

Letters and Articles

– By Gillian Brent

Based on Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë

Manchester Guardian

Thursday 13th August 1828

Advertisements

A young lady accustomed to tuition is desirous of meeting with a situation in a private family where the children are under fourteen. She is qualified to teach the usual branches of a good English education, together with French, Drawing, and Music. Address, J.E., Post-office, Lowton, ——shire.

Wanted By a gentleman (whose recent losses compel him to seek employment), a situation as superintendent of an agricultural and stock establishment. The applicant has conducted a concern of the above description for the last six years. Letters addressed to B.E. and left at the Lowton Post Office will receive prompt attention.

Notice

After the calling of the Banns, on the 12th August inst, in the Parish Church in Lowton, by the Reverend Mr. Collins, the Reverend Mr. George Naysmith of Audlem to Miss Maria Temple, Superintendent of Lowood School, daughter of Mr. Temple of Foxstones, Cheshire.



Lowood School
Lowood near Lowton, ____ shire
Wednesday 20th August 1828

Dear Mrs Nasmyth,

How strange it seems to address you as this! But of course Miss Temple no longer exists, and Mrs Nasmyth is my mentor and my good friend. I hope that married life is all that you expected of it, and that you find yourself well pleased with it.

It may come as no surprise to you that I am considering a change in my own situation. The eight years I have spent at Lowood have prepared me for my place in this world, but I do not believe that that place is thus to always be Lowood.

In order to do this, I have advertised in the Manchester Guardian, and after I have finished writing my letter to you, I shall achieve the joint goals of posting this and ascertaining if there are any replies to my advertisement.

I would appreciate any advice you might have for me in this new endeavour. As I must be independent, supporting myself with the goal of eventually obtaining sufficient funds for my eventual retirement, I feel that it is far better to make a change now rather than at a future time when my inertia is less easy to overcome.

Wish me luck, Mrs Nasmyth! I shall let you know the outcome,

Yours cordially,

J.E.

Post Script: Alas, only one reply! I will let you know more when next I write.



Carlisle Patriot

Saturday 28 September 1828

Advertisements



The Proprietors of the Northern Union Coach respectfully acquaint the public that in consequence of the increased price of hay, they are compelled to raise the price of passage from Penrith to Millcote to 24s inside, 20s outside. The coach will leave from the Greyhound Inn in Main St at midnight, and will arrive at the Queen's Head in Millcote at eight o'clock in the evening. Letters and parcels may be booked with Mr Beckside at the Greyhound Inn, where the greatest attention is paid.

Mr Waverton of the Northern Union Coach respectfully begs leave to apprise the Public that in future this coach will leave the Greyhound Inn at midnight precisely for Millcote.

Lowood School
Lowood near Lowton, _____shire
Tuesday 14th October 1828

Dear Mrs Nasmyth,

By the time you receive this letter, I shall be on my way to my new employment with Mrs Fairfax at Thornfield near Millcote. I received only a single reply to my advertisement. The situation is with but one young pupil, and after all I shall be at liberty to advertise again if this does not suit. I must confess, though, that I was concerned when it took so much time for my guardian Mrs Reed to give her permission for me to leave Lowood, and for the Committee to provide the testimonials. I feared that Mrs Fairfax might tire of waiting for me, and seek out a different governess. But as you see, this has not happened. From tomorrow, you may find me at Thornfield, and letters for me may be sent to the Post Office at Hay, a village that lies nearby.

But I have not yet told you of the most momentous change in my own circumstances. It seems that I have an uncle of whom I was unaware until just today. When news of my leaving Lowood came to Mrs Reed, it was also passed around the staff at Gateshead Hall, and Bessie who used to be my nursemaid came to visit me before I left for the south. She is now Mrs Leaven, and has two children and (I know it is rude to assume but it was plain to see) a third on the way. She told me that some years ago, a Mr Eyre from Madeira came to find me, and was not pleased that I was here at Lowood. I have not heard from him, but it is still so very delightful to find that I have other relatives in this world!

Mrs Leaven also told me of my aunt and cousins at Gateshead, and I am glad that I was not there to see how things have changed. I shall not describe it all (for I haven't much time before I need to get some sleep – my coach departs from the Brocklehurst Arms at four in the morning), but it seems my cousin John has not found a profession that pleases him, and Mrs Reed has had to bear the brunt of the financial consequences. This may seem small-minded, but it is a great comfort to me to know that the shillings in my purse, the clothes on my back and in my trunk, and most of all the knowledge in my head, are sufficient to give me the life I require.

And now I must attempt to sleep. Miss Gryce will be glad of my departure – she will have our shared accommodation to herself for some time as I believe the committee may delay finding a replacement for me until after Christmas now. I shall write as soon as I can from my new location.

Yours cordially,
J.E.

Thornfield
Near Hay, _____shire
Wednesday 19th November 1828

Dear Maria,

It feels like such a liberty to be calling you by your first name! Thank you for giving me that permission – I have felt you were my friend from the first day I arrived at Lowood but nothing now may take that from me. Thank you also for your frank and detailed letter of advice. Currently the situation here is nothing of the sort you feared. While Thornfield does indeed belong to a gentleman (and not Mrs Fairfax as I originally thought), he is rarely at home and thus I do not need to be cautious in my dealings with him. Mrs Fairfax is, instead, the housekeeper, and Adele (my pupil) is the ward of Mr Rochester, the owner.

I get on very well with Mrs Fairfax, but I would be remiss if I did not specifically give credit where it is due. Your excellent choice in employing Mme Pierrot led to me being able to converse in French with both Adele and her nurse Sophie. Adele has very little English, and Sophie has almost none, so as well as being governess to the child, I am able now to translate all the things that they could not previously communicate to the household. You can imagine how glad Sophie is of this: until now, she could not even ask for an extra candle or a cup of tea.

I am teaching Sophie sufficient English to find her way, and my lessons with Adele are all that I hoped for. We have our own schoolroom in the library (oh all those books! Even if I only have access to one bookcase worth, it is still a great treasure), and Thornfield itself is delightfully situated in a dell surrounded by low hills and delightful vistas. I shall not tire of this place easily.

There is one very strange person here though. Mrs Poole is one of the many staff in the house, and she spends most of her days in a side attic, doing I-don't-know-what and then roaming the house at nighttime and creating mischief. I really do not understand why she is tolerated – and paid well, apparently.

I have heard nothing more from Gateshead Hall, and do not expect to for some time. I am sorry that my relative from Madeira has not made a greater effort to find me, but it is possible that he has died in the interval. Well, I cannot mourn what I did not have.

I enclose a drawing I have done in ink of Thornfield. I find it difficult to render the three stories of the hall with the accuracy it deserves, but I hope you can see from it the style of the house. I believe it to be about two hundred years old or so, and it looks far better than my picture shows. Have a delightful Christmas, and I shall write again in the New Year and tell you how things are progressing.

Yours in friendship,
J.E.

The Millcote Herald.

Friday January 8th, 1829

Weather

On Tuesday last, there was a very heavy fall of snow in Millcote, sufficient that no wheeled vehicles could make their way through the lower gate nor into the marketplace, and even the coach to Penrith was obliged to wait three days before the roads were again passable. In the interior, very hard frosts have also been experienced – ice six inches thick, affording the pleasure of sliding and skating! This present winter is the coldest experienced in these regions these seven years, and all hope that the current hardships are balanced by a beneficial effect on all corn and other crops in the ground.

Volunteers requested

A subscription having been raised for the development of a local Fire Brigade to be located in the village of Lightcliffe, serving that location and the villages of Hay, Halifax, Elland and Wyke, the benefactors seek those willing to join the Brigade. This force will consist of 25 members. Volunteers will be expected to spend one day every three weeks in attendance at the station, and to be ready to be summoned by bell and messenger in the event of a fire. Uniforms and equipment are covered by the subscription, and members would be recompensed by one shilling per three-weekly attendance, and salary for each fire attended. Apply at the Sun Inn, Lightcliffe.

Thornfield
Near Hay, _____shire
Saturday 10th January 1829

Dear Maria,

Well! Things have changed dramatically at Thornfield. On Tuesday inst, I took a letter to Hay for Mrs Fairfax, as the evening was cold but clear and the light was more than sufficient. As I was resting before the long hill up to Hay, a rider came galloping past, and I am afraid that even without moving, I was sufficient to startle the horse and make him throw his rider! The ice on the road would not have helped, either. I assisted the rider back to his horse, but when I arrived home, I discovered that the rider was none other than my employer, Mr Rochester. Thankfully, he does not think worse of me for being the cause of his accident, but it has laid him up for some time.

Yesterday I had to remove my books and items from the library I had been using a school for Adele, for Mr Rochester requires the space to conduct business with his tenants. I cannot complain. I still have access to the opened bookcase full of literary delights, and indeed it is a relief to be removed from the temptation of all the other volumes locked behind glass doors. I have met with him – he asked to see my pictures, and while he was not overly full of praise for them, neither was he bitterly critical. Indeed, he made some interesting comments about the subjects, and seems to know more about my imagination than I do!

Mrs Fairfax has informed me that Mr Rochester has only been in possession of the house these nine years past (since the death of his elder brother) and does not seem to like it very much as he rarely spends much time there. She said that he is wont to go a-visiting the neighbours, staying away for weeks at a time, so I doubt if I shall see much of him.

I must tell you though that he has given me a gift of immense value. When we had tea together last night, he told me that he already discerned improvement in Adele. This pleases me greatly.

He is a little strange. At one point he accused me of being in league with the fairy population in bringing down his horse. I hope I interpreted his mood correctly as trying to show me that he did not hold me at fault for his accident. It was an odd conversation, not at all what I expected from an employer, but it did amuse him and made the evening rather more pleasant. Oh, I must explain. When I say "we", I mean Mr Rochester, Mrs Fairfax, Adele and myself.

John is going to take Mr Rochester's mail to the village Post Office in a short while, so I bid you farewell until our next letter.

