the master?

His eyes wandering from the diary to a text, beginning Seventy times Seven – a Pious Discours delivered by the Reverend Jabes Branderham, Lockwood falls asleep. There is no doubt implied this time as Lockwood's nightmare mimics the boredom, aggression and hypocritical religious cant he had read about in the diary. In contrast to his first experience, this dream is even comical as Lockwood, participating in the events, accuses the Reverend Jabes of "the sin that no Christian need pardon" (p24 *Wuthering Heights*) - after listening to 490 parts of a sermon! The whole congregation attacks him and each

other with all the manic enthusiasm of a Hollywood bar room brawl, the Reverend Jabs attempting to quell the mob by tapping his gavel, which Lockwood, stunned into consciousness by the sound, recognises as the tapping of the fir tree outside the lattice. Then, dreaming once more, he attempts to stop the noise by opening the window. Finding the clasp soldered shut, he breaks the glass with his fist and grasps not a tree branch but a “little ice-cold hand” (p25 *Wuthering Heights*). Made cruel by terror, he ignores the plaintive cries of the ghost-child and tries to free himself from her tenacious grip by sawing her wrist to and fro across the broken glass as if he were sawing through a bough of the tree.

Now, this sadistic act is thoroughly shocking to the reader, for up to now Lockwood has presented himself as rather a fop, a would be Romantic lover who can't read obvious signals of behaviour or body language. He is an object of contempt for the household at *Wuthering Heights* but, such is the force of first person narration the reader does identify with him. And so, when Lockwood commits this barbarous act against a child who is trying to get in, the reader is also confronted with a dark side he would prefer not to acknowledge.

Against the comic exaggerations of the Branderham sequence, this dream seems not like a dream at all, but a real and terrifyingly felt experience. Lockwood's cruelty is matched by the ghost-child's aggressive tenacity. He keeps on sawing as the blood flows down to soak the bedclothes, but she will not let go. “I won't let you in”, he cries, not if you beg for twenty years.”

“It is twenty years”, wails the child (p25 *Wuthering Heights*), and the struggle continues until Lockwood shouts out, breaking the dream and summoning Heathcliff to the room and to the window.

The ghost-child is a masterful creation. A child's spirit is more likely to break the boundary between this and the alternate world than that of an adult. Here Emily Brontë has taken the ghost motif which in earlier Gothic stories has been used in a fairly simple and straightforward way and transformed it to become the psychological centre of the novel. Cathy's ghost may be a dream but we believe in her. In the moment Lockwood believes in her and Heathcliff believes that her spirit is constantly present.

Just as Catherine's love drew him to her in life, so it haunts him after her death. For eighteen years he pursues a furious, implacable revenge against all those who have wronged him. Yet, the irony is that they continually haunt him. Catherine exists in their features, in a momentary turn of a head, a look, a gesture. Hindley is destroyed, but his eyes are those of his sister. Young Catherine's face, in part, resembles her mother's, and Hareton, whom Heathcliff has deliberately degraded, bears a startling likeness to her. "His aspect", Heathcliff tells Nelly, "is the ghost of my immortal love" (p324 *Wuthering Heights*).

So, when Lockwood tells Heathcliff of the "little fiend" (p27 *Wuthering Heights*) who tried to get in at the window, he is amazed at Heathcliff's reactions of rage and grief. "Come in! Come in! Cathy do come. Oh, do – *once* more. Oh! My heart's darling, hear me this time – Catherine, at last" (p28 *Wuthering Heights*).

The ghost-child of Lockwood's nightmare shows her power over Heathcliff. She has broken through some barrier to draw him to her and from now on the furious energy that has sustained him dissipates. There has been no peace, no satisfaction in a revenge which will, in any case, be nullified as Hareton and Young Catherine fall in love, bringing about a restitution of a natural order that had been violently disrupted so many years before by the dark gypsy-child's intrusion into the family. This restitution, return to normality, is ensured with Heathcliff's death, an event given a richly Gothic treatment with the implication that his heart's desire has at last been fulfilled in a mystical, metaphysical union with his Cathy. She, of course, is the fatal woman of the piece. When she betrayed Heathcliff by marrying Edgar Linton she also betrayed her own integrity. It would prove impossible for her to absorb herself completely into the role of a gentleman's wife as she and Heathcliff had forged their own idea of moral behaviour, beside which Edgar's conformity to conventional social norms seemed unutterably weak and irrelevant. Inevitable that catastrophe would follow upon Heathcliff's return.

When Catherine decides on a plan of self-destruction following the quarrel between Edgar and Heathcliff, it is to break both their hearts by breaking her own, even though she is expecting Edgar's child. In her weakened state she foresees the ghost she will perhaps

become, screaming at a face in the mirror, not recognising it as hers. Again, Catherine's dreams, which, as she tells Nelly, flow through her "like wine through water" (p80 *Wuthering Heights*), foreshadow the experience of nightmare and haunting that Lockwood will suffer in her room all those years later. As we listen with Lockwood to Nelly Dean's story, we recognise the details, corresponding to his nightmare, and the idea of haunting is reinforced. In Cathy's dreams the Heights, not Heaven, is her spiritual home, her fulfilment is being with Heathcliff. Separation from him brings total anguish and torment, and yet she makes the disastrous decision to marry Edgar, choosing social advancement over a degrading union, a decision which brings torment and misery to everyone. For the singular passion that had grown between Catherine and Heathcliff since childhood had attained such intensity that neither could imagine existence without the other. And so, they are mirror images of a romantic ideal of freedom of the spirit and emotion and their idea of heaven is expressed in the boundless spaces of the moors.

Although by her own selfish actions she has separated them in life, Catherine will not allow them to be parted in death. They may bury her twelve feet deep, she cries, and pile the church on top of her but she vows that her spirit will never leave Heathcliff. Earlier, while justifying to Nelly the rightness of her decision to marry Edgar, Catherine tried to explain her belief that she and Heathcliff shared, in some way, the same existence. "I cannot express it; but surely you and every body have a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? 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. ... Nelly, I am Heathcliff – he's always, always in my mind – not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself – but as my own being –" (p82 *Wuthering Heights*). He, in his turn, shares this belief and cannot endure being without her. Learning of her death he calls on her to haunt him, to drive him mad. "Oh *do* not leave me in this abyss where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I

cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" (p169 *Wuthering Heights*) And in a truly Gothic moment he attempts to open her grave, only stopped at the last moment by the sound of a ghostly sigh.

Heathcliff's conviction that ghosts do walk the earth seduces us into believing it as well. Eighteen years later, when his passion for revenge is spent, and he finally arranges for her coffin to be opened, he finds her untouched – there will be no dissolution of her body until he lies beside her. It is as if her spirit is waiting for him. Of course, there is a rational explanation for this. The peaty moisture of the graveyard has preserved her but perhaps this detail is forgotten when we contemplate Heathcliff's fulfilment of desire in having one side of Catherine's coffin opened so that he may, in death, dissolve with her into the earth.

For Heathcliff the "dead are not annihilated" (p334 *Wuthering Heights*) and in the days before his own death he is convinced of Catherine's relentless presence. He can neither sleep nor rest, his body destroyed by his soul's bliss, his dying an eerie parallel to Catherine's last days. Nelly discovers his corpse, lying on his back within the panelled bed, his hand resting on the sill of the open window, his eyes open, fixed, exultant. No comment or interpretation is needed. And Emily Brontë resists the temptation, leaving Nelly to complete Heathcliff's story.

In her treatment of Gothic motifs, devices and language, and most particularly in the art of suggesting the existence of an alternate world, Emily Brontë is unsurpassed. From a genre originally naive and sensational, relying on what we would now call special effects to terrify and amuse the readers, her tough and fearless imagination created a work as powerful and unique today as it was in its time. *Jane Eyre* satisfies, as its Gothic elements yield, at last, to the civilising effects of marriage, home, and child. *Wuthering Heights* disturbs. Despite reconciliation, love, and a marriage that restores the rightful order of things, we might still be inclined to question Lockwood's conclusion that no unquiet sleeper could disturb the quiet earth. After all, that is Lockwood's point of view. And Emily Brontë knows what the reader thinks of him.

This is a novel charged with energy, totally unafraid to challenge, subvert and break the barriers of social convention, to reveal the dark side of desire. Although Emily Brontë creates a believable world with plenty of realistic detail – *Wuthering Heights* is clearly shown as a working farm – she concentrates the action upon states of mind. Action is internal rather than imposed from outside and is therefore more astonishing, more impressive, more essentially Gothic.

Of course, the Gothic genre is alive and well today, in books, films, fashion and even, if you like, in world events. However, not only the genre, but we as readers owe quite a debt to Charlotte and Emily Brontë whose unique, daring imaginations gave us works so rich in their exploration of human aspiration and desire.

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ADÈLE'S DOLLS –

DOLLS IN THE BRONTË NOVELS

A talk by Christopher Cooper on Fri Sept 29th 2006 at an evening where we viewed Marloesje Valkenburg's doll collection.

If I were to ask you to describe the differences between Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë I can imagine many answers that you might give, including Charlotte's own. She said that Jane lacked passion. But a very simple difference, that may not be obvious at first, is the fact that Charlotte refers to dolls many times in her novels while Jane makes not a single mention of them. Actually that's not quite true – she did let the word slip just the once. In *Northanger Abbey* she describes Catherine Morland as somebody who would much prefer to play cricket than play with dolls!

It made me wonder whether Jane ever had any dolls. She seems to have been a little adult, even when she was a child while in some ways Charlotte was a child, even as an adult.



