

READING INTELLIGENCE:

A DISCUSSION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 'READING' IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S *THE PROFESSOR*

By Anne Collett

A talk to the Australian Brontë Association on Saturday 8th March 2008

At the outset I feel I should admit that although I am a Brontë fan, up until very recently it would be more accurate to say that I have been a fan of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* since my first encounter at the age of eleven or twelve. It would be true to say that this was and still is my favourite novel. I have subsequently re-read *Jane Eyre* countless times and was loathe to read anything else that Charlotte or her sisters might have written. If this seems peculiar – it most probably is; but by way of explanation I can only say, on consideration of this reluctance, that I just didn't want to admit anything or anyone else into the intimacy of my relationship with *Jane Eyre*. It is perhaps evidence of a curious kind of jealousy that other readers of beloved books might share with me. I don't know, I have never asked anyone ... and I would have thought, that the impulse should have been the opposite – that is, the normal tendency would be to seek out other books by the same author, if not other works by Charlotte's sisters. And I have done this in all other cases on discovery of a great book, or even a good book. *Jane Eyre* is a special case. The reason for my refusal to seek out other books by Charlotte Brontë is somewhat unaccountable; but the reason for not seeking out books by her sisters is more accountable – that is, there is no reason to assume that a book written by Emily or Anne should have anything in common with a novel by Charlotte; and yet of course the closeness of relationship between the sisters would suggest otherwise ... perhaps.

I have also to admit to having attempted to read Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* at much the same age as I first read *Jane Eyre* – not because she was Charlotte's sister, but because it was one of five books my mother cherished (the others being Jane Austen's *Emma* and L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and *Anne of Avonlea*); additionally *Wuthering Heights* was put in the same box as *Jane Eyre* – as though the novels were natural twins... 'If you liked *Jane Eyre* you must like *Wuthering Heights*.' But I couldn't read it ... I found all that high-flown passion just 'silly'. Much later however, when I made a more concerted attempt as an adult to read *Wuthering Heights*, I found it quite fascinating

– not because it was a compelling read or a book to which I felt a sense of accord. This was not and still is not a book with which I feel any particular emotional bond; but it is a book that I find intellectually interesting. It sits in a very different category to *Jane Eyre*. I have also subsequently found it to be the case that readers of these novels tend to line up on either side of a divide – those who love *Jane Eyre* and those who love *Wuthering Heights* – the readers have little in common with each other [and there are of course those who like neither novel, but they don't count in this discussion or in this room].

These admissions are by way of an introduction to the nature of reading and a brief portrait of myself as a particular kind of reader – one for whom reading is a deeply private, jealous relationship between myself and the book – the book not the author; although I would admit to relationship with the author only as revealed within the pages of the book – a kind of meeting of like minds and hearts within the world of the book. This is also perhaps why I have scorned literary tourism, that is, until very recently when I made a trip to Haworth (and prior to that Dove Cottage – it's a worrying trend). The visit to Haworth dismayed and delighted, confirmed and challenged, my view of the novels and the sisters. I expected a wide sweep of desolate moor and some dilapidated cottage on its bleak edge and of course it was nothing like that. What particularly struck me was the size of the house - the obvious fact that the sisters were middle class [even if one might describe it as a genteel poverty] and thus they were the beneficiaries of all that comes with being middle class in the nineteenth century – including perhaps most importantly education, and the centrality of reading. Think how important reading is as image, as indicator of character, as narrative device and as practice in Charlotte's novels ... *Jane Eyre* for example. Remember the opening chapter:

A small breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room. I slipped in there. It contained a book-case: I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrouded in double retirement.

Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day ... With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way. (14-15) [1]

The image of reading here assimilates with my own idea and practice of reading: reading is an intensely private practice, an escape, a protection, and a remove from the world and yet it is 'a retirement' that does not

entirely separate one from the world – in fact it also offers a window on the world. Jane looks both inward and outward. This picture of Jane reading, and the picture of Jane as a reader offered by the novel, is a reflection of Charlotte herself. As a novelist, Charlotte prides herself not only on the ability to ‘write’ character, but what must in fact come first, the ability to ‘read’ character. The comment Hunsden makes of William, that in a room full of company, he chooses to sit near the door, “bent on hearing, not on speaking; on observing, not on entertaining;” (*The Professor*, 230) might as easily have been made of Charlotte herself.

The writer is an observer – separated yet intimately connected to ‘the world’, just like the reader. She must turn one eye inward and the other outward – one eye is visionary and the other is analytical; one eye is caught up in the world of fantasy whilst the other keeps an eye on reality. Chapter Nineteen of *The Professor* begins with the declaration that “Novelists should never allow themselves to weary of the study of real life.” The Professor [although I thought on first reading it was Charlotte speaking] chastises those novelists who forget themselves so far as to get caught up in the realms of fancy: if they kept their eye more firmly fixed on reality, “they would give us fewer pictures chequered with vivid contrasts of light and shade; they would seldom elevate their heroes and heroines to the heights of rapture – still seldom sink them to the depths of despair...” (186) “...the man of regular life and rational mind never despairs,” observes William (and Charlotte if we think of the narrative voice as a kind of duet between character narrator and author narrator).

The caution against the luxurious indulgence in extreme passions might well be directed against Emily – surely it is this that characterises *Wuthering Heights*; but much of the appeal of this passage on the duty of the novelist is the language of passionate intensity employed by the narrator – it is really quite shocking ... Given a lack of respect for the regular life and the rational mind, William envisages a fall into despair so great that “God ... can have no place in our collapsed minds, where linger only hideous and polluting recollections of vice; and time brings us on to the brink of the grave, and dissolution flings us in – a rag eaten through and through with disease ...’ (186)

It is perhaps this unevenness, this lack of balance that makes reading *The Professor* such an unsettling experience. But this is to get a bit ahead of myself so I will take you back to my first impressions of the novel and why I decided to talk about the significance of reading, and more

importantly, the idea of ‘reading intelligence’ in relation to *The Professor* in particular.

Being asked to give a talk to the Bronte Association I felt it incumbent on me not to stand before you in ignorance of all but *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and some of Emily’s poems. So, given my interest is primarily in Charlotte, I finally overcame my reluctance of so many years and read *Shirley*, *Villette*, *The Professor* and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Life of Charlotte*. Nothing really comes close to *Jane Eyre*, but much was of interest. Most prominent of my impressions was the oddness – the sheer unconventionality and unexpectedness – of Charlotte’s works. Charlotte refers to her treatment of life as truthful. The preface to *Jane Eyre* requests the public to incline an indulgent ear to ‘a plain tale with few pretensions’ and at the same time rebukes the reader with the observation that ‘conventionality is not morality’. (5) Her tale then will be plain but it will also be unconventional: it will indeed be singular to her experience of the world.

Charlotte’s preface to *The Professor*, published some years after its completion and its repeated rejection by publishers, stresses the degree to which this is a novel whose author is well-practised, indeed a skilled professional: Charlotte stresses that the novel’s perceived faults are not those of a journeyman, but characteristics intended and indeed, preferred, by the author to those traits of the novel currently fashionable. ‘This little book,’ she writes,

was written before either *Jane Eyre* or *Shirley*, and yet no indulgence can be solicited for it on the plea of a first attempt ... I had not indeed published anything before I commenced *The Professor*, but in many a crude effort, destroyed almost as soon as composed, I had got over any such taste as I might once have had for ornamented and redundant composition, and come to prefer what was plain and homely. (37)

‘Homely’ is not the word I would use to describe *The Professor*, although the word makes more sense to me when placed in relation to the discussion which follows: ‘I said to myself,’ Charlotte continues, ‘that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs – that he should never get a shilling he had not earned ... As Adam’s son he should share Adam’s doom, and rain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment.’ (37)

It often seems to me in reading Charlotte’s work that there is far more rain than sunshine – that Charlotte was given much more than her fair share of ‘Adam’s doom’ and thus a ‘plain and homely’ or ‘realistic’ portrayal of life is necessarily reflective of her own experience of life.

Villette is one of the darkest (and in many ways peculiar) books I have ever read. The other revelation of significance in my visit to the Haworth parsonage was the proximity of the graveyard. I wondered what it felt like to live *in* a graveyard ... to wake up every morning, look out the window and see the graveyard; to go to bed every night in such close proximity to the newly dead and the spirits (unquiet or otherwise) of the long dead. *Wuthering Heights* began to make more sense, but so too did Charlotte's bouts of debilitating melancholia, or what might be described today as depression (mentioned in Gaskell's *Life* and in Charlotte's letters).

One of the most striking and unexpected episodes in *The Professor* is that which follows Frances' acceptance of William's proposal of marriage. The passage begins:

Now, reader, during the last two pages I have been giving you honey fresh from flowers, but you must not live entirely on food so luscious; taste then a little gall – just a drop, by way of change.

This is more than a drop of gall – it carries all the shock of a thunderstorm launched in fury on the unsuspecting and unprepared reader. What follows is a harrowing account of more than a week's passage into a terrible darkness, of which the narrator observes of its sudden and unheralded onset: 'in truth, though I saw nothing, yet, "a thing thereof"; there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying – "In the midst of life we are in death." ... I felt my chamber invaded by one I had known formerly, but had thought for ever departed. I was temporarily a prey to hypochondria.' (252-3)

William goes on to describe not only this particular experience, but his prior acquaintance with this darkness in his childhood: she would 'drop her drear veil over me, and so hide sky and sun, grass and green tree; taking me entirely to her death-cold bosom, and holding me with arms of bone.' (253) It is no wonder so many readers of this novel found it to be, as expressed by Heather Glen, the author of the introduction to my edition, 'an unpleasant and oddly disquieting book.' '[C]ritics,' she remarks, 'have concurred in finding it the least satisfactory and certainly the least attractive of Bronte's novels.' (7) But I find its curiosity a source of puzzlement and fascination.