Your friend

J.E.

The Millcote Herald

Saturday March 14th 1829

Lucky escape at Thornfield

On Tuesday last, Mr Rochester of Thornfield near Hay narrowly escaped injury when he fell asleep with a candle still burning, and it set fire to the hanging curtains around his bed. His fortunate survival is reportedly due to having both a full washbasin and ewer, and waking in time to apply their contents to the conflagration. While there is some smoke and water damage to some of the furnishings, that is quite light, and much to be preferred to the alternative.

Gathering at the Leas.

Followers of the local members of society will be pleased to hear that a party has gathered at the Eshton's house north of Millcote consisting of Mr Eshton, Mrs Eshton, Miss Eshton and Miss Louisa Eshton; the dowager Lady Lynn and her sons Sir George Lynn, Mr Henry Lynn and Mr Frederick Lynn; the dowager Lady Ingram, her son Lord Ingram, and her daughters the Honourable Miss Ingram and Honourable Miss Mary Ingram; and Mr Rochester of Thornfield. As the Spring weather improves, it is expected that the party will spend the time enjoying the forests and moors around the Leas, and evenings of gaiety and music. Sir George Lynn, lately elected as Member of Parliament for Millcote, will need to travel to London to represent the district, but until then some of the most eligible bachelors and maidens of the county will bring a fresh Spring breeze to help lift the chill of the hard winter past.

Thornfield
Near Hay, _____shire
Saturday 11th April 1829

Dear Maria,

Things here have been quiet for a few weeks. There was some excitement last month when Mr Rochester was almost burnt to death ~~in his bed by Mrs Poole~~ when he left his candle alight in his bedroom. Luckily he woke in time and extinguished the flames before there were more than just a few items scorched. Since then he has been away at another grand house, enjoying the society of his peers.

He did, however, tell me some of Adele's story before he left. It seems she is his natural child. Am I right, Maria, in feeling quite uneasy that he has shared this confidence with me? Is it normal for those with such children to talk about them so? I had assumed that discretion was the key in these circumstances, not frank discussion of what can only be an immoral past. This does seem to be my introduction to the world of adults and, to be honest, I am not certain that I am comfortable with it. I will though look after and care for Adele even more than before. It is no fault of the girl that her parents were not married. With a good education and the support of her guardian, she can still make her way in the world.

The Spring weather has finally chased away the chill in the hills surrounding Thornfield, the last of the sheltered snow has melted from the hedgerows, and the road to Hay is clear enough that I might walk there this evening and post this letter.

Your friend,
J.E.



The Observer

25th April 1829

Births, Marriages and Deaths

DIED 22nd inst, at his Chambers, Mr John Reed, son of Mr Reed, Magistrate of Gateshead near Skipton, Yorkshire, aged 22.

Gateshead Hall
Near Skipton, _____shire
Tuesday 5th May 1829

Dear Maria,

My head is spinning so over everything that has happened this past month and I have taken refuge in my room for an hour to write you a letter so that I too might make sense of it all. Fear not, my friend, I am in no trouble, but I fear that others are.

The black border is in respect for my cousin John, who died last month in London. Mrs Reed has summoned me to Gateshead, although she does not always recognise me. She has had a seizure and is not expected to live very long. It seems that John has squandered the family fortune, and left his mother and sisters in penury. I am keeping busy as best I can here with writing and drawing, and with helping around the Hall, and will probably stay until Mrs Reed has died and a little after if I can be of assistance to the family. And then, I shall leave, and never return.

I have no regrets. I have told you of growing up here. My cousins are very different from me. Georgiana hopes for a fine romance and marriage to a well-connected rich man, and Eliza I think will spend her years involved in some religious endeavour. I will wish them luck and then not need to ever think of them again.

I have not yet told of all that happened at Thornfield before I left, and I have not enough time now to tell all, but I can certainly give the Lamb's Tales version. Mr Rochester stayed away some weeks with his group of friends, then brought them with only three days' notice back to Thornfield where he proceeded to entertain them with charades, excursions, and one time he even dressed as a gypsy and told people their fortunes! Adele was pleased as she was allowed sometimes to dress up and join the party in the evenings, although I fear that some of the company were not very courteous to her. However, it seems that Mr Rochester is to marry the Honourable Blanche Ingram, sister to Lord Ingram. When that happens, he will send Adele to school, and it seems that I will need another position. Mr Rochester has offered to find one for me, so at least I will not need to advertise, but oh, Maria, to have to move again to a new place and meet new people and find my footing once more ... I shall keep you informed as to what happens.

As for Mrs Poole – I am so confused. She attacked one of the guests one night, and yet she is *still* permitted to stay! Mr Rochester must have his reasons, but I have no idea what they are.

If I wish to get to the post office, I should seal this letter now. I enclose a few of the landscapes I have drawn while I have been here. You always did encourage me with my drawing, and I hope these bring you the same joy they did me.

Your friend,

J.E.

Post Script: I was right about Bessie!

SKIPTON MERCURY

Saturday 16th May 1829

DIED: REED, Sarah, née Gibson, 12 inst, widow of the late Mr Reed of Gateshead Hall and mother of the late Mr John Reed of Caldwell Chambers, London, after a short illness. Survived by two daughters.

The Millcote Herald

Saturday June 1st 1829

The large party of our local dignitaries and gentlefolk which has been gracing Thornfield have dispersed to their respective dwellings, with no important news emanating from that gathering. However, local rumour still holds that Mr Rochester of Thornfield has been courting the Honourable Blanche Ingram of Ingram Park, and that a major announcement may yet eventuate.



Thornfield

Near Hay, _____shire
Tuesday 16th June 1829

Dear Maria,

I have news! Such news! Great news that I can barely contain myself in telling you. I can barely believe it myself.

Where to start?

In order of importance, and then I shall tell you the whole in chronological order. Mr Rochester – Edward de Fairfax Rochester – is not going to marry the Honourable Blanche Ingram. No – instead he's asked *me* to marry him! Little plain Jane Eyre! I cannot believe how happy that makes me. I tried so very hard, Maria, but I found myself falling in love with him from the first moment I met him. And all this time ... let me tell it in order.

My Aunt Reed died about a week after I last wrote to you. We had been expecting it, and the end was peaceful. However, before she died, she explained why my uncle John who had come to Gateshead had not come looking for me. In her bitterness (no, I am *not* going to ignore the hatefulness she had for me. Is it really

worse to speak ill of the dead than it is to lie about them?) she told him that I had died of Typhus at Lowood. I have since written to him to advise him that I am still alive, thus now I have more family than I had before. So something good came of that. Also, my suspicions of my cousins were correct. Eliza has converted to Catholicism and joined a convent, and Georgiana is to live with her uncle Gibson (her mother's brother) in London.

I returned to Thornfield, and thought that I would have but a few scant weeks before Adele went to school and I to whatever new position Mr Rochester had obtained for me. Yet it was strange – Mr Rochester was supposed to be courting Miss Ingram, and yet he showed no interest in visiting her, although he had ordered the carriage for them. And then, on Midsummer Eve, I asked him if he had found a position for me.

He told me he had found one with a family in Ireland.

I have to admit here, Maria, although you may have guessed already, that despite his upcoming position as the bridegroom to Miss Ingram, I had conceived an infatuation for him. I tried to hide it, so that none but myself knew, but somehow Mr Rochester noticed. Thus, when he told me of this new position, I started crying.

He then confessed all – that Miss Ingram only wanted to marry him for his money, which he had suspected; that he had actually been falling in love with me but was playing with me for his own amusement; that when Miss Ingram found out (mistakenly) that his fortune was much less than she had originally thought, she and her family had cut him.

He has asked me to marry him, Maria, and I have accepted his offer. The banns are being read each week, and the wedding will take place on the 23rd July.

I shall make him pay for that teasing though. He shall not get away without punishment. I have thought of the perfect task. I shall ask him to dismiss Grace Poole forever.

I included this news in the letter to my uncle. I just wish it were not such a distance for you to travel (not that you should travel at the moment, Maria. You with child? I am so happy for you!) but I shall think of you on my wedding day, and then the next time I write I shall be your friend Jane Rochester, instead of

Your friend

J.E.



Millcote and District Advertiser

Saturday June 28th 1829

ON SALE

Ladies' silk, and printed dresses, of the latest fashions,
the quality surpassing those sold in London.

White lace veils, and ball sashes.

Silk velvet, shawls and scarfs

Kid, brown Morocco, and Denmark satin shoes

Cotton stockings

Tortoise shell combs, and parasols

Zante currents, &c., &c., &c.

A. Beveridge, Millcote

The Millcote Herald

Saturday June 28th 1829

MARRIAGES

The Banns are here published for the first time for local Parish churches regarding the following impending nuptials:

BROOKS – PEARCE, St Matthew's Lightcliffe; HUBBARD – ADKIN, St Matthew's Lightcliffe; BAXTER – DAYNES, Wakefield Halifax; MADDER – FISH, St James Hay; ROCHESTER – EYRE, Rochester Hay, BRUNTON – GOLDING, St Mary's Wyke; GIDELOW – SPRAGGS, St John's Halifax. If any of you know just cause, or just impediment, why these should not take place, declare it to the minister at the relevant church.

Morton Standard

Saturday 1st July 1829

Following the establishment of a school for the boys of poor background in the town of Morton two years previously, it has been decided to create a similar establishment for girls of a similar situation for their education in reading, writing, ciphering, sewing and knitting. Families desirous of having their daughters so educated are therefore advised to apply to the Rev. Mr Rivers at the parsonage, Morton. A quarterly fee of 3 shillings per girl to be paid prior to the term commencing.

In addition, one student may cover her tuition as assistant to the School Mistress, performing such housework as will aid the Mistress in her duties. Applicants for this position are to apply to Miss Oliver at Morton Hall.