This seems to explain why Jane explored the complexities of human society while Charlotte was more at home with unbridled passion. Now some people have criticised Charlotte's writings (and Emily's too) for being mere childish or adolescent fantasies. I'd agree with that except that I would leave out the word "mere". As we grow up into adulthood we become aware that the world is more complex than we had thought. But we lose something of the simplicity of childhood and the passion of adolescence. Charlotte and Emily hung onto this passion.

According to *European and American Dolls* by Gwen White, Charlotte had about 21 dolls, which would have made her quite a collector. But I don't recall seeing any in the Parsonage Museum and I couldn't find any reference to dolls in a quick search of the standard biographies, so I wonder where she got this from. According to Gwen White, the chief doll in Charlotte's collection was a large wooden doll that was presented to her as a prize for hemming her first

handkerchief. I'm a little bit cautious in accepting these facts since she goes on to say that Charlotte would have been about five at the time of winning this prize and that this would make it about 1828. In 1828 Charlotte was in fact 12 years old. Christine Alexander says that this is the first she's heard of Charlotte's doll collection, so it's probable that White was confusing Charlotte Brontë with some other Charlotte.

Jane Austen never wrote much about children. Even when she was herself a child she wrote about the adult world. But the Brontë sisters understood children and wrote much about them. Now I wouldn't go so far as to say that the Brontës were the first to write about children. But I wonder if Charlotte was the first writer to make us aware of what goes on inside a child's mind and heart.

In the days before mechanical and electronic toys, that almost play by themselves, a toy was a springboard for the imagination. Indeed one doesn't have to go back too far in history to find a time when toys were just ordinary objects that happened to be lying around and which could be breathed into life. A corn dolly is just a sheaf of corn that has been gathered up and made to look like a person. By the time of the Brontës, childhood was just beginning to be discovered as a separate stage of life and simple toys could be bought. We all know what came about as a result of the set of wooden soldiers that Patrick brought back for his children!

Wooden soldiers are not normally considered to be dolls but like dolls they represent people and so they allow much richer possibilities for the imagination than, say, a toy cart or a spinning top. But a doll allows an even richer experience than a wooden soldier because, while you can talk *about* a wooden soldier and chronicle his exploits you can talk *to* a doll. A doll can be a companion, which is especially important for an only child.

Of course Charlotte wasn't an only child but somehow she instinctively knew what it felt like to be one. In *Jane Eyre* she describes the way young Jane felt about her doll.



When tired of this occupation, I would retire from the stairhead to the solitary and silent nursery: there, though somewhat sad, I was not miserable. To speak truth, I had not the least wish to go into company, for in company I was very rarely noticed; and if Bessie had but been kind and companionable, I should have deemed it a treat to spend the evenings quietly with her, instead of passing them under the formidable eye of Mrs. Reed, in a room full of ladies and gentlemen. But Bessie, as soon as she had dressed her young ladies, used to take herself off to the lively regions of the kitchen and housekeeper's room, generally bearing the candle along with her. I then sat with my doll on my knee till the fire got low, glancing round occasionally to make sure that nothing worse than myself haunted the shadowy room; and when the embers sank to a dull red, I undressed hastily, tugging at knots and strings as I best might, and sought shelter from cold and darkness in my crib.

To this crib I always took my doll; human beings must love something, and, in the dearth of worthier objects of affection, I contrived to find a pleasure in loving and cherishing a faded graven image, shabby as a miniature scarecrow. It puzzles me now to remember with what absurd sincerity I doated on this little toy, half fancying it alive and capable of sensation. I could not sleep unless it was folded in my night-gown; and when it lay there safe and warm, I was comparatively happy, believing it to be happy likewise.

I suppose Jane must have been lucky that Aunt Reed even allowed her to have a doll. But then it was a “faded graven image, shabby as a miniature scarecrow”, probably a simple wooden doll – nothing like Georgiana’s wax doll from Paris, dressed in all the latest fashions.

Bessie had now finished dusting and tidying the room, and having washed her hands, she opened a certain little drawer, full of splendid shreds of silk and satin, and began making a new bonnet for Georgiana's doll.

Jane’s doll had nowhere to live except in Jane’s bed. But Georgiana’s miniature dolls lived in a magnificent dolls house – a dolls house that Jane was not allowed to touch.

Having spread the quilt and folded my night-dress, I went to the window-seat to put in order some picture-books and doll's house furniture scattered there; an abrupt command from Georgiana to let her playthings alone (for the tiny chairs and mirrors, the fairy plates and cups, were her property) stopped my proceedings; and then, for lack of other occupation, I fell to breathing on the frost-flowers with which the window was fretted, and thus clearing a space in the glass through which I might look out on the grounds, where all was still and petrified under the influence of a hard frost.



I wonder if Jane left her doll behind at Gateshead or did it go with her to Lowood, or even to Thornfield Hall? Probably it was the only doll she ever owned – unlike Adèle. Adèle had a “*best wax doll*” so no doubt she had several, not to mention dolls made of wood, leather, bisque and porcelain.

Having seen Adele comfortably seated in her little chair by Mrs. Fairfax's parlour fireside, and given her her best wax doll (which I usually kept enveloped in silver paper in a drawer) to play with, and a story-book for change of amusement; and having replied to her "Revenez bientôt, ma bonne amie, ma chere Mdlle. Jeannette," with a kiss I set out.



Not only did Charlotte write about actual dolls she also allowed her characters to describe somebody as “a doll”. Blanche Ingram thought of Adèle as “a little doll”.

"Mr. Rochester, I thought you were not fond of children?"

"Nor am I."

"Then, what induced you to take charge of such a little doll as that?" (pointing to Adèle). "Where did you pick her up?"

And Jane, herself, felt that she was being treated like a doll by Rochester when he wanted to dress her up in fine clothes.

I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester

Let's move on to *Villette*. Here Charlotte goes to great lengths to describe little Polly's doll. Again this is a special doll that comforted an only child. And this doll even has a name.

Repairing to the drawing-room – in which calm and decorated apartment she was fond of being alone, and where she could be implicitly trusted, for she fingered nothing, or rather soiled nothing she fingered – I found her seated, like a little Odalisque, on a couch, half shaded by the drooping draperies of the window near. She seemed happy; all her



appliances for occupation were about her; the white wood work-box, a shred or two of muslin, an end or two of ribbon, collected for conversion into doll-millinery. The doll, duly night-capped and night-gowned, lay in its cradle; she was rocking it to sleep, with an air of the most perfect faith in its possession of sentient and somnolent faculties; her eyes, at the same time, being engaged with a picture-book, which lay open on her lap.

'Miss Snowe,' said she in a whisper, 'this is a wonderful book. Candace' (the doll, christened by Graham; for, indeed, its begrimed complexion gave it much of an Ethiopian aspect) – 'Candace is asleep now, and I may tell you about it; only we must both speak low, lest she should waken.

Her lip trembled. I hastened to disclose the fact of a letter having been received, and to mention the directions given that she and Harriet should immediately rejoin this dear papa. 'Now, Polly, are you not glad?' I added. She made no answer. She dropped her book, and ceased to rock her doll; she gazed at me with gravity and earnestness.

Tiny Polly could herself be described as a doll, and that would be a compliment. But Charlotte's characters were often less flattering when they describe someone as a doll.

'The Colonel-Count!' I echoed. 'The doll – the puppet – the manikin – the poor inferior creature! A mere lackey for Dr. John: his valet, his foot-boy!

'Dr. and Mrs. Bretton were at M. de Bassompierre's this evening?'

'Ay, ay! as large as life; and missy played the hostess. What a conceited doll it is!'

It's not quite clear to what extent Lucy Snowe was being sarcastic when she likens De Hamel to a doll.

I believe I could have picked out the conquering De Hamel even undirected. He was a straight-nosed, very correct-featured little dandy. I say little dandy, though he was not beneath the middle standard in stature; but his lineaments were small, and so were his hands and feet; and he was pretty and smooth, and as trim as a doll: so nicely dressed, so nicely curled, so booted and gloved and cravated he was charming indeed.

When Dr Graham suggested to his mother that a certain young lady might become her daughter-in-law Mrs Bretton made no secret of her jealousy.

'You will bring no goddess to La Terrasse: that little château will not contain two mistresses; especially if the second be of the height, bulk and circumference of that mighty doll in wood and wax, and kid and satin.'

What doll references are there in *Shirley*? Harriet is described as one who would not be treated like a doll.

Hannah was his favourite. Harriet, though beautiful, egotistical, and self-satisfied, was not quite weak enough for him. She had some genuine self-respect amidst much false pride, and if she did not talk like an oracle, neither would she babble like one crazy; she would not permit herself to be treated quite as a doll, a child, a plaything; she expected to be bent to like a queen.

And Jessy is described as a doll.

Jessy, with her little piquant face, engaging prattle, and winning ways, is made to be a pet, and her father's pet she accordingly is. It is odd that the doll should resemble her mother feature by feature, as Rose resembles her father, and yet the physiognomy -- how different!

When Martin claims that all women are dolls he is not being at all complimentary.

'I'll say the same then. I mean always to hate women. They're such dolls; they do nothing but dress themselves finely, and go swimming about to be admired. I'll never marry. I'll be a bachelor.'

Shirley complains that all men think of women as mere decorative dolls.

'If men could see us as we really are, they would be a little amazed; but the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women: they do not read them in a true light: they misapprehend them, both for good and evil: their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend.

To Caroline, playing with dolls is but a childish occupation. She would have had no sympathy with the enthusiastic collectors of this world who are never too old to play with their dolls.