Writing in response to a third rejection of the book by her publishers in 1851, Charlotte remarks,

...of course my feelings towards it can only be paralleled by those of a doting parent towards an idiot child. Its merit – I plainly perceive – will never be owned by anybody but Mr Williams and me; very particular and unique must be our penetration, and I think highly of us both accordingly. You may allege that

that merit is not visible to the naked eye. Granted; but the smaller the commodity – the more inestimable its value. (quoted by Glen, 8)

There are number of aspects of this passage that operate as a window into my discussion of ‘reading intelligence’ today. The first is the wording of this passage that recalls a passage toward the end of *The Professor*, and the second is the idea of penetration – the ability/skill to perceive the inner life from what is often the most minimal of outward sign. Between the heavenly scene of Frances’ acceptance of the professor’s proposal of marriage and his journey into the hellish abyss is a bridging passage in which William reflects upon the singularity of his powers of discernment:

I know not whether Frances was really much altered since the time I first saw her; but, as I looked at her now, I felt that she was singularly changed for me ...I had been accustomed to nurse a flattering idea that my strong attachment to her proved some particular perspicacity in my nature; she was not handsome, she was not rich, she was not even accomplished, yet was she my life’s treasure; I must then be a man of peculiar discernment. Tonight my eyes opened on the mistake I had made; I began to suspect that it was only my tastes which were unique, not my power of discovering and appreciating the superiority of moral worth over physical charms. For me, Frances had physical charms: in her there was no deformity to get over; none of those prominent defects of eyes, teeth, complexion, shape, which hold at bay the admiration of the boldest male champions of intellect... It is true Frances’ mental points had been the first to interest me, and they still retained the strongest hold on my preference; but I liked the graces of her person too... It appeared, then, that I too was a sensualist, in my temperate and fastidious way. (252)

The logic of this passage is a bit tricky to follow, but it charts a complex philosophical discussion of the relationship between inside and outside examined in the novel. Charlotte’s apparent interest, or at least familiarity, with the relatively new science of phrenology and its antecedent, physiognomy, and her ‘feminism’, are entangled in this discussion and in the narrative progress made by the Professor toward ‘the right choice’ of life partner – Frances being ‘[his] counterpart... the female of [his] kind’ (255) – a partner for whom William must come to feel as Rochester does of Jane, and Frances must come to feel as Jane does of Rochester (yes, of course I have returned yet again to *Jane Eyre*, it seems I can’t help myself, but a reading of *The Professor* also makes clear an intimacy of relationship between the two novels).

Before Jane realises that Rochester seeks marriage not to Blanche but to herself she speaks with passion of an equality of ‘intelligence’ between herself and Rochester, by which I mean a quality of mind, heart and soul – although Jane describes it in this instance as ‘spirit’. (Along with the

stockings and pudding speech from the battlements it is, for me, one of the best speeches in the book.)

‘Do you think,’ demands Jane of Rochester, [that] ‘because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? – You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you – and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: - it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal – as we are!’ To which Rochester responds, ‘As we are!’ and later he affirms, ‘My bride is here ... because my equal is here, and my likeness. Jane will you marry me?’ (184-5)

The testing that moves the contenders to this point is long and fiercely battled, as it is between William and Frances in *The Professor*; but where much of the battle in *Jane Eyre* is played out in dialogue (more like Frances and Hunsden than Frances and William) the battle in *The Professor* is played out by eyes rather than voices – it is a watching rather than a speaking game:

‘I gave a short exercise which they all wrote down,’ William relates, and ‘I saw the new pupil [Mademoiselle Henri – i.e. Frances] was puzzled at first with the novelty of the form and language; once or twice she looked at me with a sort of painful solicitude, as not comprehending at all what I meant; then she was not ready when the others were, she could not write her phrases as so fast as they did; I would not help her, I went on relentless. She looked at me; her eye said most plainly, “I cannot follow you.” I disregarded the appeal, and, carelessly leaning back in my chair, glancing from time to time with a *nonchalant* air out of the window, I dictated a little faster. On looking towards her again, I perceived her face clouded with embarrassment, but she was still writing on most diligently; I paused a few seconds; she employed the interval in hurriedly re-perusing what she had written, and shame and discomfiture were apparent in her countenance; she evidently found she had made great nonsense of it. In ten minutes more the dictation was complete, and having allowed a brief space in which to correct it, I took their books; it was with a reluctant hand Mdlle Henri gave up hers, but, having once yielded it to my possession, she composed her anxious face, as if, for the present, she had resolved to dismiss regret, and had made up her mind to be thought unprecedentedly stupid. Glancing over her exercises, I found that several lines had been omitted, but what was written contained very few faults; I instantly inscribed ‘Bon’ at the bottom of the page, and returned it to her; she smiled, at first incredulously, then as if reassured, but did not lift her eyes; she could look at me, it seemed, when perplexed and bewildered, but not when gratified; I thought that scarcely fair.’ (152)

The eyes, William remarks (in so many words), in introduction to his narrative, are the windows on the soul; and as such they are sought out by those desirous of knowledge of that soul, and they are veiled by those who would keep that knowledge from the seeker. Of Mrs Crimsworth junior (his brother's wife), William writes:

I sought her eye, desirous to read there the intelligence which I could not discern in her face or in her conversation; it was merry, rather small; by turns I saw vivacity, vanity, coquetry, look out through its irid, but I watched in vain for a glimpse of soul. (46)

Much of the novel is taken up with watching, looking, observing, interpreting ... and in reaction to the prying eyes of others, attempt is made to dissimulate, conceal, render opaque. The act of 'reading', that is the capacity to read others accurately, and conversely to prevent others from reading the self easily, establishes the hierarchy of relationship between men, between women, and between men and women. It is a game of cat and mouse played by William and his brother Edward, William and Hunsden, William and Monsieur Pelet, William and Mademoiselle Reuter; and finally, and most importantly, between William and Frances.

William and Hunsden apply the new science of phrenology to the assessment of character (with limited success), as based on the method of physiognomy developed by the Swiss priest and student of medicine, Johann Caspar Lavater, and the method of phrenology, or craniology, advocated by the Viennese physician, Franz Joseph Gall. Lavatar claimed that because the cavity of the skull was 'visibly fitted to the mass of substances it contain[ed] ... the exterior form of the brain, which imprints itself perfectly on the internal surface of the skull, is ... the model of the contours of the exterior surface,' and thus what constituted the inner life, or the character of the man, could be read on the outer form of his face and skull. Gall's theory of craniology was a combined theory of brain and a science of character. He claimed that the brain was the organ of the mind; that the brain was not a homogeneous unity but an aggregate of mental organs; and that these mental organs or physical faculties could be located in specific areas of the brain and had specific function. Furthermore he claimed that the relative size of any one of the mental organs could be taken as an index of that organ's power of manifestation; and that since the skull ossifies over the brain during infant development, external craniological means could be used to diagnose the mental faculties that ultimately made up the character and intelligence of the man or woman. Gall's colleague Johann Caspar Spurzheim was interested in applying the

science of phrenology to problems of contemporary philosophy, religion, and social reform.

The organs of the brain were believed to be divided into two categories: the first were those ‘feelings and propensities’ that were common to man and beast, located at the bottom and back of the brain, which included *adhesiveness* (understood as the tendency to live in communities), *combativeness*, *destructiveness*, *acquisitiveness* and *amativeness* (described as ‘the feeling of physical love’ – i.e. sex drive) and the lower order of what were called “sentiments” like *self-esteem*, *love* or *approbation*, *benevolence* and *cautiousness*. The second order of sentiments were those proper only to man such as *veneration* (piety, devotion), *hope*, *ideality* (inspiration or imagination), *conscientiousness* (duty or gratitude) and *firmness* (resolution or determination). Most of the nobler sentiments were found near the crown of the head.

The second category comprised those faculties of “knowing” by which a person understood the existence of external things and their qualities (like *size*, *weight*, *colour*, *order*, *time*, *number*) and the ‘reflecting faculties’ that distinguished man from the lower animals like *comparison*, *wit*, *causality*, *imitation*. [2] Of course there was much debate about these categories and the relationship between them as in part dependent on their relative size.

Serious lectures (rather than frivolous ones like mine) on the science and the practice of ‘reading the skull’ or ‘bumps on the head’ became very popular at the beginning of the 19th century and its impact can be seen throughout Charlotte’s writing, most obviously in Hunsden’s query of William:

‘Is it your intention to become a tradesman?’ He inquired presently.

‘It was my serious intention three months ago.’

‘Humph! The more fool you – you look like a tradesman! What a practical business-like face you have!’

‘My face is as the Lord made it, Mr Hunsden.’

‘The Lord never made either your face or head for X----. What good can your bumps of ideality, comparison, self-esteem, conscientiousness, do you here? But if you like Bigben Close, stay there; it’s your own affair, not mine.’

(60)

And phrenology is again taken into account in William’s second assessment of Frances (after the application of his spectacles). After discussion and assessment of her figure and clothing, William observes the shape of her head: ‘The shape of her head too was different, the superior part more developed, the base considerably less.’ (151) William’s practical

phrenology is markedly racialised (as in his earlier description and assessment of the other girls in the class) but also in this analysis of Frances when he goes on to declare,

I felt assured, at first sight, that she was not a Belgian; her complexion, her countenance, her lineaments, her figure, were all distinct from theirs, and evidently, the type of another race – of a race less gifted with fullness of flesh and plenitude of blood; less jocund, material, unthinking.

Most interestingly, at least for the purposes of my discussion, is the importance William places on the eyes and eye play: ‘When I first cast my eyes on her, she sat looking fixedly down, her chin resting on her hand, and she did not change her attitude till I commenced the lesson.’ Frances will not make eye contact with him. William goes on to remark that, ‘None of the Belgian girls would have retained one position, and that a reflective one, for the same length of time.’ (151) He is tantalised by the challenge she offers and his assessment of her character and figure as un-Belgian, if not at this stage recognised as English. But the retention and release of ‘knowledge’ is played out not only between William and Frances, but also between William and the reader.

In this passage Charlotte, through William, applies a number of different means of reading character or soul through a series of external signs. His/Her method might employ the new science of phrenology, but it also applies the much older precepts of Greek/Roman philosophy and the *New Testament*: the Roman philosopher Cicero is quoted as saying ‘The face is a picture of the mind, as the eyes are its interpreter’; and Matthew [in chapter 6: verses 22-23] declares that ‘The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.’