Sheffield Register

18th July 1829

CALLED TO GLORY

On 14th inst, John Rivers esq. of Moor House was taken up to Heaven after a long illness; there he will join with his wife who preceded him thirty years prior. He leaves behind his son the Rev St John Rivers, and his daughters Mary and Diana Rivers.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Carlisle Patriot

Saturday 28 July 1829

Advertisements



The Proprietors of the Northern Union Coach are pleased to advise the public of the new circular route being undertaken, viz: Manchester to Oldham, to Millcote, thence Sheffield, thence to Manchester by way of Whitcross. The coach will leave from the Apple Tree Inn in Portland St at midnight on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, and will arrive back at that Inn at eight in the morning a day afterwards. Excellent food is available at each of the Inns along the way. Please apply to Mr Warburton at the Apple Tree Inn for information on fares and departures.

The Millcote Herald

Saturday July 25th 1829

DREADFUL CRIME AVERTED AT HAY ROCHESTER'S FIRST WIFE ALIVE IN THORNFIELD HALL

Readers of this paper will be dismayed to hear of the scandalous affair uncovered on Thursday 23rd inst, where Mr Edward Rochester of Thornfield Hall was due to marry Miss Jane Eyre of Lowood at the church attached to the estate. To the horror of the Reverend Mr Wood who was conducting the ceremony, as he requested *if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it*, he was answered by Mr Briggs of London who produced proof of the existence of the previous Mrs Rochester, who had been incarcerated within Thornfield Hall these fifteen years past.

Whilst rumours of an involuntary inmate of Thornfield have been circulating for some time, none guessed that she was the former Bertha Mason of Spanish Town, Jamaica, lawfully wedded to Mr Rochester. Her presence at the Hall was known to her brother, Mr Richard Mason, who, upon receiving news of Miss Eyre's impending marriage whilst staying with Miss Eyre's uncle John Eyre in Madeira, made all haste to return to England and engage the services of Mr Eyre's solicitor in London to prevent the marriage taking place.

Miss Eyre, being innocent of all wrongdoing in this matter, is known to have quit Thornfield Hall for parts unknown. Mr Rochester will be called before the magistrate on the charge of attempted bigamy in due course. Mrs Rochester, being of unsound mind, will remain at Thornfield Hall in the care of Mrs Poole of Millcote, who has nursed the patient for the last many years.

Manchester Guardian

Saturday 25th July 1829

Advertisements

David Warburton, Bookseller, is pleased to offer his clients the latest edition of *Marmion* by Sir Walter Scott, bound in fine green cloth, 6s. Also offered is the score of *St Matthew's Passion* by J. S. Bach, as recently performed in Berlin. Those with special interests will enjoy *Poems* by William Brent. Apply Ogden Lane, Didsbury

The Observer

15 August 1829

Births, Marriages and Deaths

DIED 6th inst, at his home in Funchal, Madeira, Mr John Eyre, Merchant, formerly of Manchester, after a long illness, aged 55.

Manchester Guardian

Saturday 22nd August 1829

Advertisements

A reward is offered to anyone having information on the whereabouts of JANE EYRE, of Lowood and Thornfield Hall. Contact Mr J Briggs, Caldwell Chambers, London.

Morton Standard

Saturday 5th September 1829

It is with great pleasure that we may report the opening of the new School for Poor Girls in Morton, created with the generosity of Mr Oliver and his family. Miss Elliot, the School Mistress, commenced on Tuesday inst with twenty scholars who are to learn the essential elements of reading, writing, ciphering and industrial skills. Miss Oliver has sponsored Alice Wood, whose parents perished from cholera last year, to be Miss Elliot's assistant in domestic matters. We have observed the classes and can confirm that the students seem eager to learn, and Miss Elliot is a capable and knowledgeable tutor. We wish Miss Elliot every success in this endeavour.

The Millcote Herald

Saturday September 19th 1829

FIRE

Conflagration at Thornfield Hall

Building completely destroyed

Death of Mrs Rochester

It is with considerable regret we announce the following distressing occurrence, On Wednesday, the 16th instant, about the hour of half past ten P.M., Thornfield Hall, the historical residence of Mr Rochester, near Hay, by some accident took fire. The property being some distance from the village, dry due to the warm Harvest weather, and filled with flammable ancient furniture and fabrics, the flames raged with ungovernable fury, and, notwithstanding the utmost exertions of the men servants and the fire engine from Hay, none of the property, with the exception of a very few trifling articles, and some provisions, which with considerable danger and difficulty, were thrown out of the windows, was saved. Every article in the upstairs apartments was consumed; and in the lower rooms nothing escaped except for the stone foundations and walls of the original medieval building around which the Hall had been built.

Mrs Rochester, having been confined to rooms at the top of the Hall, fell to her death from the roof during the conflagration, despite the efforts of Mr Rochester to save her. He had already valiantly assisted the servants in escaping from the blaze, but as he descended the main staircase after his wife's fall, the main hall collapsed and trapped him under some beams. The men of the Fire Brigade were able to extract him at great peril to themselves, but he had lost one eye, and one hand was crushed beyond hope. Both Mr Rochester and members of the Fire Brigade received serious burns, and even now their survival is not guaranteed. Mr Carter, the surgeon resident at Hay, is tending to the patients in his own house, and it is hoped that their recovery is fast and free from complications.

Manchester Guardian

Saturday 26th September 1829

Advertisements

A reward is offered to anyone having information on the whereabouts of JANE EYRE, of Lowood and Thornfield Hall. Contact Mr J Briggs, Caldwell Chambers, London.

Manchester Guardian

Saturday 24th October 1829

Advertisements

A reward is offered to anyone having information on the whereabouts of JANE EYRE, of Lowood and Thornfield Hall. Contact Mr J Briggs, Caldwell Chambers, London.

Moor House
Morton, ____shire
Sunday 8th November 1829

Dear Maria,

I am so very sorry for the silence. So much has happened, some good, some not. The important thing is that I am safe, I am living with friends (who happen to be cousins of mine, although I shall explain that afterwards), and my circumstances have so significantly changed that I feel quite a different woman from the one who last wrote to you in June.

You will notice the signature, and the return address on the enveloping sheet. I am *not* married to Mr Rochester. I am still Jane Eyre. I discovered on our wedding day that the strange woman in the hall, Grace Poole, was there employed as the caretaker for Bertha Rochester, Mr Rochester's wife. He has had her shut in the attic of the Hall these many years past, in secret, as she became insane not long after he married her fifteen years ago. He could not put her aside for he had sworn, as he intended to swear to me, *to honour, and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, only unto her, so long as they both shall live?* It is clear from Adele's history that he broke those vows in part, but just as a china cup may be only broken in part, so it is still not a whole cup any more. I thank providence and the timely interruption of the solicitor and of my uncle's friend Mr Mason, who was with my Uncle John Eyre in Madeira when my letter arrived telling my uncle of my impending marriage. Mr Mason I had met before – he is Mrs Rochester's brother, and the one that I thought Mrs Poole had attacked when he came to visit Mr Rochester last April. Of course, I know now that it was his *sister* who so cruelly injured him, although from what I could tell of my brief introduction to the lady, I do not think she knows what she is doing. Surely, if nothing else, being restrained in

that small pair of rooms for *fifteen years* would be enough to break the mind of any person.

I did not know what to do, Maria. I was not in my right mind. If I had thought through my circumstances, I should have come to you and asked for shelter and assistance. Instead, I fled, and was fortunate enough to obtain a seat on a coach that left me close to Morton. The minister here is a cousin I had no knowledge of, and Providence again led me to his door where he lives with his two sisters. I have family, Maria! I have three cousins close to my age, the children of my father's sister, and they too are related to my Uncle John in Madeira.

However, it is said that the Lord giveth, and he taketh away. Uncle John has died. I was warned by Mr Briggs (the solicitor) that his health was failing, and it was through that connection that I discovered that he died three months ago in Madeira. Alas that we never met! But in taking this new uncle from me, I have instead been told that I and my cousins are to receive his fortune, split between us. I have no need to work again if I do not need to! I have been, of course – Mr St John Rivers (my cousin) supervises a small school here in Morton where I have been teaching the local girls, but I will give this up in the New Year in order to put my life in order. If I live frugally (and when have I lived as anything else?) I have sufficient to keep me content.

Here I must apologise again for not telling you where I was. I wished to keep myself away from the notice of Mr Rochester, as I am persuaded that, should he discover my whereabouts, he would come and attempt to entice me away to live with him in an irregular manner. He did offer to make me his mistress. I cannot lie, Maria – to be kept in luxury and loved and adored, the temptation did try to call me but I managed to resist. But for a while at least, I would prefer not to have to put up those walls of virtue. I held out against the swift attack, but a long slow siege might be my doom. So even my cousins did not know who I was, nor was I aware of their connection with me, until an error on my part three nights ago revealed all.

And what now, Maria? What shall I do? I am not sure. I shall prepare Moor House for Christmas, and spend it with my new and beloved family. And after that? I do not know what Diana and Mary will do, but I am confident that St John will use his portion of the inheritance to become the missionary in India that he feels called to. He is very determined, quietly studious of Hindustanee. and has decided that within the year he shall set out on the hazardous voyage to that distant land.

I understand Mrs Fairfax from Thornfield has also been asking after me. I shall write to her, asking that she not tell Mr Rochester where I am (or indeed that she has heard from me).

But do please write and tell me I am forgiven for not going to you in my first time of difficulty.

Your friend

Still J.E.

The Audlem and District News

Saturday 21st November 1829

Unto us a child is born!

Audlem Parish welcomes Allan Nasmyth, son of the Rev. Mr George Nasmyth, minister of the Parish Church of St James the Great, Audlem, on Sunday 15th inst. The editors recognise that newborn children pay no attention to the exhortation to adhere to a day of rest, and are grateful for the safe delivery thereof.