'Pooh! mere nonsense! I'll not hear of governessing. Don't mention it again. It is rather too feminine a fancy. I have finished breakfast, ring the bell: put all crotchets out of your head, and run away and amuse yourself.'

'What with? My doll?' asked Caroline to herself as she quitted the room.

Dolls get a mention in *The Professor*. Crimsworth is glad that Zoraide Reuter is no mere doll. (Once again Charlotte doesn't simply use the word "doll" but she mentions some of the materials with which dolls of the day were made.)

... the idea of marrying a doll or a fool was always abhorrent to me: I know that a pretty doll, a fair fool, might do well enough for the honeymoon; but when passion cooled, how dreadful to find a lump of wax and wood laid in my bosom, a half idiot clasped in my arms, and to remember that I had made of this my equal – nay, my idol – to know that I must pass the rest of my dreary life with a creature incapable of understanding what I said, of appreciating what I thought, or of sympathizing with what I felt!

Now what about Emily? In her own childhood she probably had more time for the animals around the Parsonage than a lifeless piece of wood or leather. Her only two uses of the word “doll” in *Wuthering Heights* describe a character unfavourably, as being effeminate. Nelly Dean tells Heathcliff that compared to him Edgar Linton is quite a doll.

And now, though I have dinner to get ready, I'll steal time to arrange you so that Edgar Linton shall look quite a doll beside you: and that he does. You are younger, and yet, I'll be bound, you are taller and twice as broad across the shoulders; you could knock him down in a twinkling; don't you feel that you could?'

Then little Hareton is described by Nelly as a “moaning doll”.

My master kept his room; I took possession of the lonely parlour, converting it into a nursery: and there I was, sitting with the moaning doll of a child laid on my knee; rocking it to and fro ...

But Anne must have played with dolls. At least, in *Agnes Grey*, she describes Mary Ann's dolls and her accessories.

When the room and books had been shown, with some bickerings between the brother and sister that I did my utmost to appease or mitigate, Mary Ann brought me her doll, and began to be very loquacious on the subject of its fine clothes, its bed, its chest of drawers, and other appurtenances; but Tom told her to hold her clamour, that Miss Grey might see his rocking-horse, which, with a most important

bustle, he dragged forth from its corner into the middle of the room, loudly calling on me to attend to it. Then, ordering his sister to hold the reins, he mounted, and made me stand for ten minutes, watching how manfully he used his whip and spurs. Meantime, however, I admired Mary Ann's pretty doll, and all its possessions; and then told Master Tom he was a capital rider, but I hoped he would not use his whip and spurs so much when he rode a real pony.

... with a feeling of unusual repose, I sat by the fire, putting the finishing stitches to a frock for Mary Ann's doll ...

It may be that Anne had not seen the very lifelike bisque dolls that had begun to be made in France and Germany. Uppermost in her mind seems to have been the painted wooden dolls with their rather unnatural colouring. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* Milicent Hargrave and Helen are discussing Mr Huntingdon's complexion. Milicent thinks it's too red but Helen replies indignantly:

It is not red at all. There is just a pleasant glow, a healthy freshness in his complexion – the warm, pinky tint of the whole harmonising with the deeper colour of the cheeks, exactly as it ought to do. I hate a man to be red and white, like a painted doll, or all sickly white, or smoky black, or cadaverous yellow.

In addition to these doll references the Brontës mention “automatons” nine times. Automata are mechanical dolls that were more adult novelties than children's playthings. You would wind up their clockwork and they would move, though rather stiffly.

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".

Finally, 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 BRIEF HISTORY OF DOLLS

The text of a talk given by Marloesje Valkenburg, at an evening on Friday September 29th 2006, as she showed her doll collection.

Dolls have been made from a wide variety of materials.

WOOD

Many of the earliest dolls have been made entirely or partly of wood and those of the sixteenth century differ little from those in ancient Egypt. There were 'stump' dolls about 5 or 6 inches high, carved complete with a skirt, like ninepins. Others had the head and body carved from one piece with jointed arms and legs, connected by wooden pegs. And others had only the head and shoulders carved from wood, connected to a rag body.

Central Europe had abundant forests in the sixteenth century and most of the dolls of that period were made there in places such as Oberammergau, Nuremberg and South Tyrol. The more elaborate wooden dolls were treasured and handed down from generation to generation and were often specifically mentioned in wills. For example an English will of 1548 mentioned a wooden headed doll with the head slightly carved, with a protruding nose and with carved eyes and mouth. This doll was bequeathed to the granddaughter with the request that it be passed on with the estate.

A wooden doll believed to have been played with in Holyrood Palace in the late 17th century had a large wooden head with painted eyes and with beauty spots painted on the face, large hands and jointed legs and arms.

Some wooden dolls had painted eyes, but as the century progressed most of them had glass eyes. The eyebrows and eyelashes were painted with stylized dots. Sometimes the hands were cloth, sometimes of wood. The torsos were either square or pointed – the latter being a later variation.

In the early 19th century wooden dolls began to have the heads covered in plaster, with the features moulded rather than carved.



RAG

If you take a bundle of rags and tie it around, near one end, you make a crude head. Another tie can make a waist. All over the world rag dolls have been made in homes, loved to bits, and then vanished.

Faces have been made by stiches, paint or even tar, but although rag dolls are usually such jolly things they have a curious history, for some of their ancestors were used as hex dolls by witches. In the seventeenth century one unfortunate deranged woman living near Boston was found to have a large collection of torn and disfigured rag dolls and she was executed as a witch. It was believed that the dolls

represented the children in the village and that by ill treating the dolls she was trying to harm the village children.

By the eighteenth century most children had some kind of home-made rag doll to play with. Poor children had rag dolls crudely made from discarded rags. Wealthy children played with beautiful cloth dolls with carefully embroidered features and elaborate dresses. Doll manufacturers began to mass produce rag dolls in the late 1800s and there are numerous patents concerning rag dolls. In 1893 Ida Gutsell made patterns for rag dolls which were printed on a piece of material, designed to be cut out and sewn together and stuffed. Mademoiselle Renée de Veraine made a rag doll with two faces, one smiling and one crying. The unwanted face was covered with a little cap. A variation on this idea is the Little Red Riding Hood doll (you can still buy these) where it can be Riding Hood herself, the grandmother or the wolf, depending on how it is arranged.

PAPIER MÂCHÉ

Wooden and wax dolls were expensive to produce and so, to bring dolls within reach of the majority of the population, doll makers experimented with papier mâché. These were made of mashed and pulped paper which could be moulded in a press. A model of the doll would be made in carved wood or clay and then coated with shellac. This would be completely surrounded by clay. When hard this would be cut away in two pieces – one for the front of the head and one for the back. Paper pulp would be inserted between the two halves and then they were pressed together.

By 1810 papier mâché heads were being mass produced in Sonneberg in the state of Thüringen in Germany. They were strong and light to hold and, although crude at first, better ones gradually became more popular. The doll heads, complete with the yoke, would then be sewn or glued to soft bodies of rag or kid.

COMPOSITION

Composition refers to a substance made from finely ground material mixed with glue. Strictly speaking it includes papier mâché but generally refers to later dolls made from a mixture of wood pulp and glue. They were often referred to as “indestructible” dolls though

they can be damaged quite easily. In 1907 the ingredients for some French dolls' bodies were listed as "old cardboard, old gloves, old rags and gum tragacanth". Each doll manufacturer had his own "secret" formula for composition but few of the products of the recipes have successfully withstood the ravages of time.

BISQUE

Bisque is a ceramic material with a hard matt surface. Bisque heads may be pressed or poured into moulds. The pressed ones are usually rough on the inside and are not of uniform thickness. They are generally earlier than the poured heads, most of them having been made prior to 1890. Bisque heads were often produced in factories that made other ceramic products. However doll parts had to be fired in different kilns.

Bisque heads were popular as early as the 1860s, and no doubt some were made before then. They were produced primarily in Europe, mainly in Thur, Bavaria, Bohemia, Paris and Limoges.

Before 1880 most bisque heads were the shoulder type, with or without a swivel neck. Many of these had moulded hair or even moulded bonnets. Some dolls after 1880 were all bisque. Some were jointed – others were stiff (the stiff ones are called "Frozen Charlottes").

Most bisque heads are fired both before and after the colour is applied. However Otto Zeh, in 1898, obtained a patent for painting the heads and then covering them with a transparent lacquer to eliminate the second firing.

LEATHER

Dolls are classified according to the materials from which the heads are made so that although leather bodies were common enough, dolls with leather heads – the true leather doll – are quite rare. At first the leather used was coarse sheepskin, the doll body being merely a bag shape. The upper arms were loosely attached to the torso, but the forearms and hands were beautifully made and gave the appearance of the doll wearing long kid gloves.

WAX

Many of us have visited waxworks like Madame Tussauds. Her life-size models of famous people were made of solid wax, cast in a mould, and had inset hair and glass eyes. It is reported that she studied the heads of victims of the guillotine to learn her anatomical skills. But wax figures of prominent people were made long before this. Throughout medieval Europe full-sized figures, replicas of notable people, were made of wax and placed in churches and chapels.



Later, as wax was expensive as well as heavy, these figures had wax faces and hands only, the bodies being frameworks of canes and wood over which the clothes would be placed. Cellini, the sixteenth century Italian craftsman, made wax figures, and the country of Spain also excelled in realistic effigies with natural colouring with glass eyes.