But of particular interest to me is what might be called the ‘modernity’ of Charlotte’s refusal to give the reader a fully coloured-in portrait of Frances: she does not describe character through a ‘naturalistic’ representation of facial features as many 18th and 19th century novelists had done (and continued) to do. Charlotte, through William, insists that you as reader come to a knowledge of Frances through the progress of the narrative – or through the eye and mind of the narrator. William calls upon the reader to note his method – not only his method of character analysis, but his novelistic method:

Now reader, though I have spent more than a page in describing Mdlle Henri, I know well enough that I have left on your mind’s eye no distinct picture of her; I have not painted her complexion, nor her eyes, nor her hair, nor even drawn the outline of her shape. You cannot tell whether her nose was aquiline or

retrouse, whether her chin was long or short, her face square or oval; nor could I the first day, and it is not my intention to communicate to you at once a knowledge I myself gained by little and little. (152)

This is a rather startling position to take and would have taken the Victorian reader quite by surprise. Its effect would have been quite unsettling which quite possibly resulted in the judgement of the novel as ‘the least satisfactory and certainly the least attractive’ of Charlotte’s works. Emily’s *Wuthering Heights* is often discussed as a very modern novel (particularly in terms of its structure and the subjective nature of its multiple narratives that leave the reader unsure of ‘the truth’. But Charlotte’s work has never been understood as modern in the same way, and yet here, in *The Professor* – the novel judged as sub-standard, or the less than perfect craft of an immature and unskilled pen – Charlotte takes the very modern approach of impressionism. The impressionist movement in art was in part a reaction to the development of photography. It recognized the human eye as a subjective lens that coloured what it saw, unlike the ‘objective’ lens of the camera; but this movement did not really coalesce until the 1860s in France. But in *The Professor* Charlotte applies a subjective perspective from which to ‘paint her [or rather William’s] portrait’ of Frances. We might go so far as to understand *The Professor* as a portrait of the artist as a young man/woman (and Joyce didn’t publish his novel until 1916!) William is the writer of his own story – but Charlotte wields an editorial eye such that *The Professor* might be understood as an autobiography ‘edited’ by Charlotte Bronte (much as *Jane Eyre* was published as an autobiography, edited by Currer Bell); and thereby the private is made public in a game of hide and seek, or should that be ‘I spy’.

[1] Page numbers refer to the Penguin Classic editions of *Jane Eyre* (London, 1996) and *The Professor* (London, 1989)

[2] Information and quotation is taken from David de Giustino, *Conquest of Mind: Phrenology and Victorian Social Thought*, London: Croom Helm, 1975 – pp.15-16.

A/Prof Anne Collett
English Literatures Program
University of Wollongong
Ph: (02) 4221-3736
email: acollett@uow.edu.au



BRANWELL BRONTË – A GIFTED BROTHER

An edited version of a talk given by Sarah Burns on 17th May 2008

Branwell Brontë was a promising writer and artist with a rich imagination. Although he was the first of the Brontë siblings to appear in print, he would never gain money or success and was destined to live in the shadow of his three sisters.

The Brontës are known for their passion. Whilst his sisters channelled their passion into their novels, Branwell wore his heart on his sleeve. His suffering affected all who knew him. He ended his days depressed, ill and addicted to alcohol and opium. He died surrounded by his family 160 years ago, on 24 September 1848, aged 31, broken of heart and mind.

In his novel *Branwell*, Douglas Martin describes how:

As the only son, Branwell ... is expected to make the fortune for the family and immortalize the Brontë name. Given no formal education, he is painstakingly tutored by his father, and writes endless stories and poems with his sisters in their small parsonage home. Haunted by the early deaths of his mother and sister; both named Maria, Branwell is unable to reach his heart's desire: to be a great artist. He roams from job to job, as painter, railway man, and tutor, constantly writing and sketching, as his sisters spin and fume on the dark moor with the stories that will immortalise them.

Branwell has always been somewhat of an enigma. It's been interesting trying to sort fact from fiction and I know I have only just scratched the surface. The family continues to fascinate us, some of the legends have been dispelled but there are still more questions than answers where Branwell is concerned.

Most recently, the search for the real Branwell is one of the themes of Justine Picardie's novel *Daphne* as the author Daphne du Maurier becomes obsessed with Branwell in the late 1950s and corresponds with Alex Symington, a disgraced former member of the Brontë Society, as she researches her biography of the infamous Brontë brother in a race for publication before Winifred Gérin's own biography of Branwell is

released. It is suggested in this novel that poems attributed to Charlotte and Emily may have been written by Branwell and Daphne and others try to prove this.

In her *Second Thoughts on Branwell* for the *Bronte Society Transactions*, Miss du Maurier states: “It is impossible, with the Brontës, as with many other writers, to say when fiction ceases and fact begins, or how often the imagination will project an imaginary image upon a living personality ...”

Mrs Gaskell’s biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* was unsurpassed for a hundred years. However, Daphne du Maurier thought there was more to Branwell than the picture Mrs Gaskell painted of a troubled man whose unhappiness was caused by an abortive love affair. Miss du Maurier believed that Branwell was unable “to distinguish truth from fiction, reality from fantasy; and who failed in life because it differed from his own ‘infernal world’”.

George Eliot also considered there was something wrong with Mrs Gaskell’s characterisation of Branwell:

She sets down Branwell’s conduct entirely to remorse, and the falseness of that position weakens the effect of her philippics against the woman who hurried on his utter fall. Remorse may make sad work with a man, but it would not make such a life as Branwell’s was in the last three or four years unless the germs of vice had sprouted and shot up long before, as seems clear they had in him.

Where did it all begin?

Patrick Branwell Brontë was born at Thornton Vicarage in Yorkshire, on 26 June 1817, the fourth child and only son of Patrick and Maria Brontë. Two more daughters followed before the family moved to Haworth Parsonage in April 1820.

Conditions in Haworth were very poor and mortality rates rivalled those in the worst parts of London. Patrick soon found that over 41% of the village’s children died before the age of 6 and the average age at death was 25. The family’s own losses were no worse than those suffered by his parishioners.

In January 1821 Mrs Brontë began to suffer terribly from the symptoms of what is now believed to be uterine cancer and died in September. Later Patrick tried to find a new mother for his children, however,



Maria Branwell Brontë

after three unsuccessful attempts to remarry, his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Branwell, agreed to move from Penzance, Cornwall, to care for the children and run the household.



Elizabeth Branwell

From their father the children inherited a love of books and, with access to his library and various periodicals, they explored the world. As soon as they could read and write they invented and acted in plays. Servants were often roped in to playing a part in one of their plays in which Charlotte's hero, the Duke of Wellington, was usually the conquering hero. Patrick would often step in to settle disputes that arose regarding the merits of Wellington, Bonaparte, Hannibal and Caesar. He could see signs of rising talent in all his children at an early age.

After tea on a typical day at the Parsonage, Patrick would gather the children about him for oral lessons in history, biography or travel while the girls sewed. On Sunday evenings, the whole family gathered for Bible study and catechism.

Their games were inspired by what the eldest sister, Maria, read to them from newspapers, as well as tales of tradition, history and romance.

With no prospect of remarrying, and Aunt Branwell anxious to return to Penzance, Patrick was concerned about his children's future. Whilst continuing to tutor Branwell at home, he knew he would be unable to provide financially for his daughters and that they must have the education they would need to earn their own living. The answer came with the opening of the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge in 1824. Maria and Elizabeth were sent there in July that year with Charlotte following three weeks later. Emily, aged 6, joined her sisters in November. Branwell and Anne remained at home.

Daphne du Maurier describes Branwell at this time as "red haired, quick-tempered, excitable, brimful of mischief as a bog pixie, all sunshine one minute and tears the next ... imitative as a monkey ..."

In December 1824 Maria began to show signs of consumption, but her father was not informed by the school. By mid February it was obvious she was seriously ill. When Patrick was informed he immediately went to Cowan Bridge and took her home. Less than three months later, on 6th May 1825, at the age of 11, Maria died.

As one child was dying, another was ailing. On 31st May, whilst Charlotte and Emily travelled with fellow students to Silverdale in Lancashire, Elizabeth was sent home without any forewarning. At the shock of seeing how ill she was, the next day Patrick went to Silverdale and removed both Charlotte and Emily from the school. They never returned. Elizabeth died, aged 10, on 15th June 1825.

The deaths of Maria and Elizabeth had a traumatic effect on the remaining children. Branwell wrote a number of poems hauntingly reflecting this time and was able to quote lines on a sister's death, read at that time in *Blackwood's Magazine*, when writing to the editor of the magazine ten years later.

From 1825 to 1831 the remaining Brontës and Aunt Branwell lived together at Haworth Parsonage. Whilst their aunt gave the girls simple instruction, Branwell was taught Greek and Latin and various English subjects by his father. At the age of 8 he already possessed an unusually wide vocabulary.

There was an intense period of activity following the deaths of their older sisters. The children continued to invent characters for themselves depending on the lesson of the day, the story read aloud or the events in the daily newspaper.

Books on history and geography, the Bible, Bunyon's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and many others as well as various magazines available at home were to be the core of their reading and were to shape their ideas for the future. Another source of books was the circulating libraries in Keighley.

The Keighley Mechanics' Institute, founded in 1825, held fortnightly lectures on diverse subjects which would have given the children an opportunity to improve their scientific knowledge.

They also had art lessons from John Bradley, a founder member of the Keighley Institute, and copied woodcuts from Bewick's *History of British Birds* over and over again.

Of all the books and periodicals that the Brontë children read, it was the monthly *Blackwood's Magazine* borrowed from a neighbour that would change their lives. Their interests were fuelled by its Tory politics. They made heroes, from the Duke of Wellington to Lord Byron, their own and copied its style. Its long and detailed reviews of new biographies, history, travel, politics and even fiction gave them access to books and knowledge that would otherwise have been beyond their reach.

They would create their own miniature books in the style of *Blackwood's Magazine*, with tiny writing to look like print, which didn't help their eyesight. As paper was expensive they would cut up sugar bags and old wallpaper to use.

The children also had many toys. In a four year period Branwell acquired at least three sets of wooden soldiers, two sets of Turkish musicians and one set of Indians. Their wide range of reading gave the Brontës endless scope for adventure as they gave their toys characters and invented stories around them.

On 5th June 1826 Patrick gave Branwell a box of 12 wooden soldiers which inspired the most important and longest lasting stories, those of the "Young Men" which would develop into the complex, imaginary world of Glass Town and ultimately Angria.

Charlotte was later to note their three great plays were: Young Men, June 1826; Our Fellows, June 1827; and Islanders, December 1827 ...

The young man play took its rise from some wooden soldier's Branwell had Our fellows from Esops fables and the Islanders from several events whi[c]h happened ...

Papa brought Branwell some soldiers at Leeds ... I snat[c]hed up one and exclaimed this is the Duke of Wellington it shall be mine!! when I said this Emily likewise took one and said it should be hers when Anne came down she took one also. Mine was the prettiest of the whole and perfect in every part Emilys was a Grave looking fellow we called him Gravey Anne's was a queer little thing very much like herself he was called waiting Boy Branwell chose Bonaparte ...