Sheffield Register

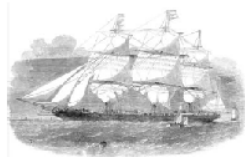
Saturday 13th February 1830

MARRIAGES

GRANBY – OLIVER: Mr James Granby, grandson to Sir Fredrick Granby of Sheffield, to Miss Rosamond Oliver, daughter of Mr William Oliver, manufacturer of Morton, on Tuesday 9th inst. The couple tour Europe for two months, including Paris and Rome, before taking up residence in Granby House in Leeds.

London Shipping News

Saturday March 6th, 1830



DEPARTURES

The ship MARQUIS OF LANSDOWNE, Master Captain Noyes, will Sail via Gibraltar, thence Cape Town, Calcutta, Batavia, and thus to Sydney, on or about the 20th June., and returns to this Port with all possible Despatch from there. Lieutenant Langdon will make liberal advances on Shipments of Cotton, Silks, Medicines, Books and Instruments, which will be warehoused, free of Expense, at the Stores of the undersigned.

The ship is fitted up for Passengers in very superior style, and carries an experienced Surgeon.

For Freight or Passage, apply to the undersigned
John Lord, 3 Fenchurch Ave.

Moor House
Morton, _____shire
Friday 21st May, 1830

Dear Maria,

Firstly, my most hearty congratulations on the birth of young Allan. I am pleased beyond belief that all went well, and that your recovery was boring and incident-free. I quite understand that any godmother would need to reside nearer than I do now: was that a hint? When I have finished everything here in Morton, I will certainly come and visit you and your good husband, and little Allan. I have enclosed a gown for him that should fit him for a goodly while yet.

Now, may I ask your advice? You were the closest thing to a mother to me for many years, and I have no-one else I might confide in.

I have mentioned my cousin St John, and his calling to be a missionary in India. He has asked me now, first to put aside my studies in German and instead to learn Hindustanee. Last week, though, I felt quite constrained by my surroundings and my life. I have been writing to Mrs Fairfax and Mr Briggs about Mr Rochester, and have had no satisfactory reply. Mr Briggs has no knowledge of his whereabouts, and Mrs Fairfax has not responded to my letters. I fell into a despondency, and St John (I feel) took advantage of my low spirits to try and encourage me to join him in India as a missionary. As his *wife*! I do not love him, Maria, and he does not love me – all he loves is his vocation and the future he sees doing good works in ministering to the heathens who prays to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut (do you remember Mr Brocklehurst invoking those when he called me a liar?), bringing them to God. It would destroy me to be the life partner of a man like that. I offered to come as his sister, but he says (and I am afraid I agree with him here) that it would not be possible. And yet I could not give my body and soul to his keeping, knowing he did not want my heart. But he says I am truly suited to such a life, and that I would make an excellent missionary's wife – and that he can see it is God's will that I should be one, and I should trust that God will show me the way.

I am afraid I do not trust God that way.

I was worried that if Mr Rochester knew where I was, that he would come and try and persuade me, entice me, lure me into immorality and a life with him.

I am now concerned that St John will attempt to coerce me into the life of a missionary's wife, to a life of sacrifice and duty and service that I do not feel the calling to.

Am I being selfish? Should I trust this man when he says he can tell that God has a place for me in India? Or should I trust to my own beliefs and heart, and remain here?

Your friend,
J.E.

Moor House
Morton, _____shire
Monday 31st May, 1830

Dear Maria,
I did not accept his offer.

St John attempted once more to move my heart, with a reading that made it sing with the need for redemption and service and whole-hearted dedication to the cause. He knew it. He asked me, once more, if I would join him, and I was so very close to agreeing when ...

It sounds strange to say it, but just as St John was calling upon God to show me the path, I heard a voice calling to me.

Not God.

But Mr Rochester.

It gave me the strength to resist St John's entreaties, and I was able to decline his offer of marriage and martyrdom finally and decisively – for I have no doubt that should I have gone to India, I would not have lasted a decade in that strange land.

St John leaves tomorrow for Cambridge. I shall not be with him. Instead, I shall seek out Mr Rochester. Something inside me requires me to verify that he is safe and well.

Your letter arrived just yesterday. Did I really accidentally send you a picture of Mr Rochester last June, when I sent my sketches from Gateshead? I did not know I was drawing it when I did, and certainly did not mean to send it to you either. But you are right. If I feel that strongly about him, I should at least ascertain his whereabouts and his physical state. Tomorrow I catch the coach from Whitcross back to Millcote, and I shall satisfy my curiosity. Then I shall surely carry on to Audlem, to see you.

Your friend,
J.E.



Ferndean Manor
Near Laneshawbridge, _____shire
Sunday 6th June, 1830

Dear Maria,
There was a fire. Mr Rochester was injured; his wife was killed. He has been living at Ferndean Manor since.

I am marrying him tomorrow. I could not be happier.

Alas, I will not be able to come and see you soon. But I shall tell you the rest of it when I can.

Your friend,
J.E. soon to be J.R.

The Colne Times

Saturday 12th June 1830

NOTICESMarriages

ROCHESTER – EYRE, by special licence on Monday 7th inst at St Bartholomew's Colne, Mr Edward de Fairfax Rochester of Thornfield Hall near Millcote to Miss Jane Eyre, lately of Morton.

Liverpool Advertiser

Saturday August 13th 1831

MARRIAGE

FITZJAMES - RIVERS, Captain Charles Fitzjames of His Majesty's Brig *Deliverance*, to Miss Diana Rivers of Morton, on 6th Inst.

The Observer

Saturday June 23th 1832

Births, Marriages and DeathsMARRIED

WHARTON – RIVERS On Saturday 16th Inst at St Botolph's, Rev Mr Michael Wharton to Miss Mary Rivers, daughter of Mr John Rivers of Morton and sister to Rev St John Rivers of the Mysore Christian Mission, India.

The Colne Times

Saturday 8th November 1834

NOTICESBIRTHS

ROCHESTER, Tuesday 4th inst, a son.

Smyths Weekly, Kirkby Lonsdale

Saturday 10th September 1836

ADVERTISEMENTS

W. Patten begs respectfully to inform his Friends and the Public, that he has Removed to number 14, Mitchelgate, Kirkby Lonsdale, opposite Mr Dawkins', where he trusts by assiduity to merit a continuance of their favours.

W. P. has now on Sale a variety of French and Italian Marble Chimney Pieces, consisting of French Travertine, Ditto Sienna, Ditto Black (Italian) Statuary, Vein and Dove. W.P. having imported these pieces in block, can now execute Chimney Pieces or Monuments to any design required; Tombs, Headstones, &c., neatly executed. Gentlemen having suitable stone on their own Estates, can have introduced it into the Drawing-room on reasonable terms. Plaster of Paris wholesale and retail.

The Observer

7th November 1840

Births, Marriages and Deaths

DIED 5th ult, at Trichinopoly, South India, Reverend Mr St John RIVERS, missionary, son of Mr Rivers of Morton, aged 40.



Author's note: This piece was written in response to prompts given to me for the writing fest *Unsent Letters on Archive of Our Own* (<https://archiveofourown.org/>). *Jane Eyre* has been a favourite of mine since childhood, so it was an easy choice and a delight to write. The process may have run away with itself in the process 😊.

All the advertisements bar two were researched on that delightful site Trove (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/>) and then amended to suit the locations and characters in the novel. I was highly amused to find out that one thing I had always thought rather far-fetched in the novel – the advertisement for a position with instructions to reply to J.E. at the post office – was actually commonplace in those days! The advertisement from the novel is one that of course I did not have to take from Trove; the other was the posting of the Banns. That was sometimes done as a notice actually pinned to a church's noticeboard, but not usually included in the local newspaper.

The dating of the incidents in the novel are based on the analysis of John Sutherland in *Can Jane Eyre be Happy?: More Puzzles in Classic Fiction*. While *Marmion* was originally published in 1808, that edition cost one and a half guineas (£1 11s 6d), the equivalent of 3/5 of a month's salary for Jane while at Thornfield (£30 p.a.). It is much more likely that St John Rivers gave Jane a cloth-bound copy, published in the 1820s for a cost of 6s (still half a week's salary for Jane but possibly not so costly for St John.).

With the Industrial Revolution barrelling on, bringing an influx of people to the towns, parishes were often split up to keep the congregations manageable for each pastor. Unfortunately, the "living" – the funds that would support each minister – would stay with the oldest part of the parish (with the original church), and the new parish's minister would be expected to make his living from the new congregation. These congregants would be the poorer factory workers and shop staff, who were also often less interested in their own spiritual health, leading to poor clergy working in unsanitary neighbourhoods. This obvious basis for Jane Eyre's parents led to the date of Jane's birth needing to be firmly in the 19th Century. Thus I went with the timeline listed at <https://sites.google.com/view/eyreguide/the-novel/timeline>.

There are many sites that can explain the possible real-life locations for Lowood, Millcote, Thornfield, Morton and Ferndean, so I tried to pick those that made the best sense with distances, coach routes and town size. The research was as exhaustive as I could make it, as I am someone for whom incorrect facts throw me right out of the story. (We shall not mention the Regency Romance that declared the summer of 1816 to be hotter than normal.) However, I did try not to make the facts the centre of the story. The centre is, and always will be, Jane Eyre's journey through life.



The Brontës: A Book Collector's Perspective

– By Professor Emeritus Chris Browne

This paper is based on a talk presented to the Australian Brontë Association in Sydney on Saturday 9th November 2024.

Introduction: Why I collect books by and about the Brontës.

My main interests as a book collector are centred on 19th century English literature. I collect fine, significant and interesting editions of the books and authors that I enjoy reading! My interest in the Brontës, however, starts from my early childhood experiences and my family history and heritage in the West Riding of Yorkshire. I have included a modern map of the West Riding here for readers not familiar with some of the geography.