During the seventeenth century there is mention of wax dolls made in Augsburg. It was the fashion for a rich lady whose baby had died to have it copied full-size in wax, and this would be dressed in baby clothes and kept in a cradle. Small votive figures and dolls were made of solid wax in moulds, but later the heads and limbs were hollow. The parts were joined to wooden bodies which eventually gave way to bodies of stuffed material.

Wax was also used as a thin layer on wood or on composition, usually being spread over the head and yoke and then tinted, but with the passing of time the wax was often cracked.

In 1701, Dr Claver Morris of Wells visited London, and while there he purchased a doll for his baby daughter Molly, “a Wax Baby with an invention to make it cry and turn its eyes”.

Daniel Defoe, writing from Paris in 1722, reported in the Daily Post: “the Duchess of Orleans made a present to the Infant Queen of a wax Baby, Three Foot High, with diamond earrings, a necklace of pearls, and diamond cross, with a Furniture of Plate for a toilet, and Two Indian chests full of linen, and several sorts of cloaths for the baby, the whole for that Princess to play with”.

At first wax dolls had wooden bodies, but by the 1760s many had stuffed bodies. Some of these were stuffed with very coarse straw, the stems being pushed down into the limbs. Wax over composition was used in 1784 for many dolls with stuffed bodies.

A shop in Bond Street, London, sold dolls, clowns and soldiers and in 1797 a wax doll was bought from this shop as a gift for the daughter of George IV. Portrait dolls of Queen Victoria in her coronation robes had heads and arms of wax, stuffed leather bodies and wooden legs. Others of 1840 show her in her wedding gown.

Pedlar dolls had wax faces which were either 'white' or 'black', some with wooden legs, some with mere sticks. Wax dolls were not so popular in the USA as in England, partly owing to the climate, but they became more popular in the 1830s.

In 1851 Charlotte Brontë visited the Great Exhibition in London. She probably saw the dolls exhibited by Augusta Montanari. Madame Montanari won a gold medal at this exhibition for her wax dolls. The jury report read: "The display of this Exhibitor is the most remarkable and beautiful collection of toys in the Great Exhibition. It is a series of dolls representing all ages, from infancy to womanhood, arranged in several family groups ... The dolls have hair, eyelashes, and eyelids separately inserted in wax ... The dolls are adapted for children of the wealthy rather than general sale, undressed dolls sell from 10 shillings to 5 guineas – dressed dolls are much more expensive. One of these dolls was a wax doll based on Queen Victoria's four year old daughter, Princess Louise. Also, one of her dolls had muslin stretched across the wax face, with small holes pierced so that the eyes might show through. Madame Montanari's son, Richard was also a doll maker and he too employed this technique.

Small wax dolls, about 24cm long were sold at the Ascot races in 1849. These dolls had wax heads, inset eyes, hair wigs, and arms of blue leather. Dressed in muslin trimmed with lace and ribbons, one of these dolls is now in the Cuming Museum in Southwark.

If dressed in a hat, sometimes a wax doll had just a fringe of hair on a strip of braid wound around the head. Others had real hair inserted in groups or singly.

The Anglo-American author, Frances Hodgson Burnett – she wrote *Little Lord Fauntelroy* – describes dolls in many of her books.

In the book she wrote about her own childhood, *The One I Knew The Best of All*, she mentions a wax doll. “At night this doll had her wire pulled and her wax eyelids drawn down”. She also describes the wax dolls of her youth as having black or brown rows of dangling curls sewn on a little black skull cap, or stuck on with mucilage. Only the face and neck were of wax, with a smooth round face, a dab of wax for a nose, red paint for a mouth, eyebrows were two arches of brown paint, the eyes were of black or blue glass with no pupil, and the wax eyelid pulled down over them by means of a wire which came out of the side. The calico body was stuffed with sawdust, the arms and legs dangled, the lower arms being covered with pink, blue, yellow or green kid.

Wax dolls don't do well in hot climates unless special precautions are taken. Nor do they like travelling by air. If wax dolls are transported by air the faces may sometimes become covered with minute cracks caused by the reduced air pressure. It has been suggested that ardent collectors should always go by sea when travelling with their wax dolls!

This poem *The Wax Doll*, written in 1804, highlights the perils of wax in warm climates.

*Mamma now brought her home a doll of Wax,
Its hair in ringlets white and soft as flax;
Its eyes could open and its eyes could shut,
And on it with much taste its clothes were put.*

*She plac'd it in the sun – misfortune dire;
The wax ran down as if before the fire!
Each beauteous feature quickly disappeared,
And melting left a blank all soiled and smeared.*

RUBBER

Some dolls were made of gutta-percha in 1823. This material was soft and pliable but it was not until 1839, when Charles Goodyear discovered the technique of vulcanising rubber, that it became popular for dolls. Thomas Forster took out a patent in England in 1844 for moulded rubber heads. In 1858 many patents for rubber dolls were

lodged. Bauculard made gutta-percha heads that, when squeezed, could alter their expression. He called them 'grimacing dolls'. The doll making company, Bru, made a jointed rubber doll in 1878. Another doll maker, Miller, inserted wire in the bodies of rubber dolls to allow the doll to be bent and to remain in that position.

Some manufacturers claimed that rubber dolls were good for infants to use when cutting their teeth. In 1855 Hecht had the idea of inserting metal whistles into rubber dolls. Of course these whistles could come loose and pose a choking hazard so mothers would remove them. Many rubber dolls from this period have a hole where once there was a whistle.

Solid rubber dolls are very cumbersome and even hollow ones are heavy. Moreover, over time, their 'skins' become an unattractive grey colour. They are unbreakable and should have survived in large numbers but fewer early rubber dolls have survived than their more fragile sisters.

CELLULOID

Celluloid was used for dolls as early as 1862. This is a substance made to imitate ivory, china etc, but as it contains camphor and gun-cotton it is highly inflammable and even burns in water. Moreover celluloid is easily dented and goes yellow with time, so it is not a suitable material for dolls. Nevertheless it was used for about 60 years, at first only for the head or head and yoke but later for whole bodies.



In 1899 the Rheinische Gummi & Celluloid factory patented a doll where the modelled hair lifted off so that the movable eyes could be repaired. The trade mark was a turtle in a diamond. This long-living creature represented the long life of the dolls.

MASQUERADES IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

It has been said that Jane Austen wrote as if she was painting an exquisite miniature on ivory while Charlotte Brontë drew on a much larger canvas. Austen wrote of the narrow world in which she moved (a mere handful of families) and her genius lies in the fact that she was able to draw out from this limited world themes that have echoed across many different cultures in many different times. The recent film *Bride and Prejudice* is an excellent example of how relevant she can be under totally different circumstances.



Charlotte on the other hand travelled much more widely. Not only did she write about this more varied experience, she also wrote about many things she had only read about. It is amazing how many books and papers on Victorian topics refer to what Charlotte Brontë said on the subject. She wrote about politics, phrenology and polar exploration, to name just three.

But when it comes to the masquerade ball you would imagine that Jane Austen would have had more to say than Charlotte. Jane moved in the fashionable world, while Charlotte moved in more confined circles. But the opposite is true – Charlotte mentions masquerades and masks many times while Jane does not. The reason becomes clear when you realise that masquerades were no longer “in” by the time of Jane Austen. She only wrote about what she saw and it is likely that she never saw this extraordinary cultural phenomenon that had died out a generation before she was born. Charlotte, though of a later generation, had read about the masquerade and it became grist to the mill. Also, the masque survived on the continent somewhat longer and she probably experienced a masque during her time in Brussels.

Charlotte's first experience of the mask, as a means of making one anonymous, occurred as a child. Everyone remembers that story, told by Patrick Brontë to Mrs Gaskell.

When my children were very young, when, as far as I can remember, the oldest was about ten years of age, and the youngest about four, thinking that they knew more than I had yet discovered, in order to make them speak with less timidity, I deemed that if they were put under a sort of cover I might gain my end; and happening to have a mask in the house, I told them all to stand and speak boldly from under cover of the mask.

I began with the youngest, Anne, and asked what a child like her most wanted; she answered, 'Age and experience.' I asked the next, Emily, what I had best do with her brother Branwell, who was sometimes a naughty boy; she answered, 'Reason with him, and when he won't listen to reason, whip him.' I asked Branwell what was the best way of knowing the difference between the intellects of man and woman; he answered, 'By considering the difference between them as to their bodies'. I then asked Charlotte what was the best book in the world; she answered, 'The Bible.' And what was the next best; she answered, 'The Book of Nature.' I then asked the next what was the best mode of education for a woman; she answered, 'That which would make her rule her house well.' Lastly, I asked the oldest what was the best mode of spending time; she answered, 'By laying it out in preparation for a happy eternity.' I may not have given precisely their words, but I have nearly done so, as they made a deep and lasting impression on my memory. The substance, however, was exactly what I have stated.

In many places Charlotte uses the image of a mask to describe a character's facial expression, or the lack of any expression in a deliberate attempt to conceal their feelings. Jane Eyre's Aunt Reed had a "grim face ... like a carved mask". When Jane thought it was Grace Poole who created havoc in Thornfield Hall she asks "what creature was it, that, masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey?"

In *Villette* Monsieur Paul, when raised to anger seemed to “cover his human visage with the mask of an intelligent tiger”. On rare occasions he would smile and his visage changed from a mask to a face. Lucy Snowe, in describing the performance of the great Vashti says of the evil forces, “they writhed her regal face to a demoniac mask”.