Branwell recorded a previous history for their soldiers in his *History of Young Men*. The Twelves were a brave band of Englishmen who became characters in endless tales of wars and battles.

The original soldiers were to develop other names, characteristics and adventures. They each initially had their own kingdom, of which Branwell drew a map. Eventually these would become The Great Glass Town Confederacy, which had publishers and authors, magazines, artists, inns, generals, heroes and rogues. This imaginary world was protected by the Four Genii – Tallii, Branii, Emmii and Annii. They created magnificent cities inspired by pictures hanging in the Parsonage which included engravings of John Martin's "Belshazzar's Feast" and "Queen Esther" amongst others. Glass Town was eventually to become Verreopolis (from the French for glass) and then Verdopolis.

Over the years the main figure shifted from the imaginary Duke of Wellington to his son Arthur Wellesley, Marquess of Douro. Charlotte and Branwell decided that Douro should have a kingdom of his own and invented Angria. Arthur became the Duke of Zamorna and King of Angria. Charlotte conducted the romances of Angria, giving the Byronic Zamorna three wives and several mistresses. Branwell looked after the parliaments and wars of Angria, and introduced a pirate named Rogue as Zamorna's adversary.

In his concluding address in the June 1829 issue of *Branwell's Blackwood's Magazine*, the editor advised his readers that:

... as we are conducting a Newspaper which requires all the time and attention we can spare from ot[h]er employments we hav[e] found it expedient to relinquish the editorship of this Magazine but we recomend our readers to be to the new Editor as they were to me. The new one is the Cheif Genius Charlotte. She will conduct it in future, tho' I shall write now and then for it.

Branwell was to publish a newspaper entitled *Monthly Intelligencer* and concentrate on other projects. At the age of 13, he “published” two volumes of poems by one of his characters (Young Soult) and produced his first verse play (again by Soult): “Lausanne – a Dramatic Poem” set in France in 1423.

Music also featured in the Brontës' lives. Branwell played the flute and compiled a book of his favourite arrangements which ranged from church music to Scottish ballads. Like his sisters, he could also play the piano and when an organ was installed in the church he would learn to play that as well.

Following a severe illness, Patrick again became anxious about his children's future and, as he had nothing to leave them, he knew his daughters would need formal qualifications to earn their living. Charlotte was sent to Roe Head School in January 1831 with Emily following some time later.

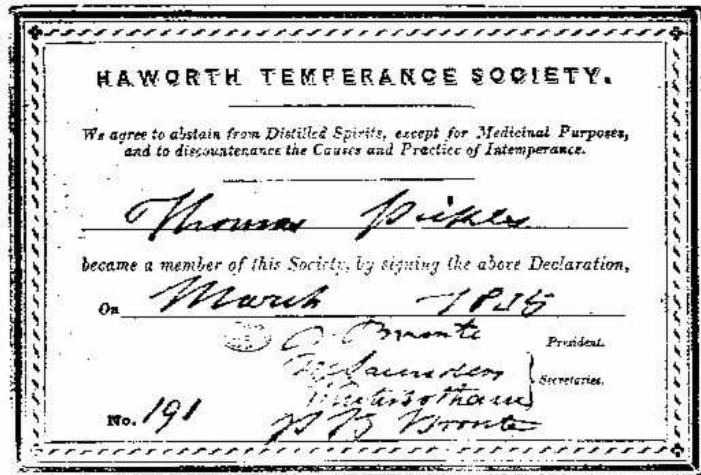
When Charlotte went to Roe Head, the children agreed to destroy their dream world but ultimately Charlotte and Branwell decided against this. Whilst she was away, Emily and Anne broke away from Angria and invented a kingdom of their own, Gondal. Branwell continued to write alone without his collaborator. When she returned from Roe Head, Charlotte plunged back into Angria with tremendous energy. She teased her brother with the creation of a caricature in the Angrian stories, Patrick Benjamin Wiggins – a boastful poet, who is described in *My Angria and the Angrians* as a low, slightly built man with a hat at the back of his head,

revealing a bush of carrot hair, and a pair of spectacles placed across a prominent Roman nose.

From 1832 to 1838 the saga continued. Rogue, the pirate, is discovered to be the black sheep of the noble Percy family and develops into a Byronic hero who eventually becomes the Duke of Northangerland, Zamorna's father-in-law. Northangerland becomes Branwell's life long romanticised alter ego.

In September 1832 Branwell escorted Charlotte to the home of her new friend, Ellen Nussey. He was in wild ecstasy about the house and grounds, and told his sister he "was leaving her in Paradise, and if she were not intensely happy she never would be". Ellen observed how proud Charlotte was of her brilliantly expressive brother.

Ellen was to return the visit the following July. Reminiscing nearly 40 years later, she wrote that "Branwell studied regularly with his father, and used to paint in oils, which was regarded as study for what might be eventually his profession. All the household entertained the idea of his becoming an artist, and hoped he would be a distinguished one ..."



The "Gun Group" portrait was painted around 1833-34. Only a fragment of the original oil painting, showing Emily in profile, remains. Charlotte's husband, Arthur Bell Nicholls, destroyed the rest of the painting following the death of Patrick in 1861 as he believed this was the only accurate

portrait of the four siblings. Pencil tracings of the figures of Anne, Charlotte and Emily do exist as does an engraving dated 1879.

The so-called "Pillar Portrait" is believed to have been painted in 1834. The 17 year old Branwell painted himself out of the picture

probably because of the cramped composition rather than as an act of self-loathing as it was done years before his eventual downfall.

In 1835 Patrick paid for Branwell to take lessons with the celebrated portrait painter William Robinson of Leeds, at the princely fee of 2 guineas per lesson, in preparation for entry into the Royal Academy in London.

Although Branwell wrote to the Secretary of the Royal Academy in July that year, enquiring about when and where to present his drawing in an attempt to become a probationary student, the plan appears to have come to nothing. In November both Branwell and Patrick wrote to Mr Robinson requesting a further course of lessons.

Although it has never been proved, many believed that Branwell did go to London but lost his nerve and his money and returned home without every entering the doors of the Academy.

Branwell would later tell friends tales of his London experience. His story was that he had been robbed at an inn before ever reaching London. With a keen interest in boxing, the Castle Tavern at Holborn kept by Tom Spring, a veteran prize fighter, would have been a great attraction for Branwell.

In the Angrian story *Charles Wentworth's Visit to Verdopolis*, written by Branwell in May 1836, Wentworth has a violent reaction to the sight of the capital city he had so long desired to see. It has been argued that this account seems too autobiographical to be disregarded.

In 1837 Branwell was desperate to see his poems in print and wrote to *Blackwood's Magazine* and the poet William Wordsworth seeking approval of his writing. His letters went unanswered which may not be surprising as they have been described as conceited, impertinent, bullying and wild almost to the point of madness. In his letter to Wordsworth, he foretold his own path to ruin: "I have striven to develop strong passions and weak principles struggling with a high imagination and acute feelings, till, as youth hardens towards age, evil deeds and short enjoyments end in mental misery and bodily ruin."

Whilst at home between 1836 and 1838, Branwell began to take part in Haworth activities. He played the church organ, taught in Sunday school (he was notorious for his impatience with the children), was made a Freemason and secretary to the local temperance society. It was during this time that he became friendly with the parish sexton, John Brown, and became a regular at the Black Bull hotel.

It was also during this time that Branwell was introduced to opium and began to admire the addicted Romantics over Wordsworth. Samuel

Taylor Coleridge had written the celebrated opium vision *Kubla Khan* in 1797, and Thomas De Quincey wrote *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* in 1821. When Branwell began to have nightmares, Patrick wrote copious notes (dated 1838) next to the entry on “Nightmare” in his copy of Thomas Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine*.

While continuing with his Angrian stories, Branwell tried to establish himself as a professional painter. Excluding those of his sisters, there are only 11 oil portraits still in existence known to be by Branwell, all but three are of people associated with Haworth including his friend, John Brown.

By May 1838 Branwell had set up a studio in Bradford, under the patronage of Patrick’s friend, the Reverend William Morgan. He painted portraits of his patron, his landlord, Mr Kirby, and his wife, and a number of eminent Bradford people.

Whilst in Bradford he enjoyed the company of young men like himself, would-be writers and painters, including the Halifax sculptor, Joseph Bentley Leyland, who, unlike Branwell, had achieved success in London.

His career as a portrait painter was not a success. Although he had had a number of commissions, he wasn’t earning enough to live comfortably or give him a secure future. In February 1839 he returned home to the parsonage.

That year a new curate, William Weightman, came to Haworth. He was a great flirt and soon became very popular with all the Brontës and was a good friend to Branwell. Anne was said to have been particularly fond of him.

In late December 1839 Branwell went to Broughton-in-Furness in the Lake District as tutor to the sons of Mr Robert Postlethwaite, magistrate and fox-hunter. He traveled by coach from Keighley to Kendal where, he later told John Brown, he spent the night at the Royal Hotel with a party of gentleman in a riotous drinking session.

At Broughton-in-Furness, Branwell only had to put in a few hours a day teaching the two Postlethwaite boys and then was free to do as he wished. Lodging at High Skye House, his comings and goings weren’t as noticeable as they would have been if he had lived with his employers and he took full advantage of his freedom.

Always a keen walker, he explored the area with books such as Wordsworth’s sonnets in his hand and he was inspired to further his poetic efforts. He wrote to de Quincey who was then living at Wordsworth’s

Dove Cottage in Grasmere, however, de Quincey was ill at this time and probably never replied. Whilst his letter has been lost, the manuscripts of Branwell's poems were kept by de Quincey.

Branwell also wrote to Hartley Coleridge, son of the poet, which led to an invitation to visit Hartley at Rydal Water near Ambleside. Like Branwell, Hartley was small in stature, loved literature and had a daydream world of his own. He praised Branwell's poetry and translations of Horace and advised Branwell to make literature his life. Branwell never forgot this.

Two months later Branwell was dismissed from his position as tutor. According to one legend, Branwell followed Coleridge's advice to pursue his literary efforts and as such neglected his pupils. Another has it that when he did not return to Broughton House as expected one day, his employer found him "visibly the worse for drink". However, another explanation sheds a different light on the dismissal.