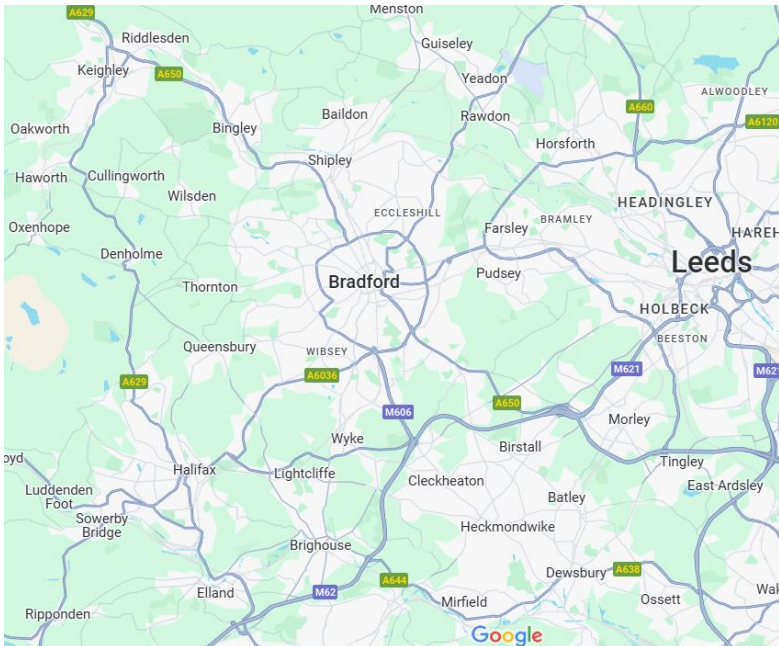


Figure 1. The West Riding of Yorkshire

My parents were both in the Royal Air Force, and in my early childhood, my father was often sent on postings where children were not permitted; indeed, for some of those postings, my mother was also not allowed to be with him.

When I was three years old in the early 1950s, my father was posted somewhere in the world where my mother could be with him, but children were not allowed, so I was left in England with my maternal grandmother. Although she had been born the daughter of a farmer in Kent, and had lived her early adult life in London, she was then living in a small cottage on the edge of moorland, just to the south of Pudsey in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It was a primitive dwelling, even for the early 1950s, having mains electricity, but no mains water, sewerage, gas or any other services. She had been evacuated to this cottage in 1940, following the destruction of her London house in the Blitz, and indeed remained there until she died in 1968. She had also transformed herself from a Southerner to a proper West Riding Yorkshirewoman, who had befriended many long-time locals who spoke in West Riding dialect, which she herself had learned and could speak fluently.

As a three-year-old from the south of England, I was completely bemused by the strange people who spoke in such a rough, gruff language which was barely discernible as English, and of which I could barely understand more than one word in ten. I had a second stay with her when I was 8 years old, when my parents were on another overseas posting, and on this occasion, despite my advancement in age and language skills, I was still completely flummoxed by the conversations in dialect.

One day, during this second stay, grandma took me and my cousin Pearl, who was also 8 years old, on a trip by bus and train to Haworth, where we visited the Brontë Museum, the church and graveyard, and had a memorable afternoon tea in a Haworth teashop,

about half-way up the steep, cobbled main street. Grandma explained to me all about the Brontë sisters and their famous books, so next week, on my weekly visit to the Pudsey Public Library, I duly borrowed a copy of *Jane Eyre* and read it with great pleasure, delighted that famous books could have originated in this rather strange region where I found myself living. I also realised that the current residents of the region remained very proud of the Brontës. The next week, I borrowed *Wuthering Heights*, which I must admit I completely failed to understand and appreciate, but in the words of Joseph I could recognise echoes of that strange dialect that my grandmother and her friends were still using.

That was my introduction to the Brontë sisters, and, on reflection many decades later, I realised that the living conditions in my grandmother's cottage were not all that much advanced over those of the Brontës, who had lived about ten miles and one hundred years away.

My second familial link to the Brontës, and one of the reasons for my lifelong interest in printing and publishing, was the fact that my paternal grandfather, George West Wardman-Browne, had been born in Mirfield, the site of the Roe Head school, in 1860. The house where he had been born was just across the Leeds-Huddersfield road from the site of the school, but is sadly no longer there. He moved with his family several miles north to Birstwith in Nidderdale in 1864, where his father, also called George, had been engaged as a gardener and coachman by a wealthy local family. George senior had been born nearby at Hampsthwaite in Nidderdale in 1834. By 1871, the family had moved back to Bingley in the West Riding, and in 1874 they were living in Cleckheaton, just north of Mirfield. That year my grandfather was apprenticed to a printer working on the Bradford Telegraph newspaper, and he was trained as a printer and compositor. He worked in Bradford and then Keighley in the printing trade, and after a six month stay in Wakefield Prison for stealing some books in Keighley,

he was back with his family, and living in Saltaire in Shipley in 1881, where he and two of his siblings were working in the Saltaire wool mill. By 1883, he was back working in printing and publishing, and by the mid-1880s, he had settled in West Hartlepool in Durham, where he had become a printer, journalist and the proprietor of a small local newspaper in nearby Seaton Carew.

Following this success, he returned to the West Riding to take over the local newspaper in Bramley in 1889, which he operated for a few years before moving to London and setting up a printing and publishing business in Islington in 1892. He ran this printing business for the rest of his life, until his death in 1942.

The family printing business involved his three children, including my father, in operating the business. My father, who worked as a printer, compositor and journalist for his father for the first 15 years of his working life, told me many tales of his experiences, which sparked my interest in the whole business of printing and publishing, which has underpinned my interest and approach to book collecting. He also told me that joining the RAF at the outbreak of the second world war was his honourable way of escaping having to work for his father!

This has been a longer introduction than I had intended, but I hope that it gives the reader a picture of the background to my interest in the creation and publication of the Brontës' works.

Book Collecting and the Brontës

There is an old adage in the world of book collecting that states "Before you can decide what to collect, you need to know what there is to collect." In practical terms, this means that you need to have access to authoritative and complete descriptions of relevant books known to exist. These can be found in specialist bibliographies. In my collecting of books by and relating to the Brontës, I have relied on two

bibliographies; the standard bibliography on books written by the Brontës, first published by Thomas J. Wise in 1917 and reprinted many times (Wise, 1965), and a comprehensive bibliography on books about the Brontës (Yablon and Turner, 1978). My copies of these are shown below in figures 2 and 3.

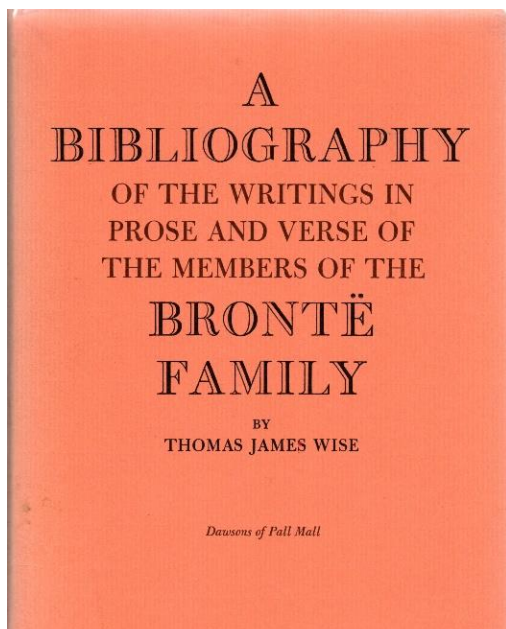
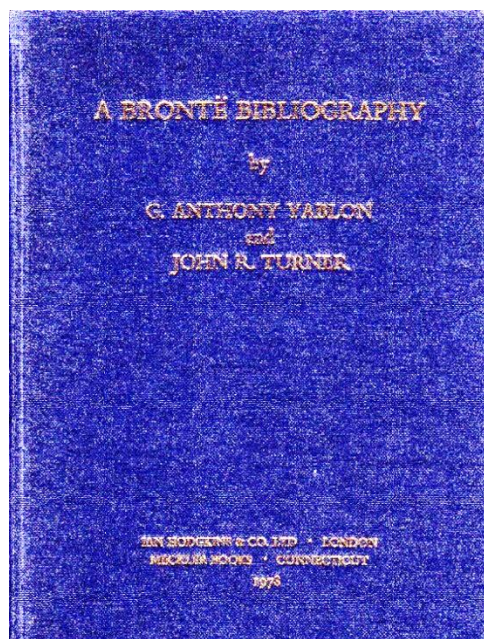


Figure 2. My 1965 reprint of the Wise Brontë bibliography.

Thomas James Wise (1859-1937) is a highly controversial figure. He was the leading bibliographer of his time, and was the president of the Bibliographic Society, as well as being a major book collector and part-time dealer in rare books. However, he has subsequently been revealed to have been a forger of rare books and a book thief, who stole pages from rare books in the British Library, which he sold to gullible collectors. Despite the exposure of the crimes of

Thomas J Wise, there is no doubt that this highly flawed man was a fine bibliographer, and his bibliographies of the Brontes have stood the test of time and have been reprinted many times. The first full account of Wise's activities was published by Wilfred Partington as "Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth" (Partington, 1946).



**Figure 3. *A Brontë Bibliography.*
Yablon and Turner, 1978.**

Yablon and Turner is structured as a listing, in alphabetical order, of 646 books about the Brontës, published between 1857 and 1978. Only the basic details of each publication are listed, but there is enough detail to identify each entry. There is no commentary or indeed brief comment on the entries other than a general classification indicating the nature of the book (biography, criticism, topography, drama etc). In the following discussion, all the valuations that I give for books are in Australian dollars.

Early books by the Brontë sisters

The first book to be published by the Brontë sisters was *Poems* by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, 1846. There are two states of the first edition of *Poems*. The first state was published by Aylott and Jones in 1846; the second state was published by Smith Elder and Co in 1848, although dated 1846.