In some cases a face appeared to be wearing a mask. In comparing Bertha Mason’s tortured face to Jane’s normal one Rochester refers to the first as a “mask” and the second a “face”. In *Villette* when the Count de Bassompierre and Dr. Bretton came inside they were covered in snow wearing a “mask of Old Christmas”

Then there are the actual masks. These are worn by rioters in *Shirley* to conceal their faces. In *Jane Eyre* we have the scene where Rochester masks himself as a gypsy.

I reflected, and thought, on the whole, I had. It was a comfort; but, indeed, I had been on my guard almost from the beginning of the interview. Something of masquerade I suspected. I knew gipsies and fortune-tellers did not express themselves as this seeming old woman had expressed herself; besides I had noted her feigned voice, her anxiety to conceal her features.

Though Charlotte uses the word “masquerade” here the account of a true masquerade occurs in *Villette*. Here the masks are used, not with criminal intent, but for amusement. As Lucy Snowe nears the park she encounters many people in costume and mask.

Villette is one blaze, one broad illumination; the whole world seems abroad; moonlight and heaven are banished: the town, by her own flambeaux, beholds her own splendour – gay dresses, grand equipages, fine horses and gallant riders throng the bright streets. I see even scores of masks.

...the crowd, the masques, the music, the lamps, the splendours, the guns booming afar, the bells sounding on high.

Although the masquerade ball was popular on the continent in earlier times it did not reach England until the 1600s. At first it was a private spectacle, arranged by the monarch for his court, but in the early 1700s entrepreneurs recognised that money could be made by conducting public masquerades.

Throughout most of the 1700s masquerades were big business with as many as 700 attending a single event. Who attended last night's masquerade and what they wore were among the chief topics of conversation in society and reports of masquerades balls appeared in all the newspapers.

A masquerade is a ball in which the participants dress in costume and wear a mask to conceal their identity. There is dancing and a sumptuous supper.

The word "masquerade" may have come from the Arabic word "maskhara" meaning "laughing-stock" or "buffoon". Or it may have come from the Old French "mascherer" meaning "to blacken the face" (which also led to the word "mascara" in make-up).

Count Heidegger went from Switzerland in 1713 to become the manager of the Haymarket Theatre. This theatre was mainly used for opera, but on nights when no opera was being performed Heidegger organised public masquerades. Admission was by ticket, sold in the coffee houses. Soon masquerades were being held at other venues and they became such a rage that there would often be more than one being held on the same evening.

Although they had the air of being exclusive private events the relatively low cost meant that all but the really poor could afford to go. So at the one ball you would have apprentices and prostitutes as well as lords and ladies. Even the king would often attend incognito.



Masquerades cut across class distinctions and social conventions and this was part of their appeal. You could mix with people from other classes, but because nobody knew who anybody was the class conventions could be maintained at other times. You had no idea whether the Indian sultan you were dancing with was a mere footman or whether it might be Lord Somerby. And the gentleman in a shepherd's garb might be his Royal Highness or it might be just the local tailor. Indeed the handsome young man, dressed as a priest, may even be a woman – perhaps Lady Somerville, or perhaps her maid. The breaking down of conventional barriers added to the excitement.

The costumes were of four main types. There were costumes representing specific people, either from history such as Henry VIII or Cleopatra, or from folk culture, such as Columbine or Harlequin. Other costumes represented people of a certain class or profession or nationality. Popular costumes were those of nuns, shepherdesses, Turkish princes and Chinese ladies. A third group of costumes represented the non-human – cats, horses, goats or even trees.

Finally a considerable proportion of the revellers were dressed in a “domino” costume. This was simply a voluminous cloak that concealed the entire body, with gloves and a simple black mask over the eyes. This neutral costume made it impossible (provided the men were clean shaven) to tell whether the wearer was male or female. With the other costumes one might guess that the wearer may be of the opposite sex to that of the costume (though this was by no means always the case). But with the domino there was no way of telling.

Of course voice would give the game away if one spoke in a normal voice. This led to the phenomenon of the “masquerade squeak”. Men would speak in a high falsetto, as if they were women. But because a high falsetto couldn’t really be confused with a genuine female voice, women also squeaked, as if they were men pretending to be women.



There were standard phrases that were used when meeting people at masquerades (much like the question “do you come here often?” used when picking up a stranger in a bar in today’s society). Such phrases were “I know who you are.” The typical reply was “I am sure you don’t”. To which the response was “Oh, but I do and I will become better acquainted with you.”

One type of mask that was popular covered about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the face and was attached to a stick. The wearer would hold the mask up over his or her eyes. The fact that occasionally the mask would accidentally slip, and the partner could then catch a glimpse of the real face underneath, added to the excitement. This type of mask also allowed the lady to reveal her identity to a person of her choice while concealing it from everybody else.

While many respectable people from all classes of life attended public masquerades, along with a fair sprinkling of low life, there was much criticism of these events from the pulpit as they were believed to encourage a loosening of morals. However, on the whole, masquerades provided a safe environment for morally constrained people to get a bit of excitement without actually doing anything wrong.



Suddenly, in the 1770s, public masquerades dropped out of fashion and some of those running them went bankrupt. Masquerades continued as small private events in country houses and, in more recent years, on cruise ships.

Many famous 18th century novels and plays refer to masquerades and indeed quite a number include whole scenes that take place at a masquerade ball. The following dialogue comes from *Marriage à la Mode* by John Dryden.

PALAMEDE: We shall have noble sport tonight. Rhodophil this masquerading is a most glorious invention.

RHODOPHIL: I believe it was invented first by some jealous lover to discover the haunts of his jilting mistress, or perhaps by some distressed servant to gain an opportunity with a jealous man's wife.

PALAMEDE: No, it must be the invention of a woman: it has so much subtlety and love in it.

RHODOPHIL: I am sure 'tis extremely pleasant, for to go unknown is the next degree to going invisible.

PALAMEDE: What with the antique habits and feigned voices – *do you know me? and I know you?* – methinks we move and talk just like so many overgrown puppets.

RHODOPHIL: Masquerade is only visor-mask improved, a heightening of the same fashion.

PALAMEDE: No, masquerade is vizor-mask in debauch, and I like it the better for't: for with a vizor-mask we fool ourselves into courtship for the sake of an eye that glanced or a hand that stole itself out of a glove sometimes to give a sample of the skin. But in masquerade there is nothing to be known; she's all *terra incognita* and the bold

discoverer leaps ashore and takes his lot among the wild Indians and savages without the vile consideration of safety to his person or of beauty or wholesomeness in his mistress.

Reference: Terry Cole *Masquerade and Civilization* Stanford University 1986

HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED

BEING A

HANDBOOK TO MARRIAGE

BY A

GRADUATE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MATRIMONY

**Extracted from the book of that name by Rev Edward J Hardy,
published in 1885.**

In the preface to the second edition of this book the author relates the following anecdote. Taking up the book in a lending library a friend read aloud the title to a lady who accompanied her – “How to be Happy though Married.” Lady: “Oh, bother the happiness; does it tell how to be married?”

“How to be happy though married.” This was the quaint title of one of Skelton’s sermons, which would certainly cause a momentary cloud of imagination, not to say of alarm, to pass over the minds of a newly married couple, should they discover it when skimming through a collection of old volumes on the first wet day of their honeymoon.

A married pair should be all the world to each other. Sydney Smith’s definition of marriage is well known: “It resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated, often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing any one who comes between them.” Certainly those who go between deserve to be punished; and in whatever else they may differ, married people should agree to defend themselves from the well-meant, perhaps, but irritating interference of friends. Above all, they should remember the proverb

about the home-washing of soiled linen, for as old Fuller said, “Jars concealed are half reconciled; while, if generally known, ‘tis a double task to stop the breach at home and men’s mouths abroad.”

George Eliot tells us that marriage must be a relation either of sympathy or of conquest; and it is undoubtedly true that much of the matrimonial discord that exists arises from the mutual struggle for supremacy. They go to church and say “I will,” and then, perhaps on the way home, one or other says “I won’t,” and that begins it.

“What is the reason,” said one Irishman to another, “that you and your wife are always disagreeing?”

“Because,” replied Pat, “we are both of one mind – she wants to be master and so do I.”

TO BE OR NOT TO BE – MARRIED?



THE BUSY HUSBAND.

That is the question that may occur to many readers. If so much precaution and preparation are necessary to ensure a harmless, not to say a happy marriage, is the game worth the candle? Is it not better for the unmarried to cultivate the contented state of mind of that old Scotch lady who said, “I wadna gie my single life for a’ the double anes I ever saw!”

The controversy as to whether celibacy or wedlock be the happier state is a very old one, perhaps as old as what may be called the previous question – whether life itself may be worth living.

It has been said that of the state of matrimony that those who are in desire to get out, and those who are out, wish to enter. The more one thinks on the matter the more one becomes convinced that the Scotch minister was by no means alarmist who thus began a wedding service: “My friends, marriage is a blessing to a few, a curse to many,

and a great uncertainty to all.” Lord Beaconsfield said: “I have often thought that all women should marry, and no men.”

Robert Burton in his very quaint and interesting *Anatomy of Melancholy* gives the following support for marriage: “Has thou means? thou hast none to keep and increase it. Hast none? thou hast one to help to get it. Art in prosperity? thine happiness is doubled. Art in adversity? she’ll comfort, assist, bear a part of thy burden to make it more tolerable.”

“There’s nothing delightsome without society, no society so sweet as matrimony. The sweet company of kinsmen increaseth, the number of parents is doubled, of brothers, sisters, nephews.”