In October 1859 Lord Houghton, a friend of Mrs Gaskell's, visited William Brown and was shown a number of letters written by Branwell to William's brother, John. Beneath his transcript of a letter beginning "Old Knave of Trumps", Houghton noted that Branwell "left Mr Postlethwaites with a natural child by one of the daughters or servants – which died". Whilst this is almost impossible to verify, on 3rd April 1846 Branwell did write a poem entitled "Epistle from a Father on Earth to his Child in her Grave" signed Northangerland which was published in the *Halifax Guardian* two weeks later.

His dismissal after only six months doesn't seem to have worried Branwell as he returned to Haworth with a professional literary career ahead of him. Within days he was working on his translations of Horace's *Odes* again to send to Hartley Coleridge. Whilst Coleridge did commence a letter of reply, the draft was not completed and Branwell never heard from him again.

His literary career having failed to take off, in September 1840 Branwell obtained a position as an Assistant Clerk in Charge on the new Manchester & Leeds Railway at the Sowerby Bridge station. He received a salary of £75 a year in comparison to the £16 Charlotte was paid as a governess at the same time. The following March he was promoted to Clerk in Charge (£130) at Luddenden Foot railway station, near Halifax, where the Leylands lived. He spent much time with Joseph and his brother, Francis Alexander Leyland, and Francis Grundy, a railway engineer, all who became life long friends. His new position gave him

plenty of time to write poetry and Francis Leyland helped Branwell to get some of his poems printed in the *Halifax Guardian* and later became his biographer. At Luddenden Foot he also fell in with a set of young mill owners with whom he drank and quarrelled at the Lord Nelson Inn.

He soon lost interest in life as a railway clerk. He spent his days dreaming of fame and doodling in the company ledgers. In March 1842, Branwell was dismissed by the railway company for an irregularity in his accounts, which were some £11 short. He was not accused of dishonesty, but simply of constant carelessness with his frequent absences from the station, and the state of his notebooks, which when examined by the railway officials revealed a combination of railway notations and Angrian and Yorkshire poems and drawings.

Patrick's friend, the Haworth surgeon Thomas Andrew, died that April. The town decided a memorial should be erected in Haworth Church to his memory. Branwell suggested his friend, the sculptor Joseph Leyland, be commissioned to produce the memorial. The sculpted marble tablet he produced was then inscribed by John Brown to the memory of this well respected man, the first of many collaborations between the two men.

Bouncing back from the humiliation of his dismissal in May Branwell wrote to Leyland enclosing a sketch of a half-buried tombstone with the legend "Resurgam" (I will rise again). He also wrote to Francis Grundy saying his health was improving "After experiencing ... extreme pain and illness, with mental depression worse than either ... I can now speak cheerfully and enjoy the company of another without the stimulus of six glasses of whisky..."

Within a month of his dismissal from the Railway, Branwell enjoyed his greatest literary success with his first poem published in the new *Bradford Herald*, a sonnet inspired by Landseer's painting "The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner". A week later a second sonnet, "On the callousness produced by cares" was published in both the *Bradford Herald* and the *Halifax Guardian*. A new poem, "The Afghan War", was published in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, inspired by the British retreat from Kabul a few months before. A week later another sonnet, "On peaceful death and painful life" appeared in both the *Bradford Herald* and the *Halifax Guardian*.

Branwell kept up this momentum for the rest of the year. He also sought Grundy's advice about obtaining another post on the railways but there was a "great glut in that market". He contemplated working in

Europe like his sisters but nothing eventuated and he continued with his poetry.

On 6th September 1842 William Weightman died of cholera. He was only 28. Still grieving for the loss of one of his dearest friends, Aunt Branwell died of a bowel obstruction on 29th October. Writing to Grundy on the day his aunt died, Branwell said:

I am incoherent, I fear, but I have been waking two nights witnessing such agonising suffering as I would not wish my worst enemy to endure: and I have now lost the guide and director of all the happy days connected with my childhood.

Aunt Branwell left each of the Brontë children a personal memento, but believing in Branwell's talent and success, she only left money to her nieces – £300 each.

In January 1843 Branwell joined Anne at Thorp Green Hall as tutor to the young Edmund Robinson. However, unlike his sister, he didn't live with his employers. He lodged at Monk's House in the grounds of the Hall. On 25th August 1844 he drew a sketch of the back of his lodgings – the "Old Hall", built in the 1680s.

While Charlotte was becoming emotionally dependent on Monsieur Heger in Brussels, Branwell was also embarking on the great love affair of his life and appeared to be receiving encouragement from the object of his affection, Mrs Robinson – who Mrs Gaskell would describe as "that bad woman who corrupted Branwell Brontë".

Extracts made by Lord Houghton in 1859 from a letter Branwell wrote to John Brown in May 1843 note:

... he is living in a palace, with a delightful pupil – I curl my hair & scent my handkerchief like a Squire - I am the favourite of all the household – my master is generous – but my mistress is DAMNABLY TOO FOND OF ME. She is a pretty woman, about 37. with a darkish skin and bright glancing eyes ... the husband is sick & emaciated – she is always making him presents, talking to his sister about him – telling him she does not care a farthing for him – asking him if he loves her & so on

Mrs Gaskell says that:

He was so beguiled by this mature and wicked woman, that he went home for his holidays reluctantly, stayed there as short a time as possible, perplexing and distressing them by all his extra-ordinary conduct – at one time in the highest spirits, at another, in the deepest depression – accusing himself of blackest guilt and treachery, without specifying what they were; and altogether evincing an irritability of disposition bordering on insanity.

Interestingly, the reference to Branwell on the Wikipedia website includes a footnote suggesting that Branwell's affair with Mrs Robinson is mirrored in the movie "The Graduate" in which a young man, Benjamin Braddock, is seduced by an older woman. We may need to have another look at that!

On returning from Brussels in January 1844, Charlotte discovered her father was losing his sight and felt she could not leave him again. She attempted to establish a school at the Parsonage with her sisters but they failed to attract any pupils.

Branwell's mood swings continued. After Christmas, in early 1845, Charlotte told Ellen that he had been "quieter and less irritable on the whole this time than he was in the summer".

On 31st July 1845 Emily and Anne summarised the events of the past year in their diaries. Emily simply records:

Anne left her situation at Thorp Green of her own accord – June 1845.

Branwell left – July 1845.

She notes that Branwell had been unwell, as does Anne who, following her "escape" from Thorp Green, records:

Branwell has left Luddenfoot and been a Tutor at Thorp Green and had much tribulation and ill health he was very ill on Tuesday but he went with John Brown to Liverpool where he now is I suppose and we hope he will be better and do better in future ...

On the same date Charlotte wrote to Ellen, following a visit to see her in Derbyshire, to say that on returning home:

I found Branwell ill – he is so very often owing to his own fault – I was not therefore shocked at first – but when Anne informed me of the immediate cause of his present illness I was greatly shocked, he had last Thursday received a note from Mr Robinson sternly dismissing him intimating that he had discovered his proceedings which he characterized as bad beyond expression and charging him on pain of exposure to break off instantly and for ever all communication with every member of his family – We have had sad work with Branwell since – he thought of nothing but stunning, or drowning his distress of mind – no one in the house could have rest – and at last we have been obliged to send him from home for a week with some one to look after him – he has written to me this morning and expresses some sense of contrition for his frantic folly – he promises amendment on his return – but so long as he remains at home I scarce dare hope for peace in the house – We must all I fear prepare for a season of distress and disquietude –

Mr Robinson's letter was posted in Scarborough allegedly the day after the arrival of his son who had remained at Thorp Green with Branwell after the rest of the family had departed. It has been suggested that Branwell

may have done something untowards involving Edmund who was later to drown unmarried in his 30s. Was the love affair with the mother a cover story to conceal something more sordid? Did Edmund reveal something about his tutor or did someone (eg the gardener) report something they had seen? Why did Anne resign – what did she witness? The mystery has led to much speculation and great material for creative novelists.

As Mrs Gaskell always avoided publicity, she went to Rome with two of her daughters a few days before the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Her husband, William, was left to handle the problems that arose on publication of the book. A court case was threatened over references to the part played in the downfall of Branwell by Mrs Robinson. Mr Gaskell had to take quick action without consulting his wife. A solicitor drew up a retraction and an apology was printed in *The Times*. All unsold copies were withdrawn, the book having already gone into a second edition. After Mrs Gaskell's return, the offending passages were removed for the third edition.

Following his journey to Liverpool and North Wales, Branwell wrote to Leyland:

I found during my absence that wherever I went a certain woman robed in black, and calling herself 'MISERY' walked by my side, and leant on my arm affectionately as if she were my legal wife.

Whatever happened, it was the ruin of Branwell. From this time on he drank, got into debt, took opium, wrote wild illustrated letters to his friends, occasionally begged Francis Grundy to find him employment with the railways, stayed at the Parsonage in a drunken stupor by day and raged and ranted at night.

His decline into alcoholism and the effect it had on the family was to be used by Anne in her novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

Charlotte was humiliated when her love for Monsieur Heger was discovered by his wife. However, whilst she returned home heartbroken and suffering in silence, Branwell's disgrace began a cycle of scandal and tragedy that would involve the whole family.

She told Ellen that "he is an impediment to all happiness, his bad habits are deeply rooted ... no good can be said of him ... he will never be fit for much".

All the Brontës were now at home together, living in domestic misery. Patrick was saddened by his own helplessness during this troubled time when his children needed him. He was, however, assisted in the parish by a new curate, the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls.

Branwell subsequently declared: “I shall write a novel”. The novel, entitled “And the Weary are at Rest”, is a reworked childhood story featuring a love triangle. His hero, Northangerland, will live out Branwell’s dream of being united with his mistress. In a letter dated 10th September 1845 to Joseph Leyland, Branwell writes of devoting his time “to the composition of a three volume novel” which, having completed the first volume, was “really the result of half a dozen by past years of thoughts about, and experience in, this crooked path of life.” He felt he needed something to do “while roasting daily and nightly over a slow fire”.

In his letter he includes a drawing of two fighters, “Bendigo” (William Thompson) and Benjamin Caunt. Caunt became Champion of England by defeating Bendigo after 75 rounds in April 1838. In a much publicised rematch on 9th September 1845, Bendigo won in 93 rounds after a controversial foul. Branwell’s letter is dated 10 September, the day after the fight, so he was keeping up with current affairs.

Only a few weeks later Branwell was to describe his mental state: “I have lain during nine long weeks utterly shattered in body and broken down in mind”. He writes to Grundy detailing his current distress at the loss of the “one whom I must, until death, call my wife”.