The Brontë sisters had inherited £900 from their aunt Elizabeth Branwell who had died in 1842. In 1846, following the discovery by Charlotte of some of Emily's poems in the autumn of 1845, the three sisters agreed to publish a collection of poems contributed by all three of them. The sisters elected to publish using the pseudonyms Currer,

Ellis and Acton Bell in order to hide their identities and disguise their gender.

The project was very much managed by Charlotte, who wrote to the publisher Chambers in Edinburgh to seek advice on how to get their poems into print. Charlotte then wrote to Aylott and Jones, of Paternoster Row, London in January 1846, agreed terms with them in early March, and had approved the second proof of the poems by the middle of that month. One thousand copies of the poems were printed, and were offered for sale at 4 shillings in June 1846. A positive review, particularly of Emily's poems, was published in *The Athenaeum* on 4th July 1846.

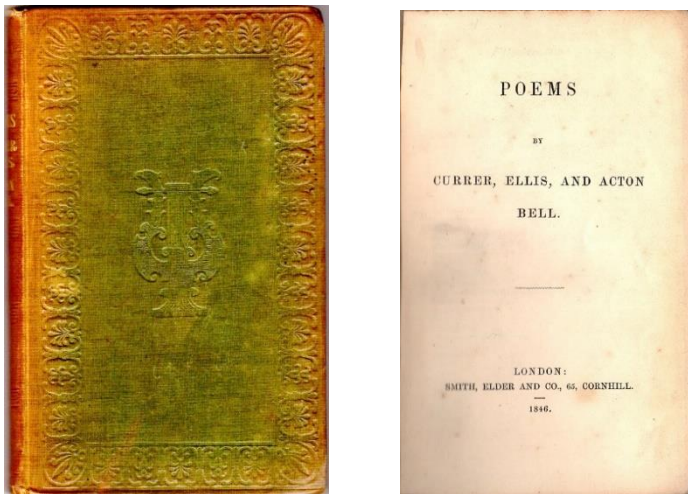
The whole enterprise had cost the sisters £46.10s, of which £10 was to be applied to advertising. This cannot have been well managed, as only two copies sold in the 12 months following publication. A further 37 copies had been given away to friends, family and some literary notables, including Tennyson, Lockhart and possibly Thackeray. This first state or first issue - both terms are used - remains one of the rarest and most highly desirable books in English literature. The most recent copy to come to auction was at Sotheby's in London in 1986, where it sold for £8000, about \$15,000. My guess would be that any complete copy in reasonable condition would sell today for more than \$100,000.

Intriguingly, a copy of the first state of *Poems* had been owned by Charles Dickens, as a copy is listed in the sale catalogue of his personal library in June 1870. It sold for 1 guinea (£1.1s.) and its current whereabouts is unknown. My guess is that it was probably given to Dickens by Thackeray, who had formed a friendship with Charlotte Brontë.

The *Poems* were however to enjoy a renaissance. Following their highly successful publication of *Jane Eyre* in October 1847, Smith Elder were keen to publish more work by Currer Bell, and so

they purchased the roughly 950 unsold, printed but unbound sheets of *Poems* from Aylott and Jones, added their own title page, still dated 1846, and published the second state of the first edition of the *Poems* in 1848. We call this the second state of the first edition because, other than the title page, all the other pages of the book were part of the same batch of printing as the first state published by Aylott and Jones in 1846. Therefore, in book parlance, it is the second state, not the second impression. The poems sold well on the back of the fame that the sisters were accruing as the authors of their novels, and a second, revised and extended edition was eventually printed and published by Smith Elder in 1860.

In the figure below, you can see my copy of the second state of *Poems* in the original cloth as published by Smith Elder, together with the 1848 title page dated 1846. We call this a “cancel” title page in book-speak, as a newer version has replaced the original Aylott and Jones title page.



***Figure 4. Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell.
Second state 1846/1848***

There is evidence that the poems were reviewed, presumably by Charlotte, as this second state contains a small “*errata*” slip, in which four words in four different poems have been corrected. The presence of the *errata* slip is an important part of the book. Its absence means that the book is incomplete, and therefore less valuable.

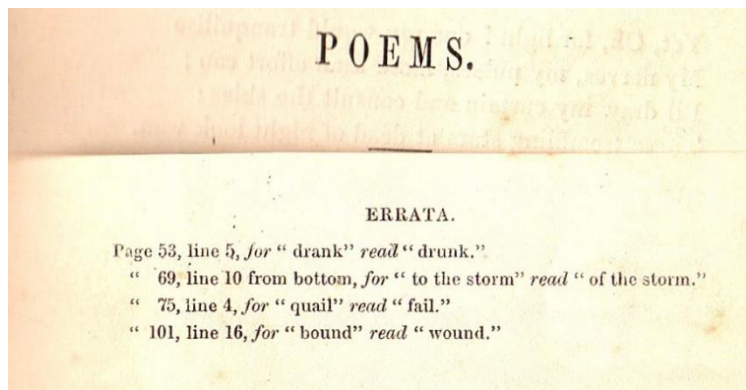


Figure 5. Errata slip from second state of Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell 1848.

The current value for a complete copy of the second state of the *Poems* in the original publishers binding in very good condition would be around \$15,000. For a rebound, incomplete copy lacking the errata slip, the value would be closer to \$3000.

Novels of Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë published three novels in her lifetime: *Jane Eyre* in 1847, *Shirley* in 1849 and *Villette* in 1853. Following her death in March 1855, the first novel that she had completed, *The Professor*, was published in 1857; in addition, an incomplete fragment of a novel called *Emma* was published in 1860. All the first English editions of

these novels were published by Smith Elder in London, while Harper and Brothers published the first American editions in New York.

I will start by considering Charlotte's first published novel, which has always been generally regarded as her greatest book, *Jane Eyre*. Although both of Charlotte's sisters had their first novels accepted for publication before *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte's masterpiece was the first novel to be published by a Brontë sister. 500 copies of *Jane Eyre* were issued in three volumes on October 16th 1847 by Smith Elder, & Co., for sale at the standard price of 31s.6d.

For most of the 19th century, English publishing was characterised by the three-volume novel, generally known as a "triple-decker". The publishing world was dominated by the needs of the subscription libraries, of which Mudies was the largest and most influential. These libraries generally charged an annual subscription fee of £1.00, followed by a charge of 6d. for each volume borrowed. The idea was that you borrowed volume 1 of *Jane Eyre* for sixpence, and then, if you liked it, spent two more sixpences to borrow and read volumes 2 and 3. Since the subscription libraries got a huge discount from the publishers on the purchase price of novels, which they often brought in very large numbers, absorbing most of the first edition of many books, this was a very profitable business. Only the wealthiest members of English society could afford to spend 31s.6d. for a book, so the middle and professional classes would rely on the subscription libraries as a source of their reading.

This model of book availability also means that not many copies of the early editions have survived to present times. The books were literally "read to death" by the public, and, in the main, the only surviving copies are those that had been bought by the wealthy upper classes. This is why such books are scarce and highly prized by collectors, and are therefore expensive. It is also why many of the

copies that have survived bear the bookplates or inscribed names of notable people.

A parallel situation persisted into the 20th century, where the first editions of the first book of unknown authors were published in small print runs, many of which were then purchased by the English Public Library system and “read to death”. This is why the first edition of the first James Bond book *Casino Royale*, published in 1953, and the first edition of the first Harry Potter book, published in 1997 are both very scarce and very valuable. The demise of the English Public Library system in the 21st century, due to budgetary austerity from Westminster, may have caused an end to this phenomenon.

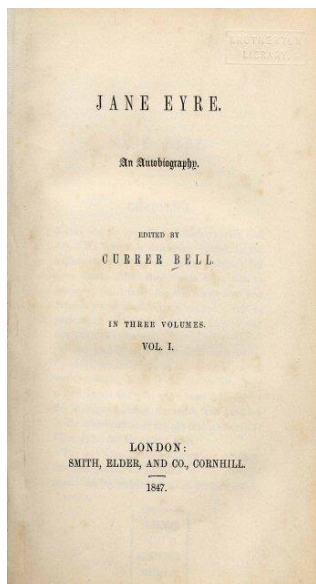


Figure 6. Title page from volume 1 of the first edition of *Jane Eyre*

Returning to *Jane Eyre*, the title page of volume 1 of the first edition is shown in Figure 6. It is interesting that on the title page, *Jane Eyre* is described as “An Autobiography, edited by Currer Bell”. The phrase “Edited by Currer Bell” also appears on the spine of the original publisher’s binding of all three volumes. This was the second appearance of Charlotte’s pseudonym in a book, following the publication of the *Poems* by the three sisters in 1846, but due to the poor sales of the *Poems*, it was the publication of *Jane Eyre* that brought Currer Bell to the public’s attention.

Jane Eyre was a publishing sensation; all 500 copies sold out within a month, and the book attracted great critical attention and caused much speculation about the identity and the gender of the author. A second edition was

immediately prepared for publication, and this, in the same format and price as the first edition, appeared on 21st December 1847, although it had 1848 printed on the title page. This was a common strategy of 19th century publishers for books published in December; it had happened to the first edition of Jane Austen's posthumous novels *Northanger Abbey/Persuasion*, which had been published in December 1817 but were dated 1818. The post-dating made the books seem still current in the new year.

The first edition of *Jane Eyre* had not included a preface, but Charlotte produced a three-page preface for the second edition. It starts:

"A preface to the first edition of "Jane Eyre" being unnecessary, I gave none: this second edition demands a few words of acknowledgement and miscellaneous remark."

She then proceeds to offer rather brief thanks to "The Public", "The Press" and "My Publishers", before devoting the next two pages to an essay in praise of William Makepeace Thackeray, which ends as follows:

"Finally; I have alluded to Mr. Thackeray, because to him- if he will accept the tribute of a total stranger- I have dedicated this second edition of "Jane Eyre."

CURRER BELL

This is reinforced by a dedication page which is printed in volume one of the book and reads:

TO

W.M. THACKERAY, Esq.