But Burton then offers equally convincing advice against marriage: “Hast thou means? thou hast one to spend it. Hast none? thy beggary is increased. Art in prosperity? thy happiness is ended. Art in adversity? like Job’s wife, she’ll aggravate thy misery, vex thy soul, make thy burden intolerable. Nothing gives more content than solitariness, no solitariness like that of a single life. Thou shalt be devoured by thy wife’s friends.

But all these enumerations of the comparative advantages of marriage and celibacy are of little use, for a single glance of a pair of bright eyes will cause antimatrimonial arguments to go down like ninepins. The greatest misogynists have been most severely wounded when least expecting it by the darts of Cupid.

MARRIAGE-MADE MEN

If there be any *man* – women are seldom antimatrimonial bigots – who seriously doubt that the *pros* in favour of marriage more than counterbalance the *cons*, we commend to his consideration a few historical instances in which men have been made men in the highest sense of the word by marriage.

We do not endorse the exaggerated statement of Richter that “no man can live piously or die righteously without a wife,” but we think that the chance of his doing so are considerably lessened. It is not good for a man to live alone with his evil thoughts. The checks and active duties of marriage are the best antidote, not only to an impure life, but to the dreaming and droning of a useless and purposeless one.

It is often the case that when you see a great man, like a ship sailing proudly along the current of renown, that there is a little tug – his wife – whom you cannot see, but who is directing his movements and supplying the motive power.

Most people are acquainted with husbands who have lost almost all self-reliance and self-help because their wives have been only too helpful to them. Trollope and George Eliot faithfully portrayed real life in their stories when they put the reins into the hands of good wives and made them drive the domestic coach, to the immense advantage and comfort of the husbands, who never suspected the real state of the case. No man has so thoroughly as Trollope brought into literature the idea which women have of men – creatures that have to be looked after as grown-up little boys; interesting, piquant, indispensable, but shiftless, headstrong, and at bottom, absurd.



THE OVER-INDY WIFE.

But this consciousness which good wives have of the helplessness of husbands renders them all the more valuable in their eyes. Before Weinsberg surrendered to its besiegers, the women of the place asked permission of the captors to remove their valuables. The permission was granted, and shortly after the women were seen issuing from the gates carrying their husbands on their shoulders.

THE CHOICE OF A WIFE

The idea of the great electrician Edison's marrying was first suggested by an intimate friend, who made the point that he needed a mistress to preside over his large house, which was being managed by a housekeeper and several servants. Although a very shy man, he seemed pleased with the proposition, and timidly inquired whom he should marry. The friend somewhat testily replied, "Any one – a man who has so little sentiment in his soul as to ask such a question ought to be satisfied with anything that wears a petticoat and is decent."

It is useless to seek perfection in a wife, even though you may fancy yourself capable of giving an adequate return as did the author of the following advertisement.

Wanted by a Young Gentleman just beginning Housekeeping, a Lady between Eighteen and Twenty-five Years of Age, with a good Education, and a Fortune not less than Five Thousand Pounds; Sound Wind and Limb, Five Feet Four Inches without her shoes; Not Fat, nor yet too lean; Good Set of Teeth; No Pride nor Affectation; Not very Talkative, nor one that is deemed a Scold; but of a Spirit to Resent an Affront; of a Charitable Disposition; not Over-fond of Dress, though always Decent and Clean; that will Entertain her Husband's Friends with Affability and Cheerfulness, and Prefer his Company to Public Diversions and gadding about; one who can keep his secrets; that can extend domestic Expenses with Economy. Any Lady disposed to Matrimony, answering this Description, is desired to direct for Y.Z., at the Baptist's Head Coffee-house, Aldermanbury. N.B. – The Gentleman can make adequate Return, and is, in every Respect, deserving a Lady with the above Qualifications.

As regards the marriageable age of women we may quote the following little conversation: “No woman is worth looking at after thirty,” said young Mrs A., a bride with all the arrogant youthfulness of twenty-one summers. “Quite true, my dear,” answered Lady D., a very pretty woman some ten or fifteen years older; “nor worth talking to before.”

Formerly a woman's library was limited to the Bible and a cookery book. This curriculum has now been considerably extended, and it is everywhere acknowledged that “chemistry enough to keep the pot boiling, and geography enough to know the different rooms in her house,” is *not* enough for women. It is surely not impossible, however, for an intending husband to find a girl who can make her higher education compatible with his comforts, who can when necessary bring her philosophy down to the kitchen. Why should literature unfit women for the everyday business of life? It is not so with men. You see those of the most cultivated minds constantly devoting their time and attention to the most homely objects.

Thackeray said of women: “What we [men] want for the most part is a humble, flattering, smiling, child-loving, tea-making being,

who laughs at our jokes however old they may be, coaxes and wheedles us in our humours, and fondly lies to us throughout life.” It is, we think, only very weak men who would wish their wives to “fondly lie” to them in this way. Better to be occasionally wound up like an eight-day clock by one’s wife and made to go right. There is no one who gives such wise and brave advice as a good wife. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, for he knows that when her criticism is most severe it is spoken in love and for his own good.

THE CHOICE OF A HUSBAND

In their haste to be married many women are too easily satisfied with the characters of men who may offer themselves as husbands. They would not engage a servant if all they knew of her were that she had “a fortnight’s character from her last place;” but with even less information as to their characters they will accept husbands and vow to love, honour, and obey them!

There are hearts all the better for keeping; they become mellow and more worth a woman’s acceptance than the crude, unripe things that are sometimes gathered – as children gather green fruit – to the discomfort of those who obtain them. A husband may be too young to properly appreciate and take care of a wife. And yet perhaps the majority of girls would rather be a young man’s slave than an old man’s darling.

“My dear,” said a father to his daughter, “I intend that you should be married, but not that you should throw yourself away on any wild, worthless boy: you must marry a man of sober and mature age. What do you think of a fine, intelligent husband of fifty?”

“I think two of twenty-five would be better, papa”.

Never to marry a genius was the advice of Mrs Carlyle. “I married for ambition. Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him, and I am miserable.”

Perhaps it may be said that though it is easy to write about choosing a husband, for the majority of English girls, at least, there is but little choice in the matter. Dickens certainly told an American story – very American – of a young lady on a voyage, who, being intensely loved by five young men, was advised to “jump overboard and marry the man who jumped in after her.”

Accordingly, next morning the five being on deck, and looking very devotedly at the young lady, she plunged into the sea. Four of the lovers immediately jumped in after her. When the young lady and four lovers were out again, she said to the captain, "What am I to do with them now, they are so wet?"

"Take the dry one."

And the young lady did, and married him.

MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD MATRIMONIAL BARGAIN

But "the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley." It is true that newly-married people when going through the process of being disillusioned are liable to conclude much too quickly that they have got bad matrimonial bargains. We expect too much from life in general, and from marriage in particular. There are some people who are no sooner married than they begin to cast fond, lingering looks behind upon the state of single blessedness they have abandoned, or else upon some lost ideal which they prefer to the living breathing reality which they now possess. They don't know, and never did know, their own minds.

There is the story told of a rustic swain who, when asked whether he would take his partner to be his wedded wife, replied, with shameful indecision, "Yes, I'm willin'; but I'm not sure I don't prefer her sister."

In the recent census several husbands claimed their wives as heads of the families; when asked to describe their marital status a couple of husbands wrote "married, and I'm heartily sorry for it". Listing infirmities against the names of his household one husband entered "temper" opposite the name of his wife.

If we would learn how to make the best instead of the worst of a matrimonial bargain we could learn much from the first husband, Adam. He allowed himself to be tempted by Eve, and then like a true coward tried to put all the blame upon her.

When you find yourself complaining of your matrimonial bargain, think whether you deserve a better one. What right and title has thy greedy soul to domestic happiness? A Scotch judge once said to an eloquent culprit at the bar, "Ye're a verra clever chiel, mon, but I'm thinkin' ye wad be nane the waur o' a hangin'"

A man is reported to have said to a friend, "You know not the joy of an accepted sorrow." And of every disappointment, we may truly say that people know not how well it may be borne until they have tried to bear it. This, which is true of disappointment in general, is no less true of the disappointment of a married pair. Those who have not found in marriage all that they fondly, and perhaps unreasonably, anticipated, may, after some time, become to a certain extent happy though married if they resolve to do their best under the circumstances.

"HE WILL NOT SEPARATE US, WE HAVE BEEN SO HAPPY"

These were the last words of Charlotte Brontë when, having become Mrs Nicholls, and having lived with her husband only nine months, death came to snatch the cup of domestic felicity from the lips of the happy pair. A low wandering delirium came on. Wakening for an instant from this stupor, she saw her husband's woe-worn face, and caught the sound of some murmured words of prayer that God would spare her.

"Oh!" she whispered, "I am not going to die, am I?" He will not separate us, we have been so happy."

In all ages the anticipation and the reality of separation has been the greatest and sometimes the only sorrow in the lot of united couples. Many very touching inscriptions have been found in the Catacombs at Rome, but none more touching than those which record this separation. Here is one of them.

To Domina, 375AD, my sweetest and most innocent wife, who lived sixteen years and four months, and was married two years, with whom I was not able to live more than six months, during which time I showed her my love as I felt it; none else so loved each other.

When death removed Stella from Swift, and he was left alone to think of what he had lost, he described her as "the truest, most virtuous, and valuable friend that I, or perhaps any other person, was ever blessed with."

Dr Johnson's wife was querulous, exacting, old, and the reverse of beautiful, and yet a considerable time after her death he said that ever since the sad event he seemed to himself broken off from mankind; a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life; without any

direction or fixed point of view; a gloomy gazer on the world to which he had little relation.