In January 1846 Charlotte, in a letter to Miss Wooler, her former headmistress, wrote:

... he never thinks of seeking employment and I begin to fear that he has rendered himself incapable of filling any respectable station in life, besides, if money were at his disposal he would use it only to his own injury – the faculty of self-government is, I fear almost destroyed in him.

On 28 April 1846, Branwell drew the sketch “Our Lady of Grief”, in which the lady appears to be mourning by a gravestone. Some years later, his friend and biographer, Francis Leyland declared: “We need not entertain a doubt as to whom it is intended to represent”.

Branwell had his ups and downs throughout the year. He continued with his poetry and embarked on a project with Leyland – he would write an epic poem and the sculptor would model a medallion portrait of his friend. The poem never eventuated but the medallion was completed. Branwell was very proud of this portrait which made him look like a Roman emperor.

Whilst Branwell’s health declined and his dreams faded, Charlotte, Emily and Anne secretly arranged for publication of their own poems using the money left to them by their aunt.

Only two copies of the poetry collection were sold, However, the idea of a novel appealed to Charlotte and she wondered if she and her sisters could make money in this way as they had been writing since childhood. She wrote *The Professor* based on real life but from a male point of view. Emily and Anne preferred to write from the heart. Anne wrote *Agnes Grey* based on her own experiences as a governess. In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily transferred the themes and characters from Gondal to a rural Yorkshire setting.

Whilst his sisters were busy with their novels in 1846, Branwell received news of Mr Robinson's death. He shared his excitement with Leyland and John Brown as he anticipated marriage and life as a gentleman of leisure, devoting his time to poetry.

Ironically, before learning of the death of his rival, he had written a sonnet titled Lydia Gisborne, Mrs Robinson's maiden name (in Greek lettering), looking back on his last days at Thorp Green. Charlotte gave Ellen an account of her brother's troubles at that time:

"We ... have been somewhat more harassed than usual lately – The death of Mr Robinson ... served Branwell for a pretext to throw all about him into hubbub and confusion with his emotions ... Shortly after came news from all hands that Mr Robinson had altered his will before he died and effectively prevented all chance of a marriage between his widow and Branwell by stipulating that she should not have a shilling if she ever ventured to reopen any communication with him – Of course he then became intolerable – to papa he allows rest neither day nor night – and he is continually screwing money out of him sometimes threatening that he will kill himself if it is withheld from him – He says Mrs R – is now insane – that her mind is a complete wreck – owing to remorse for her conduct towards Mr R ... and for grief at having lost him. I do not know how much to believe of what he says but I fear she is very ill ...

Branwell could have been told this by informants from Thorp Green or he may have invented the whole thing. He told the same story to all his friends but it was not true. Mr Robinson had changed his will but only to exclude his eldest daughter, also named Lydia, who had eloped with an actor and Mrs Robinson was to remarry and become Lady Scott six months after Branwell's death.

Mrs Robinson did send him money. She also sent him messages via her personal maid, her doctor and her coachman, William Allison. Allison went to the Black Bull in Haworth and sent a messenger to fetch Branwell to him. They were closeted together in a private room, then Allison paid his bill and left. Branwell was not seen or heard of until about an hour later when a noise "like the bleating of a calf" was heard. Branwell was found lying "in a kind of fit". The next day he had recovered enough to

write to Leyland giving him an account of his distress at the news he had received from the coachman.

Mrs Robinson used Dr Crosby to pass on information to Branwell, in a letter confirming the coachman's message. This was followed by a letter from her maid, Ann Marshall, with a similar report. Branwell told Leyland "I have got my finishing stroke at last – and I feel stunned into marble by the blow." Branwell was now on the edge of insanity. He wasn't eating and had resorted to drink and drugs.

Mrs Robinson continued to send Branwell money which he spent on alcohol, weakening his already fragile health. His sisters soon lost patience. "These were mournful days", said Charlotte.

His poem "Real Rest", with the theme of the attractiveness of death, was published in the *Halifax Guardian* on 8 November 1846 under the pseudonym Northangerland.

Throughout his life, Branwell left many things unfinished. Charlotte took over their childhood Angrian story, many portraits were said to have been left unvarnished, he was distracted as a tutor, his railway career came to an end due to a discrepancy, and his great novel never eventuated. In the end he gave up on himself and life.

Charlotte took Patrick to Manchester for his cataract operation and stayed to nurse him for a month, writing *Jane Eyre* during this time. Emily and Anne remained at the Parsonage with Branwell as he pined for Mrs Robinson.

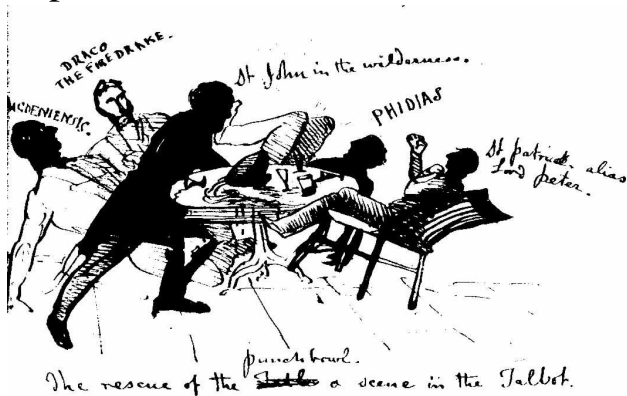
Jane Eyre was published in October 1847 to much acclaim. Patrick was subsequently given a copy of the novel to read, however, Branwell was never told of his sister's achievement.

Aware of the disapproval at home and probably out of respect for his recuperating father, Branwell spent much time in Halifax with Leyland and briefly took up residence in a public house there. He was now addicted to alcohol and opium and could not finance his habit or rely on the credit of his friends or numerous Halifax landlords. Things got so bad that Branwell was visited by a Sheriff's Officer and given the option to either pay his debts or go to the debtor's prison at York. The family reluctantly paid his debts but he was soon back in trouble again.

His excesses brought on “a fit of horror inexpressible, and violent palpitation of the heart”. He had to take better care of himself although he complained to Leyland that “the best health will not kill acute, and not ideal, mental agony”.

He returned to the imaginary world of Angria but even his hero, Northangerland, could not ease his unhappiness. On 11th January 1848 Charlotte told Ellen Nussey, “We have not been very comfortable here at home lately, far from it, indeed. Branwell has contrived by some means to get money from the old quarter, and has led us a sad life with his absurd and often intolerable conduct. Papa is harassed day and night – we have little peace – he is always sick, has two or three times fallen down in fits – what will be the ultimate end God knows ...”

Leyland had been commissioned to carve decorations for a new church at Oxenhope. Branwell visited him with John Brown, who worked closely with the sculptor. All three were soon spending Branwell’s money in the Halifax inns. A letter to Leyland following one outing included a sketch of “The rescue of the punch bowl, a scene at the Talbot” inn. It depicts John Brown (St John in the Wilderness) spilling the punchbowl and scattering glasses as he wrestled the table away from Branwell (St Patrick – alias Lord Peter), Leyland (Phidias), Daniel Sugden (Sugdeniensis) the Talbot landlord, and “Draco the Fire Drake”.



Sketch by Branwell Brontë in a letter to J. B. Leyland, January 1848
 © Brotherton Collection.
 (Branwell – ‘St. Patrick’ or ‘Lord Peter’ – is on the right).



scattering glasses as he wrestled the table away from Branwell (St Patrick – alias Lord Peter), Leyland (Phidias), Daniel Sugden (Sugdeniensis) the Talbot landlord, and “Draco the Fire Drake”. This lot were as bad as each other! Leyland would die an alcoholic three years after Branwell.

In the same letter, Branwell also depicts himself naked with a noose around his neck, in the guise of “Patrick Reid”, a notorious murderer who was hanged at York on 9th January 1848.

Branwell’s excessive drinking brought on “fainting fits”. On one occasion, whilst in a drunken stupor, he set the bedclothes on fire. Fortunately, Anne found him but when she couldn’t wake him, she ran to get Emily who dragged her brother out of the bed, got a large can of water from the kitchen and doused the flames.

Patrick insisted that his son would now sleep in the same room as himself, despite Branwell’s threats that one or other would not emerge alive next morning. In his much used *Domestic Medicine* manual, Patrick made notes next to the entry on Insanity or Mental Derangement: “There is also delirium tremens brought on sometimes by intoxication – The patient thinks himself haunted ... If intox[ication] be left off this madness will in general, gradually diminish.

His health continued to deteriorate. Influenza had affected the whole household in the spring and summer of 1848. He was still fending off his creditors but still feeding his addictions. Mrs Gaskell describes how he would sneak out of the house while the family were at church to sweet talk the village druggist into giving him opium. His last known letter was written to John Brown begging for five pence worth of gin.

In late September, Francis Grundy came to Haworth. He ordered dinner for two in a private room at the Black Bull and sent a messenger up to the parsonage for Branwell. While he waited, Patrick came to warn him of the dramatic change in Branwell’s appearance. Grundy noted:

He spoke of Branwell with more affection than I had ever heretofore heard him express, but he also spoke almost hopelessly. He said that when my message came, Branwell was in bed, and had been almost too weak for the last few days to leave it, nevertheless, he had insisted upon coming, and would be there immediately.

Despite the warning, Grundy was shocked when Branwell arrived:

Presently, the door opened cautiously, and a head appeared. It was a mass of red, unkempt, uncut hair, wildly floating round a great, gaunt forehead: the cheeks yellow and hollow, the mouth fallen, the thin white lips not trembling but shaking, the sunken eyes, once small, now glaring with the light of madness.

Once Branwell was warmed by a glass or two of brandy, “he looked frightened – frightened of himself”. Later, as Grundy took his leave, Branwell produced a carving knife and confessed that he had imagined the

message was a call from Satan. He had armed himself with the knife and come to the inn determined to rush into the room and stab its occupant. Only the sound of Grundy's voice and his manner had "brought him home to himself". Grundy "left him standing bare-headed in the road with bowed form and dropping tears".

Shortly afterwards, two days before his death, Branwell walked into the village for the last time. As he returned to the parsonage, he became breathless and faint. William Brown, the sexton's brother, found him having collapsed in the street and helped him home. The next day he was unable to get out of bed. A doctor was called and the family told he was close to death.

John Brown came to see him. Seizing his hand, Branwell cried, "Oh John, I am dying ... In all my past life I have done nothing either great or good."

Patrick prayed over his dying son. Charlotte told her publisher William Smith Williams, that they "with painful, mournful joy, heard him praying softly in his dying moments, and to the last prayer which my father offered up at his bedside, he added 'amen'".