This work

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR

On the title pages of the second edition, “Edited by Currer Bell” has been changed to “by Currer Bell”, but, presumably due to an oversight, “Edited by Currer Bell” still appears on the spine of all three volumes. The second edition also sold well, so a third edition was published in April 1848, also including the preface and the dedication page, which have been retained in most subsequent editions of *Jane Eyre*. The third edition also included a brief disclaimer where Charlotte insists that Currer Bell is only the author of *Jane Eyre* and not any other novels; this was clearly to address confusion around the identities of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell.

An estimate of the current values of the first, second and third edition on *Jane Eyre* is quite easy to make as copies of all three editions come up for sale regularly. A first edition of *Jane Eyre* would cost between \$80,000 and \$150,000, depending on the binding and the overall condition. A second edition would cost close to \$50,000 and a third edition around \$15,000.

Shirley was the second novel to be published by Charlotte Brontë. It was published by Smith Elder in 3 volumes for 31s 6d. in October 1849. On the title page, it is described as “*Shirley / A Tale / by Currer Bell / Author of Jane Eyre.*” In this standard bibliographic notation, the forward slash (/) indicates a line break. This was the only triple-decker edition of *Shirley* published in England, in contrast to the three triple-decker editions of *Jane Eyre*. A second, single volume edition was published by Smith Elder in 1852 for 6s. This edition was reprinted two or three more times before a cheaper (2s 6d.) edition was published in 1857.

My first edition of *Shirley* is not in the original publisher’s cloth, which was a blind-stamped claret-coloured cloth. Rather, my copy had been rebound in a handsome half-binding of marbled boards with dark brown morocco leather, probably shortly after the time of publication. In my experience, copies of the first editions of both *Jane*

Eyre and *Shirley* are more commonly found rebound than in the original publisher's cloth binding. *Shirley* at 928 pages is very slightly longer than *Jane Eyre* at 919 pages of the same size, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, which is called "post octavo." Both books were printed for Smith Elder by the same printer, Stewart & Murray at the Old Bailey.

I also have two other significant early editions of *Shirley*: a two-volume edition printed (in English) and published in Leipzig in Germany by Tauchnitz in 1849: and a single volume edition printed and published in New York by Harper & Brothers in 1850. These are the first European edition and the first American edition respectively.

Throughout the 19th century, Bernard Tauchnitz of Leipzig would obtain licences from the English copyright holder of most of the significant novels published in the UK, which allowed him to publish and sell his books legally in English in continental Europe, but not in the UK, the British Empire or North America. By this means, the works of British authors obtained excellent exposure across Europe, which enhanced both their sales and their fame, and often led to the translation of their works into European languages. Tauchnitz published all of the Brontë novels, shortly after their first publication in the UK. My Tauchnitz edition of *Shirley* has the two volumes rebound into a single volume, which was commonly done with Tauchnitz editions.

Harper & Brothers published all the first American editions of the Brontë novels. Harpers, as they are loosely known, were the leading New York publisher of the 19th century. They were founded by two brothers, John and James Harper, who published using the imprint "J. & J. Harper" from 1819 to 1833. In 1828, their two younger brothers, Joseph and Fletcher Harper joined the firm. In 1833 the imprint was changed to "Harper & Brothers", an imprint that was used until 1962, when the firm took over another New York publisher, Row,

Peterson & Company, and changed their imprint to “Harper & Row”, a name that persisted until 1998, when the firm was taken over by News Corporation, combined with a UK publisher and renamed “Harper Collins”, a name which is still used today.

The joke circulating in the New York publishing world was that when Harper & Brothers was formed in 1833, both John and James thought that they were the Harper and the other was included in the “Brothers” in the imprint. Smith Elder had a good relationship with Harper & Brothers, which was why Harpers were the main publisher for the Brontës in America. However, this did not stop other less scrupulous American publishers from producing pirated editions of the Brontë novels.

My copy of the first American edition of *Shirley* is in the original cloth binding that Harper & Brothers used, which has lasted now for nearly 175 years, and is still in very good condition.

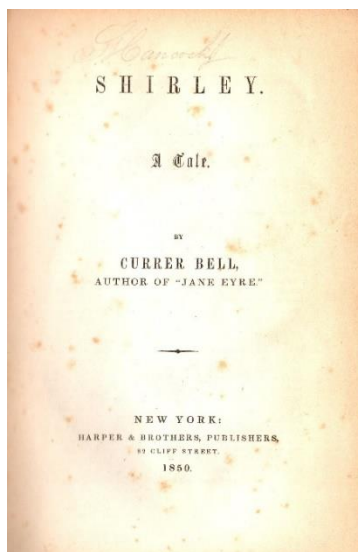
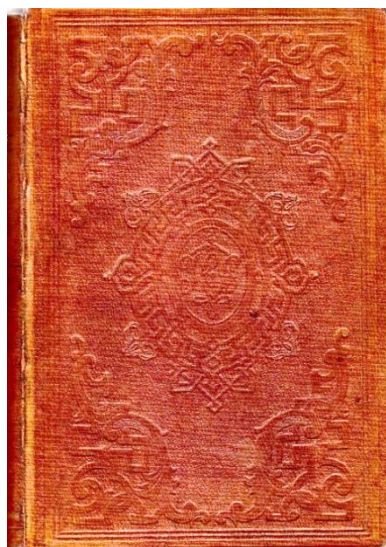


Figure 7. Original binding and title page of 1st American edition of Shirley.

The three-volume first English edition of *Shirley* of 1849 is worth between \$2000 and \$5000; my copy is probably worth somewhere at the lower end, as the binding is mid-19th century but not original. My rebound 1848 Tauchnitz edition of *Shirley* would be worth around \$500, and my first American edition of 1850 would be worth around \$1500-\$2000, closer to the high end because of the original binding and what would be called “good plus to very good” overall condition.

Wuthering Heights

Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë was published together with *Agnes Grey* by Anne Brontë by Thomas Newby in December 1847. The two books had been accepted for publication by Thomas Newby before *Jane Eyre* had been written. At that time, Charlotte Brontë was still trying to find a publisher for her first manuscript, which eventually was published posthumously as *The Professor* in 1857. However, Newby was slower to publish *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* than Smith Elder was in handling *Jane Eyre*. The two books were eventually published by Thomas Newby on 4th December 1847 in a very small edition of 250 copies, half the size of the first edition of *Jane Eyre*. They were published as a triple-decker, with *Wuthering Heights* filling the first two volumes in 764 pages and *Agnes Grey* the third volume in 363 pages. All three volumes were printed by Thomas Newby, rather than given to a third-party printer. The page count means that the combined two works were about 200 pages longer than both *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*, or looked at a different way, *Wuthering Heights* was about 150 pages shorter than *Jane Eyre*.

The title page of volume one of the first edition of *Wuthering Heights* was slightly misleading, as Newby announces it as “Wuthering Heights / A Novel / by / Ellis Bell / in Three Volumes / Vol I /”. Readers might have expected to find *Wuthering Heights* as a three-

volume novel, when in fact it only occupies two volumes. The title page of the third volume announces “Agnes Grey / A Novel / by / Acton Bell / Vol. III/”.

Wuthering Heights attracted much attention and comment when it was published. It is a little hard today to appreciate its strangeness to the mid-19th century readers. Reviewers variously called it “coarse”, “rough”, and “immoral”. One American reviewer called it “a compound of vulgar depravity and unnatural horrors.” However, some did recognise the power and turmoil so forcefully evoked.

Thomas Newby did not publish a second edition. The first edition is exceedingly scarce. I have not seen a copy for sale since 2007. On that occasion, a copy was auctioned by Bonhams in London, where it sold for £114,000, about \$225,000 Australian. If one did emerge today, I would be confident that it would sell for between \$350,000 and \$500,000. It is hard to be accurate in this case, when there is no more recent auction price on the record.

The second English edition of *Wuthering Heights* was not published until 1850, which was unfortunately after both Emily and Anne Brontë had died. It was published as the first two volumes of a triple-decker, together with *Agnes Grey* as the third volume, exactly as the first edition had been published. The second edition was published by Smith Elder, rather than Thomas Newby. Charlotte Brontë had a major role in the publication, writing a biographical note explaining the identities of Acton, Currer and Ellis Bell and a preface where she gives her views on *Wuthering Heights*. She also edited the text. The title page of the second edition of *Wuthering Heights* is shown below, where the preface and biographical notice are mentioned, together with some “literary remains” of the two sisters.

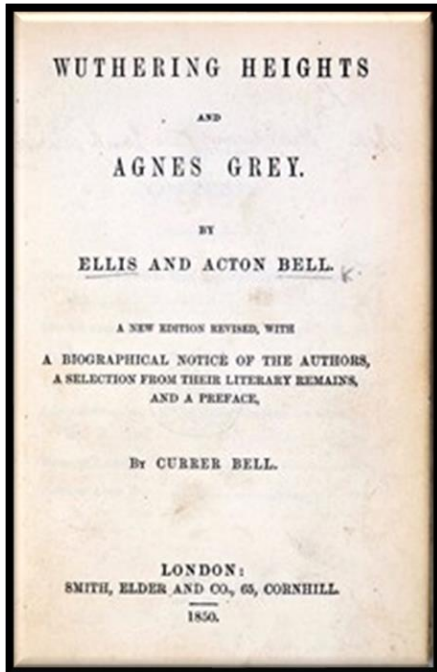


Figure 8. The title page of the second English edition of *Wuthering Heights* (1850)

The Biographical Notice starts with the following two sentences by Charlotte. *"It has been thought that all the works published under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell were, in reality, the production of one person. On this occasion, I am advised distinctly to state how the case really stands."*

It is interesting that despite the true names of the three sisters being revealed, the title page still refers to the three pseudonyms. Perhaps this was done by the new publisher to allow continuity with the first edition and to minimise any possible confusion among the readers.