But some get over their grief remarkably quickly. A writer on *The Orkneys and Shetland* tells the following. A native of Hoy went one day to his minister and said, “Oh! sir, but the ways of Providence are wonderful!” I thought I had met with a sair misfortune when I lost baith my coo and my wife at ance over the cliff, two months sin; but I gaed over to Graemsay, and I hae gotten a far better coo and a far bonnier wife.”

As a rule, however, no matter how much a husband and wife have tormented each other the separation when it comes is very painful. How true to life is Trollope’s description of the effect of Mrs Proudie’s death upon the bishop.

A wonderful silence had come upon him which for the time almost crushed him. He would never hear that well-known voice again! He was free now. Even in his misery – for he was very miserable – he could not refrain from telling himself that. No one could now press uncalled for into his study, contradict him in the presence of those before whom he was bound to be authoritative, and rob him of all his dignity. There was no one else of whom he was afraid. She had at least kept him out of the hands of other tyrants. He was now his own master, and there was a feeling – I may not call it of relief, for as yet there was more of pain than of satisfaction – a feeling as though he had escaped from an old trouble at a terrible cost, of which he could not yet calculate the amount ... She had in some ways, and at certain periods of his life, been very good to him. She had kept his money for him and made things go straight when they had been poor ... Without her he would never have been bishop. So, at least he told himself now, and so told himself probably with truth.

Sorrow, however, may teach us wisdom, and if we study patience in the school of Christ much comfort will from thence be derived. And much hope too. He is the resurrection and the life, and if we believe in Him we believe that there is a Friend in whose love we may trust for the reunion, sooner or later, of the severed links of sacred human affection.

A HANDBOOK TO MARRIAGE

A Review by Oscar Wilde, published in the Pall Mall Gazette in
November 18, 1885.

In spite of its somewhat alarming title this book may be highly recommended to everyone. As for the authorities the author quotes, they are almost numberless, and range from Socrates down to Artemus Ward. He tells us of the wicked bachelor who spoke of marriage as 'a very harmless amusement' and advised a young friend of his to 'marry early and marry often'; of Dr. Johnson who proposed that marriage should be arranged by the Lord Chancellor, without the parties concerned having any choice in the matter; of the Sussex labourer who asked, 'Why should I give a woman half my victuals for cooking the other half?' and of Lord Verulam who thought that unmarried men did the best public work. And, indeed, marriage is the one subject on which all women agree and all men disagree.

Our author, however, is clearly of the same opinion as the Scotch lassie who, on her father warning her what a solemn thing it was to get married, answered, 'I ken that, father, but it's a great deal solemnner to be single.' He may be regarded as the champion of the married life. Indeed, he has a most interesting chapter on marriage-made men, and though he dissents, and we think rightly, from the view recently put forward by a lady or two on the Women's Rights platform that Solomon owed all his wisdom to the number of his wives, still he appeals to Bismarck, John Stuart Mill, Mahommed and Lord Beaconsfield, as instances of men whose success can be traced to the influence of the women they married.

Archbishop Whately once defined woman as 'a creature that does not reason and pokes the fire from the top,' but since his day the higher education of women has considerably altered their position. Women have always had an emotional sympathy with those they love; Girton and Newnham have rendered intellectual sympathy also possible. In our day it is best for a man to be married, and men must give up the tyranny in married life which was once so dear to them, and which, we are afraid, lingers still, here and there.

'Do you wish to be my wife, Mabel?' said a little boy.

'Yes,' incautiously answered Mabel.

‘Then pull off my boots.’

On marriage vows our author has, too, very sensible views and very amusing stories. He tells of a nervous bridegroom who, confusing the baptismal and marriage ceremonies, replied when asked if he consented to take the bride for his wife: 'I renounce them all'; of a Hampshire rustic who, when giving the ring, said solemnly to the bride: 'With my body I thee wash up, and with all my hurdle goods I thee and thou'; of another who, when asked whether he would take his partner to be his wedded wife, replied with shameful indecision: 'Yes, I'm willin'; but I'd a sight rather have her sister'; and of a Scotch lady who, on the occasion of her daughter's wedding, was asked by an old friend whether she might congratulate her on the event, and answered: 'Yes, yes, upon the whole it is very satisfactory; it is true Jeannie hates her gudeman, but then there's always a something!' Indeed, the good stories contained in this book are quite endless and make it very pleasant reading, while the good advice is on all points admirable.

Most young married people nowadays start in life with a dreadful collection of ormolu inkstands covered with sham onyxes, or with a perfect museum of salt-cellars. We strongly recommend this book as one of the best of wedding presents. It is a complete handbook to an earthly Paradise, and its author may be regarded as the Murray of matrimony and the Baedeker of bliss.

*How to be Happy though Married: Being a Handbook to Marriage.
By a Graduate in the University of Matrimony. (T. Fisher Unwin.)*

WYCOLLER HALL – A HAUNT OF THE BRONTËS

**From *The Persons and Places* by Herbert E. Wroot, 1935,
volume 3 of the Brontë Society Transactions**

After the death of his poor mad wife, Rochester retired to Ferndean Manor, “about thirty miles” from Thornfield Hall. Here he was sought out by Jane Eyre and by her nursed back to sight and health. When the first illustrated edition of *Jane*



Eyre was prepared in 1872, the late Mr E.M. Wimperis, who drew the illustrations, depicted for “Ferndean Manor” Kirklees Hall, near Huddersfield, the identification being, it is understood, suggested by Miss Nussey. It is believed now that in this identification a mistake was made, and that the original of Ferndean Manor of the novel was Wycoller Hall, near Colne.

The visitor from Yorkshire who desires to visit the place will approach it most pleasantly, as Jane Eyre did, by driving, and might fitly commence his journey from Haworth, beyond which railways will fail to help him. The journey made in this way will acquaint him with something of the nature of those moors which impressed themselves so deeply upon the character of the Brontë sisters.

From the railway station a climb must be made up the steep street of Haworth to the new church, whence the road runs through Stanbury. Farther on, the Worth Valley compensation reservoir is reached. Close by, half hidden in a clump of trees on the hill-side, is a spot hardly accessible for wheeled conveyances, but worthy of a short

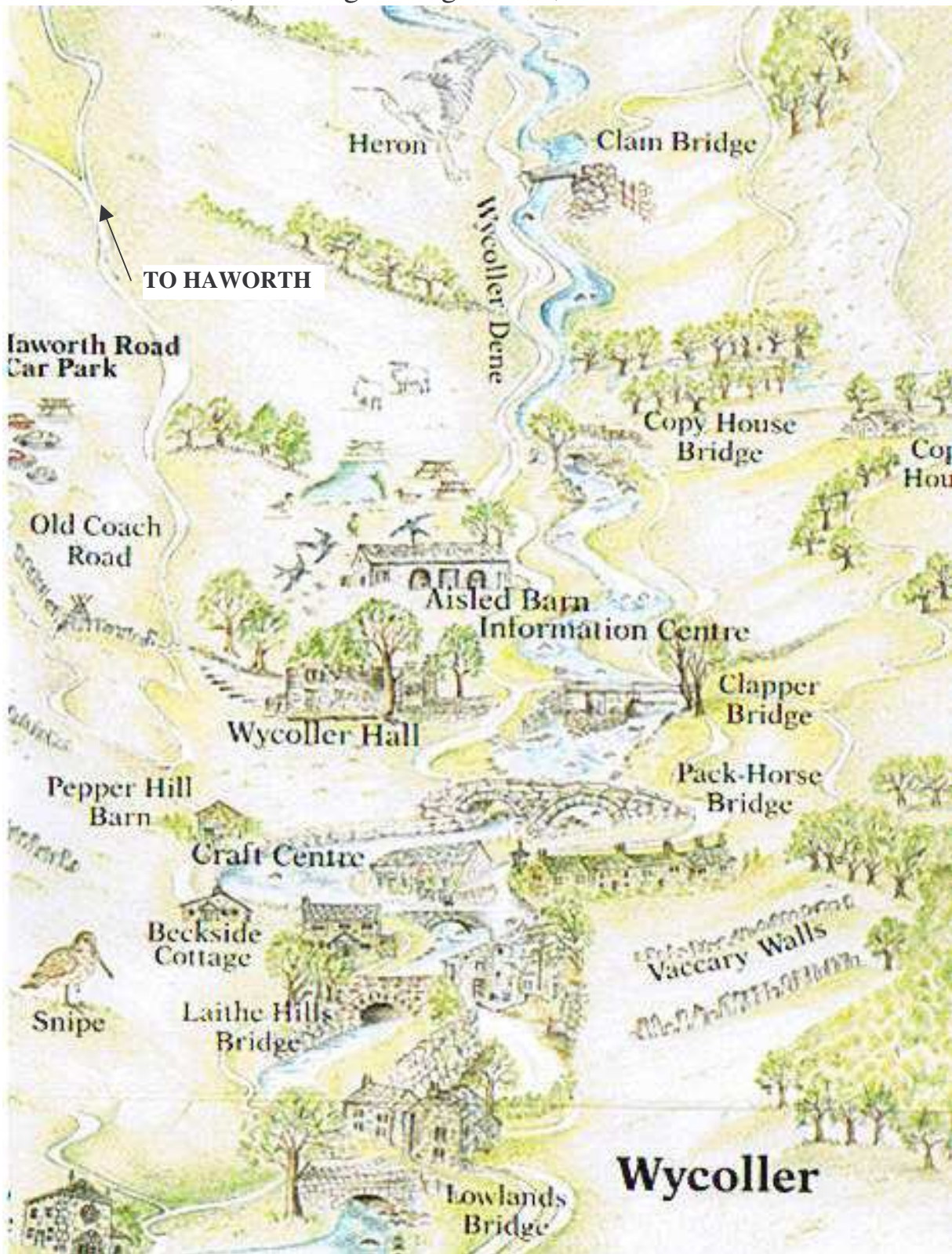


digression on foot, but high walls and gates create difficulty, is Ponden Hall, associated with “Wuthering Heights”.