The cause of death on Branwell's death certificate was stated to be chronic bronchitis and marasmus (wasting of the body), though the symptoms and the deaths of Emily and Anne shortly afterwards suggest consumption which was rife in the village at the time.

Interestingly, throughout his life Patrick made many notes in his medical manual next to entries relating to the problems affecting his wife, himself and his son. However, he made no notes next to the entry for consumption which affected four of his five daughters.

In letters to Smith Williams following Branwell's death, Charlotte wrote:

... the removal of our only brother must necessarily be regarded by us rather in the light of a mercy than a chastisement. Branwell was his Sister's pride and hope in boyhood, but since Manhood, the case has been otherwise. It has been our lot to see him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect, wait his return to the right path ...

I do not weep from a sense of bereavement – there is no prop withdrawn, no consolation torn away, no dear companion lost – but for the wreck of talent, the ruin of promise, the untimely dreary extinction of what might have been a burning and shining light. My brother was a year my junior. I had aspirations and ambitions for him once – long ago – they have perished mournfully – nothing remains of him but a memory of errors and sufferings ...

When the struggle was over – and a marble calm began to succeed the last dread agony – I felt as I had never felt before that there was peace and forgiveness for him in Heaven. All his errors ... all his vices seemed nothing to me in that moment; every wrong he had done, every pain he had caused, vanished; his sufferings only were remembered ... He is at rest, and that comforts us all. Long before he quitted this world – Life had no happiness for him ...

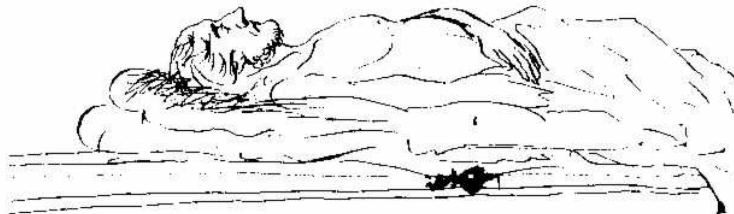
In the words of his friend, Francis Grundy:

Patrick Branwell Brontë was no domestic demon – he was just a man moving in a mist, who lost his way. More sinned against, mayhap, than sinning, *at least* he proved the reality of his sorrows. They killed him ...

What a sad ending for a man who once was so full of promise and ambition. From his family and friends we know he had a great imagination and was a prolific story teller. We can only wonder at what might have been. Daphne du Maurier summed it up saying:

The Black Sheep of Haworth Parsonage has come home. He no longer sits at The Black Bull drowning his sorrows, but is back in the drawing room where he belongs, perhaps sitting round that same table where his sisters wrote their novels.

I have only touched on some of the Branwell's achievements and adventures. There are many subjects to be explored in future talks on the juvenilia, poetry, paintings, perhaps even his friends and mentors. There is so much more we can learn about this fascinating young man.



Self Portrait. Branwell Brontë. c. Jan. 1847 © Brotherton Collection (Leyland Papers)

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MR EARNSHAW AND HIS VISIT TO LIVERPOOL

The edited text of a talk given by Annette Harman on 8th November 2008

*In the early part of *Wuthering Heights*, Mr Earnshaw makes a journey, on foot, to Liverpool, a distance of 60 miles each way. The fact that he was away for only three days suggests that he must have got a lift for part of the journey. In this talk, Annette Harman speculated on the reasons he may have made this journey.*



Zillah serves “gingerbread and warm wine” when Catherine visits Linton Heathcliff. Wine was fetched from the cellar by Joseph on Lockwood’s first visit to *Wuthering Heights*. Ginger and grapes would have to be imported and purchased through Gimmerton fair or other local markets, sourced perhaps from Jamaica (ginger) and Spain (wine). These products, spices and wine, are examples of international trading that occurred in Yorkshire around the turn of the nineteenth century.

Emily Bronte was careful in *Wuthering Heights* to provide comprehensive genealogical data for humans and dogs. She was also carefully recording a pastoral England that was disappearing, due to Industrialisation – the agricultural based society that was simultaneously lauded and downplayed by urban development – the rapid growth of towns. In this talk I am using the text as a springboard to speculate, concerning explicit and implicit social conventions that Emily Brontë’s

reading public may have made when confronted with this mysterious, and I would claim, didactic text from 1847 onwards.

Mr Earnshaw's actions when visiting Liverpool are deliberately vague,



almost fairytale like, because he was purposefully engaging in trade, in particular, nationally trading his cattle within the three kingdoms – England, Ireland and Scotland and by extension, internationally – America, Newfoundland, The West Indies and The Pacific.

In respectable society in England in 1847, for the aspirational middle class, who were reading novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, trade was taboo and not subject to social scrutiny, transparency and accountability in the ways our recent global economic downturn has been. Even Elizabeth Gaskell in *North and South* published in 1854-5, was careful to stress the respectability of the Thornton family in their overcared for house next to the mill that belched black soot through Mrs Thornton's cleanliness and purity of domestic purpose. She describes their drawing room:

Everything reflected light, nothing absorbed it. The whole room had a painfully spotted, spangled, speckled look about it, which impressed Margaret so unpleasantly that she was hardly conscious of the peculiar cleanliness required to keep everything so white and pure in such an atmosphere, or the trouble that must be so willingly expended to secure that effect of icy, snowy discomfort.

Trading activities may have been the mainstay of the gentry and celebrated in 1851 by Albert, The Prince Consort at The Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in London, but at this stage no-one is willing to write in detail about such a sordid subject, particularly not the “Mystic of the Moors”, the supposedly “rebellious daughter of Milton” (*Gubar and Gilbert, The Madwoman in the Attic*) and the respectable and conventional parson's daughter from Haworth.

If Emily was willing to publish under a pseudonym for the sake of propriety, she was hardly likely to antagonise propriety with a detailed discussion of Trade, in Yorkshire in her first public novel.

Visits and visiting are important activities in *Wuthering Heights* and surprisingly there are many visits that take place in the novel. The first is Lockwood's business visit to his landlord Heathcliff, as his tenant. The second is Lockwood's inappropriate social visit, the next day, to Wuthering Heights. Then there is Cathy's convalescent visit to Thrushcross Grange – after her nocturnal rebellious excursion with Heathcliff that resulted in her receiving a bite from Skulker. And of course there are Mr Earnshaw's business visit to Liverpool and Edgar Linton's courting visits to Cathy, Nelly's anxious visit to Hareton, Heathcliff's visit to Cathy before the birth of Catherine, and the second Catherine's visits to Linton Heathcliff. These are only some visiting examples from the novel – there are many more.

Social, convalescence, courting and business matters are the catalysts for the extensive visiting that takes place in this text. Lockwood first visits his landlord, Heathcliff, to pay his respects as his tenant of Thrushcross Grange. Lockwood notices specific details concerning Wuthering Heights which he carefully records, as he describes this farming estate in Northern England. He states:

The apartment and furniture would have nothing extraordinary as belonging to a homely, northern farmer...such an individual seated in his armchair, his mug of ale frothing on the round table before him, is to be seen in any circuit of five or six miles among these hills, if you go at the right time after dinner.

Emily Bronte creates a thumbnail sketch of homely northern farmers complete with after-dinner ale made from barley grown on the farm for fodder in autumn and winter and for human consumption (porridge, oatcakes and beer) throughout the year. We wonder, of course, how many 'homely northern farmers' Lockwood has actually met by the time of this stereotypical sketch as he has only just arrived in the area. We give him the benefit of the doubt: he is after all, tenant of Thrushcross Grange and we accept the authorial intention to provide a realistic social context for Wuthering Heights as a farming estate.

Malted barley is used to this day in brewing beer. The barley is malted by being allowed to ferment, or go sour naturally. First the ears are husked, not dried. Then fermentation takes place, and then water, hops, yeast and



sugar are added in stages and brewing takes place. At this farm, there is enough barley leftover from fodder and human consumption to make the everyday luxury of alcoholic beer.

Lockwood's description of the parlour of Wuthering Heights, in particular the vast oak dresser captures his admiration, in this, his first visit to Wuthering Heights, as he states:

One end (of the fireplace), indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, on a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The latter (the vast oak dresser) had never been underdrawn (covered with lath and plaster) or given doors made from wood – perhaps it had been made on the farm and the high turnover of stored goods made proper doors inconvenient and impracticable) : its entire anatomy (body, cavity) lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood laden with oatcakes and clusters of legs of mutton, beef and ham, concealed it.

The immense pewter dishes, silver jugs and tankards in row after row are clearly for feasting and drinking, with hopefully, entertainment added. However it is the careful description of the oak dresser that has always fascinated me – the frame of wood is



laden with oatcakes and there are clusters of legs of mutton, beef and ham – such abundance, a seemingly casual cornucopia of stored delights, sustaining and enduring.

The Oxford Companion to Food (1999, p.546) describes oatcakes:

The oatcakes are made from oats (in the form of oatmeal), salt, and water, sometimes with a little fat added, (and) were the staple food of the inhabitants of the Pennines and the Lake District in England and of the Scottish Highlands for centuries. In these upland regions oats are the only cereal which will ripen in the cold wet climate. Oatcake-baking developed into a distinct skill in West Yorkshire, where the cakes were thin, soft and moist. A batter made from fine oatmeal was used. This was lightly fermented, either by leaving it overnight to sour naturally, or with yeast. In its simplest form, the batter was poured onto a bakestone to make a rather thick oatcake. A finer type was called riddle bread,

because a pool of batter was shaken or ‘riddled’ on a special board to make it spread thinly. The thinnest, finest type was thrown oatcake, which developed during the nineteenth century. The batter was transferred from the riddle board to a sheet of paper or cloth and then thrown on to a hot bakestone to make a very thin, slender oval sheet which cooked in seconds. These were often made by commercial bakers.



In contrast, within *Wuthering Heights*, when Catherine visits Linton Heathcliff (chapter XXIII), Joseph is described as:

Joseph seemed sitting in a sort of Elysium alone, beside a roaring fire; a quart of ale on the table near him, bristling with large pieces of toasted oat-cake; and his black, short pipe in his mouth.(p.227)

Joseph’s oatcake pieces are large and they bristle in the quart of ale. He has also summoned the energy to toast them satisfactorily, as he sits in his version of Paradise. His oatcakes would not be the thin and fine version of the commercial bakers, however. It is fair to claim that they would have been what most rural people ate regularly at this time.

Interestingly, broken or crushed oatcake was mixed with broth, gravy or hot water, and butter to make browiss, a sort of savoury porridge, in Yorkshire. Perhaps this would be too fancy for Joseph on this, his would-be solitary occasion of glory, where no further gilding was needed with a roaring fire, ale, toasted oatcake and tobacco pipe supplying all wants.

Back to Lockwood’s first visit, again, we then have the scene of the possessed swine, “a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses”.

When Lockwood caresses the canine mother, she growls and wolfishly considers biting him. Heathcliff’s response is to punch the dog with his foot and exclaim, “She’s not accustomed to being spoiled – not kept for a pet”.

Lockwood's comic/malevolent situation escalates as he incites the dogs, while Joseph and Heathcliff are in the cellar trying to find wine, and they threaten him. The dogs are a strong presence on this farm, their power and utility are always stressed. These dogs are hunting dogs and working dogs. They are not house pets, nor are they spoiled. They are there simply there for utilitarian purposes.

So why don't the dogs eat the clusters of legs of meat? They are working dogs who are left in the parlour unsupervised. Joseph carries pails of porridge for the dogs throughout the novel and the humans eat porridge from basins – Isabella Heathcliff's cookery style disgusts Joseph.

Joseph was bending over the fire, peering into a large pan that swung above it; and a wooden bowl of oatmeal stood on the settle close by. The contents of the pan began to boil, and he turned to plunge his hand into the bowl; I conjectured that this preparation was probably for our supper, and, being hungry, I resolved it should be eatable; so, crying out sharply, I'll make the porridge! ... It racked me to recall past happiness and the greater peril there was of conjuring up its apparition, the quicker the thible ran round and the faster the handfuls of meal fell into the water. Joseph beheld my style of cookery will growing indignation.

Thear! He ejaculated. Hareton, thou willn't sup thy porridge to-neeght; they'll be naught but lumps as big as my neive... It was rather a rough mess, I own, when poured into the basins; four had been provided, and a gallon pitcher of new milk was brought from the dairy...

Porridge is both the dog's and the human's staple diet at Wuthering Heights, as we discover throughout the text. Could the meat be salted, and therefore be unattractive to dogs? Could this farm have a history of corned production of meat, for home consumption – pork, beef and lamb?

In the novel, often the cows are being milked, for example, by Joseph and Zillah using lanterns for light in the early evening. Therefore, specific breeding of cattle for meat, as now happens in Australia, may not have been the program for these animals. Rather they may have been considered general purpose animals, for meat and milk.

Does this farm produce so much excess meat that its owner has to travel to Liverpool to continue to trade his cattle for corning in Cork?

Cork, in Ireland, could not have produced the vast quantities of beef to supply Britain, Europe, America, Newfoundland, and the West Indies until 1825.



The Cove of Cork, now Queenstown

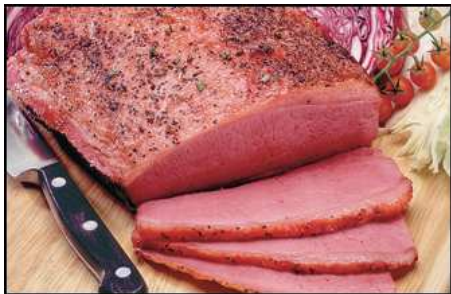
Bacon, interestingly, was speedily and cheaply supplied by the Danes who cornered the British market by the 1850s. Cobbett in *Household Economy* (1832) measures household poverty in Britain by the ownership of a pig or whether

the household possessed a fitch of bacon. Only the most poverty stricken family did not possess a fitch of bacon. During the 19th Century, Yorkshire Large Whites, Middle Whites, Tamworths, and Lincolnshires and curly coated pigs were the breeds favoured for bacon by the British, until the market became dominated by the Danes.



The Oxford Companion to Food (1999, p.218) describes corned beef:

Corned beef is so called because the beef is preserved with ‘corns’ (grains) of salt. Until the 19th century the adjective corned was applied to beef and pork in Britain. It may be that the enthusiasm for corned beef has been even higher in

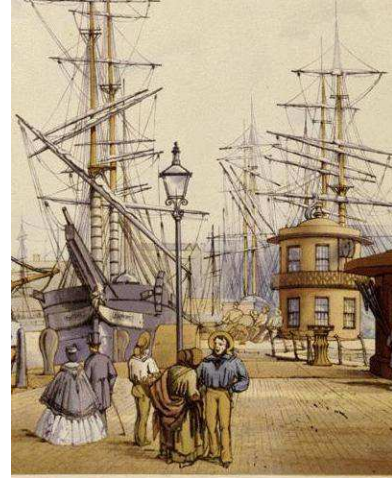


Ireland, where it has been a traditional dish for Christmas, Easter and on St. Patrick’s Day, and where the combination of corned beef and cabbage provides one of the country’s best known dishes – colcannon. There is a long history of corned meats in the Irish diet, ranging back to the 11th century. Regina Sexton (1996) states that corned beef has a particular regional association with Cork City. From

the late 17th century to 1825, the beef curing industry was the biggest and most important asset to the city. In this period Cork exported vast quantities of cured beef to Britain, Europe, America, Newfoundland, and the West Indies. During the Napoleonic wars the British army was supplied principally with corned beef which was cured in and exported from the port of Cork. Some of the exports from Cork may have gone to the Pacific Islands in many of which corned beef is a long-established popular food, almost a staple. In some of the islands it goes under the name of keg.

Mr Earnshaw's journey to Liverpool:

One fine summer morning-it was the beginning of the harvest, I remember – Mr Earnshaw, the old master, came downstairs dressed for a journey; and after he had told Joseph what was to be done during the day, he turned to Hindley, and Cathy, and me – for I sat eating my porridge with them – and he said, speaking to his son, “Now my bonny man, I'm going to Liverpool today, what shall I bring you? You may choose what you like: only let it be little, for I shall walk there and back: sixty miles each way, that is a long spell!” Hindley named a fiddle, and then he asked Miss Cathy; she was hardly six years old, but she could ride any horse in the stable, and she chose a whip...



The Liverpool Docks

Then, on Mr Earnshaw's return:

He threw himself into a chair, laughing and groaning, and bid them all stand off, for he was nearly killed – he would not have such another walk for the three kingdoms.

Why does Mr Earnshaw walk there and back from Liverpool? Why doesn't he ride one of the stabled horses for his journey? Is Emily Bronte allowing the fairytale aspect of this one hundred and twenty mile round trip dominate her narrative, or is there something far more practical going on?

Before the railroad, the horse was the way you got somewhere if you weren't going on foot, whether you went on its back or by 'waggon' or coach. (Pool, 1993, p.142)

Horses were used for labour and transport, before animal liberation rights were recognized. Are Mr Earnshaw's horses being used to gather the corn harvest? Remember corn in Britain covers oats, barley and wheat, not American sweet corn. Therefore is the six-year-old riding draft horses who need whipping to move faster? Or is she riding ponies (ladies horses) that are unable to complete a one hundred and twenty mile round trip quickly?

What about rates for horse stabling and care in Liverpool, a port city? In London, statistics reveal that anything to do with horses was expensive in the nineteenth century, Daniel Pool states:

Horses were expensive both to buy and maintain, so it is not surprising that in 1848 out of a population in excess of 18 million only 100,000 had their own carriages or riding horses. In the 1820s, a good carriage horse or hunter could run £100 and even an ordinary hack could cost £25 to £40. Also horses, unlike cars, had to be fed, sheltered and cared for daily, which meant that if you got a horse you were also entering into a subsidy of the horse transportation business. You were buying the services of a corn dealer (fast horses ate 72 pounds of straw, 56 pounds of hay, 2 bushels of oats, and 2 bushels of chaff, a



saddler, a coach maker (if you had a carriage), a harness maker, and – if you were fancy – a coachman and a groom as well. Some people simply opted out and went to livery stables, where you could rent horses. In addition, the rich and nobility in England by the latter part of the century, at least in London, almost invariably went to a “jobber” or rent-a-horse man for their horses, presumably leaving their own good ones back at the country estate where they could rest up for the summer and fall during the London season. This “jobbing” cost about £85 a year in the 1880s but freed one from all the worry about the lameness, illness, and death of the horses. (Pool, 1996, p.143)

Mr Earnshaw is obviously unable, owing to the pressure of time, to wait for a wagon or coach to conduct his specific business in Liverpool, particularly as the harvest is being gathered on his estate and would need to be totalled and collated for further trade and storage accounts.

I believe that Mr Earnshaw could have been required to appear in person in Liverpool, as one of the regular suppliers of beef cattle to a Liverpool

merchant, either through Gimmerton Fair cattle sales, or directly to Liverpool, maybe through neighbouring villages (a long supply chain) who in turn, shipped the (live) cattle to Cork, where in turn, commercially produced corned beef supplied the strong national and international markets.

The abundance of cereal crops and salted meats at Wuthering Heights, well after Mr Earnshaw's time and during Heathcliff's unhappy domination there, makes these speculations credible in my opinion.

We note the use that was made by horses on the Wuthering Heights farm.

Joseph is loading lime on the further side of Penistone Crags (a quarry near Haworth); it will take him till dark, and he'll never know.



Lime is used to improve the soil for farming and it is fair to conjecture that the lime is being loaded onto a dray by Joseph, which would be pulled by horses to the fields requiring attention.

Hindley and Heathcliff are given a colt each by Mr Earnshaw when they were young lads. Cathy rides a Galloway pony, a small strong horse bred in Scotland, Minny, on her adventure to Penistone Crags.

“The red cow didn’t die by chance; and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations”, says Cathy to Joseph.

At first the young man appeared about to befriend me. “I’ll go with him as far as the park, he said.

“You’ll go with him to hell!” exclaimed his master, or whatever relation he bore. “And who is to look after the horses, eh?”

“A man’s life is of more consequence than one evening’s neglect of the horses: somebody must go,” murmured Mrs Heathcliff, more kindly than I expected.



Then when Nelly is looking for Heathcliff after Cathy’s return from the Lintons:

I found him smoothing the glossy coat of the new pony in the stable, and feeding the other beasts according to custom.

There were many trading routes throughout Europe, Britain, China, India, America and the rest of the world in early Victorian England. Mr Earnshaw cultivated a farming estate in Yorkshire that clearly produced an abundance of cereal crops in a cold and wet climate, cattle, working dogs and work horses. Trading in Liverpool may have been unmentionable in polite society, but it was clearly feasible and practical in these circumstances.