The road then crosses the valley and runs for some miles between small pastures and upland meadows separated by grim stone walls. At the head of the Worth Valley the county boundary of Yorkshire and Lancashire is reached; and just beyond, at a height of about 1,100 feet above sea-level, lies the supply reservoirs of the Keighley Waterworks, called “Water Sheddles,” constructed since the time of the Brontës. The enclosures and engineering works have greatly destroyed the wildness of the moorland in the Worth Valley, and it is only when the highest reservoir is passed, that the moors are seen to advantage.

The sinuous road, running high on the side of Combe Hill, commands a glorious prospect to the south of the open heather land

called Dovestones Moor, Sandy Hill Moor and Cow Hill; and the few breaks in the monotony of the skyline only reveal fresh heather-clad summits – the Boulsworth Hills – beyond. To the right lies the ridge of Combe Hill, reaching a height of 1,450 feet. An inn with the



breezy name of “Top o’ th’ Heather” is passed, and a view then opens westward, the towers and roofs of Colne becoming visible, backed by the ungainly form of Pendle. The moorland once more gives place to upland pastures, and a little mass of trees is noticed in the valley. This is the object of our pilgrimage – Wycoller Hall.

The manor-house of Ferndean was a building of considerable antiquity, moderate size and no architectural pretensions, buried in a deep wood. I had heard of it before” (says Jane Eyre) ... “even within a very short distance of the manor-house you could see nothing of it; so thick and dark grew the timber of the gloomy wood about it. Iron gates between granite pillars showed me where to enter, and passing through them, I found myself at once in the twilight of close-ranked trees. There was a grass-grown track descending the forest aisle, between hoar and knotted shafts and under-branching arches. I followed it, expecting soon to reach the dwelling; but it stretched on and on; it wound far and farther; no sign of habitation or grounds were visible. I thought I had taken a wrong direction and lost my way. The darkness of natural, as well as of sylvan dusk gathered over me. I looked round in search of another road. There was none; all was interwoven stem, columnar trunk, dense, summer foliage – no opening anywhere. I proceeded: at last I beheld a railing, then the house – scarce, by this dim light, distinguishable from the trees, so dank and green were its decaying walls. Entering a portal, fastened only by a latch, I stood amidst a space of enclosed ground, from which the wood swept away in a semicircle. There were no flowers, no garden-beds; only a broad gravel-walk girdling a grass-plat, and this set in the heavy frame of the forest. The house presented two pointed gables in its front; the windows were latticed and narrow; the front door was narrow too, one step led up to it. The whole looked, as the host of ‘The Rochester Arms’ had said, ‘quite a desolate spot.’ It was as still as a church on a weekday.

The description is in the main true today. The visitor will best leave his carriage at a bend of the road, a third of a mile past “Top o’ th’ Heather,” and will, like Jane Eyre, make the rest of the journey (half-a-mile) on foot through field-paths. Charlotte Brontë, however, has very much exaggerated – indeed almost created – the woodlands.

The Hall is more desolate now than in the days of Charlotte Brontë, for it is almost wholly in ruins, only one wing being habitable. A little stream, spanned by two quaint footbridges, runs past the front of the house, and some picturesque farm buildings are grouped about the place, which has become a favourite spot for picnics among the Lancashire folk.

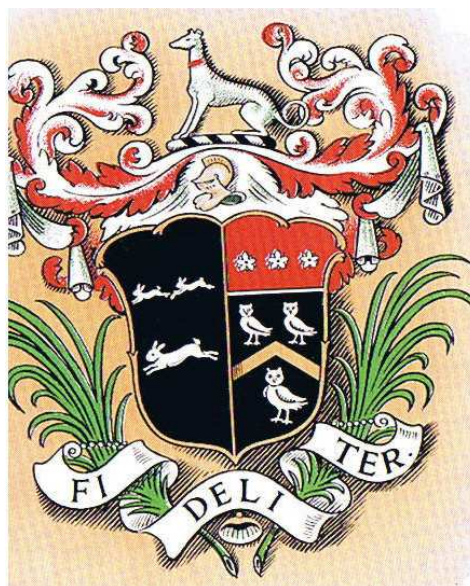
The Hall itself, built at various times (part of it as early as 1596) was anciently the seat of the Cunliffes – ancestors in a female line of the late Lord Masham. In the early part of 1900 there was talk of clearing away the buildings to make way for a reservoir for the supply of water to Colne. The Colne Corporation, however, are hoping to defer the Wycoller reservoir scheme for the present, and boring operations have been undertaken which have been successful in obtaining a supply of water sufficient to meet the requirements of the town for some years.

ROMANTIC WYCOLLER

Extracted from *Romantic Wycoller* by E.W. Folley, first published in 1949, republished in 2004 by Hendon Publishing, Nelson, Lancashire

The original owner of Wycoller Hall, in Elizabethan times, was Piers Hartley. He died with no sons and so Wycoller was inherited by his daughter. Being an heiress several suitors tried for her hand. One made such a nuisance of himself by his persistence that the young men of the village seized him and gave him a ducking in the river, which cooled his ardour and he left her alone.

But Nicholas Cunliffe was more successful. He wooed her and won her hand and so became master of Wycoller Hall and its estates. The name Cunliffe is thought to have originally been Conycliffe from the word “cony” meaning rabbit. The coat of arms of the family shows three rabbits in full



flight. The property stayed in the Cunliffe family until about the time the Brontës were born. 1818.

The last Cunliffe to live there was Henry Cunliffe. He was enthusiastic about cock-fighting and would give half a crown to any farmer whose cock could defeat one of his own. When he was dying he arranged for a cock-pit to be rigged up in his bedroom and had an arrangement of mirrors constructed so that he could watch the cock-



fighters while lying flat on his back.

He had no children and when he died in 1818 his widow went to live with her niece. The niece inherited the Hall but it remained empty and gradually fell into disrepair. In 1858 it was sold to Richard Hartley, a descendent of the original owner. Then in 1897 the Corporation of Colne purchased a portion of the estate with a view to building a reservoir. In 1948 the “Friends of Wycoller” were formed and Herbert Hartley, the owner of the Hall at that time gave his share of the property to the “Friends” so it is now jointly owned by them and the Colne Corporation.

It is interesting that the family tree of the Cunliffe's includes four members with the Christian name "Ellis" and one with the surname "Eyre". The Brontës, almost certainly, walked often to Wycoller Hall, because it is only about 7 miles from the Parsonage across the moors. Indeed if you walk to their known haunts of the waterfall, the Brontë Bridge and Top Withens you are more than halfway to Wycoller Hall.

Surrounding Wycoller Hall there are a number of houses, some modern – some quite old, comprising Wycoller village. One of these is Wycoller House. The Dewhursts who lived in Wycoller House till 1957 reported that when they were living there they heard strange noises, doors swung open, candles blew out even when there was no wind.

There is the story, told by the Reverend T. Ormerod in 1906, of the murder of the lady of the Hall in the time of Charles II.

One of the wild roystering Cunliffes was out fox-hunting one day and the fox led them across the moors until he came to Wycoller, and crossing the stream between the straight bridge and the double-arched one, he ran straight through the open door of the Hall and up the stairs into the lady's room. The hounds followed, and after them the Squire, leaving the marks of his horse's hoofs upon the stone



stairs. The wife screamed aloud in terror – for the hounds’ teeth were already in the fox and the music of the hunt was deafening – and Simon Cunliffe swore a great oath and cursed her chicken-heartedness and raised his hunting crop as if to strike her. That and the fright together killed her.

There is a story that a phantom horseman has been seen crossing one or other of the bridges in front of the Hall.

The bridges of Wycoller are famous. The river Dene runs along in front of the Hall and within a quarter of a mile on each side there are seven bridges and several fords. The pack-horse bridge, known as Sally’s Bridge, is a two arched bridge and is said to date from the thirteenth century. It is certainly older than the Hall, and unlike the Hall it still stands, serving its original purpose – except that these days few pack-horses make use of it, but many visitors to the area cross the bridge daily.



The voussoirs, or arch-shaped stones, extend the complete width of the bridge (about a metre) and for many years these stones were the actual paving of the bridge. (There is now a layer of concrete as the paving.) The bridge looks very precarious but this is mainly an

optical illusion “due to the extraordinary method employed in springing the arch (entirely of long stones) direct from the rock without any attempt to level the first.” [Ministry of Works Report 1948]



Another bridge nearby is a “clapper bridge”, a large primitive bridge of massive proportions. It was constructed using only two large slabs of gritstone and a large boulder. The boulder was placed in the middle of the stream and each slab rested with one end on this boulder and the other on the bank. Some time in the 19th century one of the slabs cracked and the two pieces had to be supported at the crack by an oak log. Later this log was replaced by a stone pier. The bridge is about 60cm wide and 5 metres long. This bridge is prehistoric and one of its names is the Druid’s Bridge because there is a legend that it led to an amphitheatre where the druids held ceremonies of human sacrifice. Further up the stream is an even simpler bridge, consisting of a single slab of stone.