The preface contains some of Charlotte's best non-fiction prose, and is a very interesting and revealing essay on her late sister's masterpiece. I have reproduced several extracts below. All are taken from the text in the preface of the second edition. This preface has been reprinted many times in later editions of *Wuthering Heights*, and I would urge all readers to read it closely.

Its starts with a section giving some background to the wild and disturbing nature of *Wuthering Heights*

"I have just read over *Wuthering Heights*, and, for the first time, have obtained a clear glimpse of what are termed (and, perhaps, really are) its faults; have gained a definite notion of how it appears to other people - to strangers who knew

nothing of the author; who are unacquainted with the locality where the scenes of the story are laid; to whom the inhabitants, the customs, the natural characteristics of the outlying hills and hamlets in the West Riding of Yorkshire are things alien and unfamiliar.”

“To all such *Wuthering Heights* must appear a rude and strange production. The wild moors of the North of England can for them have no interest: the language, the manners, the very dwellings and household customs of the scattered inhabitants of those districts must be to such readers in a great measure unintelligible, and - where intelligible - repulsive.”

Charlotte goes on to comment on Emily and her somewhat secluded life.

“With regard to the rusticity of *Wuthering Heights*, I admit the charge, for I feel the quality. It is rustic all through. It is moorish, and wild, and knotty as a root of heath. Nor was it natural that it should be otherwise; the author being herself a native and nursling of the moors. Doubtless, had her lot been cast in a town, her writings, if she had written at all, would have possessed another character. Even had chance or taste led her to choose a similar subject, she would have treated it otherwise.”

“Had Ellis Bell been a lady or a gentleman accustomed to what is called ‘the world,’ her view of a remote and unreclaimed region, as well as of the dwellers therein, would have differed greatly from that actually taken by the home-bred country girl. Doubtless it would have been wider -more comprehensive: whether it would have been more original or more truthful is not so certain.”

Charlotte then discusses the character of Heathcliff, which had caused considerable controversy at the time.

“Heathcliff, indeed, stands unredeemed; never once swerving in his arrow-straight course to perdition, from the time when ‘the little black-haired swarthy thing, as dark as if it came from the Devil,’ was first unrolled out of the bundle and set on its feet in the farmhouse kitchen...”

“Heathcliff betrays one solitary human feeling, and that is *not* his love for Catherine; which is a sentiment fierce and inhuman: a passion such as might boil and glow in the bad essence of some evil genius; a fire that might form the tormented centre - the ever-suffering soul of a magnate of the infernal world: and by its quenchless and ceaseless ravage effect the execution of the decree which dooms him to carry Hell with him wherever he wanders. No; the single link that connects

Heathcliff with humanity is his rudely-confessed regard for Hareton Earnshaw - the young man whom he has ruined; and then his half-implied esteem for Nelly Dean.”

Finally, Charlotte creates a splendid metaphor for the novel, drawing on the wildness of the local landscape.

“*Wuthering Heights* was hewn in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials. The statuary found a granite block on a solitary moor; gazing thereon, he saw how from the crag might be elicited a head, savage, swart, sinister; a form moulded with at least one element of grandeur - power. He wrought with a rude chisel, and from no model but the vision of his meditations.”

“With time and labour, the crag took human shape; and there it stands colossal, dark, and frowning, half statue, half rock: in the former sense, terrible and goblin-like; in the latter, almost beautiful, for its colouring is of mellow grey, and moorland moss clothes it; and heath, with its blooming bells and balmy fragrance, grows faithfully close to the giant’s foot.”

— CURRER BELL

I hope that these extracts will encourage you to go back and read the preface in full.

A third English edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* was published in 1858 by Smith Elder in a cheap single volume “Uniform Edition” of the works of the Brontë sisters. It contains all the elements printed in the second edition. I will be saying a little about the Uniform Edition below. The second and third editions of *Wuthering Heights* are less scarce and so considerably more affordable than the first edition. Copies of the second edition in reasonable condition command prices in the range \$7000 to \$12,000, whereas the third edition can be found for between \$3000 and \$5000.

The first American edition of *Wuthering Heights* was published by Harper & Brothers on 21st April 1848, about four months after the English first edition. I show the title page below in Figure 9, where the by line has been printed, BY THE AUTHOR OF “JANE EYRE”. It is thought that 1000 copies of this edition were printed as a rather flimsy single volume. The error in the byline is probably due to some sleight of hand by the English publishers of the Brontës. It certainly

adds to the desirability for all Brontë collectors of this first American edition, which generally costs between \$10,000 and \$25,000. The error was corrected by Harpers in the second and subsequent editions.

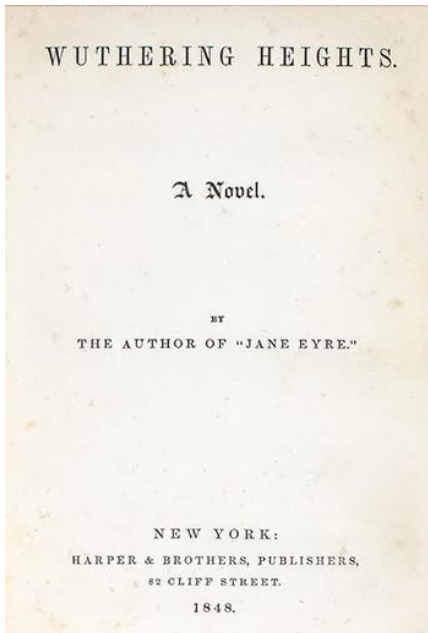


Figure 9. Title page of the first American edition of *Wuthering Heights* (1848)

This was the first truly inexpensive edition of the works of the sisters to be published in England. Although there had been single volume editions of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* costing 6s. published earlier, in 1857 Smith Elder started to publish all of the then known works of the Brontë sisters in cheap single volume editions priced at 2s 6d. each. They started in 1857 with *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*, the three novels by Charlotte that Smith Elder had published during her lifetime. They followed this with *Wuthering Heights*/*Agnes Grey* in 1858 and *The Professor* /*Poems* in 1860. In my copy of the single volume *The Professor* /*Poems*,

there is an advertisement for *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* in the 2s 6d. Uniform Edition, but after years of searching, I have never found or seen a copy. It is known that Smith Elder purchased the copyright of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* in 1859, and the advertisement cited above seems to indicate an intention to publish a cheap Uniform Edition, perhaps in 1860 or 1861. My copy of Smith Elder's 1873 "New Edition" of *Wuthering Heights* also lists a 2s 6d. edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, so I must assume that they did eventually publish it.

The reason for publishing *The Professor* later than the other Charlotte Brontë titles would have been that a fully-priced two-volume first edition of *The Professor* was not published until 1857, two years after Charlotte's death. Time had to be allowed to allow readers to buy this before the publishers would consider publishing a cheap edition. It is also notable that the other title published in 1857 by Smith Elder was Mrs Gaskell's "Life of Charlotte Bronte", which is heavily advertised in all the Uniform Editions of the sisters' work.

Time has not been kind to the original binding of the Uniform Editions, which used an orange paper-covered board that has tended to become rather dirty and scratched in the last 170 years. In Figure 10, I show my copies of the five volumes of the Uniform Edition. It should be noted that *Wuthering Heights*, *Shirley* and *Villette* are the 3rd English editions overall, and that *The Professor* /*Poems* are the second English editions of these titles. *Jane Eyre* is the sixth English edition.

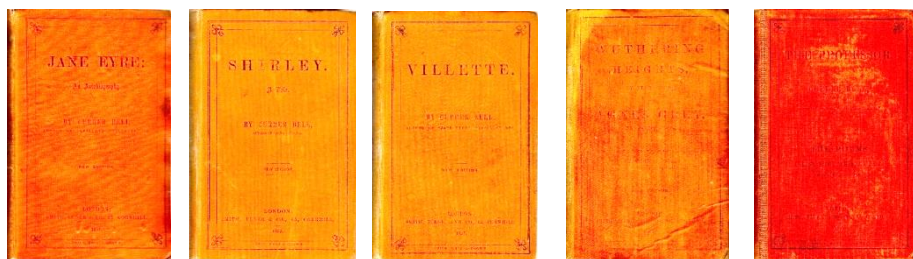


Figure 10. The Uniform Editions 1857-1860.

What books should a would-be Brontë collector consider?

I have spent the first part of this paper showing that the early editions of the novels by the Brontë sisters are both scarce and expensive. Is there an approach to collecting in this area that is realistic and affordable? I have three suggestions:

1. Collect illustrated editions of the novels.
2. Collect books about the Brontë family.
3. Collect Brontë juvenilia.

There have been many illustrated editions of the Brontë novels over the past 150 years or so. They make a fascinating focus for collecting. Similarly, there have been many books about the lives and writing of the Brontës, and even some books extending the narratives. The juvenilia have been known about for many years now. Thanks to the fantastic work of Christine Alexander and others, there are now readily available, high-quality editions of these works that make fascinating collecting. Some of them have also been illustrated, perhaps making them doubly collectable.

To illustrate these approaches I will just discuss and show here a few of illustrated editions of *Wuthering Heights* from my collection. I could equally well have chosen *Jane Eyre*, which has also been widely published in illustrated forms, and even for *Shirley*, I continue to find illustrated editions.

Illustrated editions of *Wuthering Heights*

The earliest illustrated edition of *Wuthering Heights* that I have found was published by Smith Elder in 1875, as part of a complete seven volume edition of illustrated Brontë novels. This edition followed a seven-volume set of the Brontë novels that was published by Smith Elder between 1867 and 1869; that was the first set published in green cloth decorated with black and gold, a colour scheme that Smith Elder retained until the end of the 19th century. The 1860s set was also the first occasion when the proper Brontë family names were

used for the authors, rather than the Bell pseudonyms. This practice also continued for the remainder of the 19th century. The 1875 *Wuthering Heights* was illustrated with wood engravings of houses that may have been the inspiration for places mentioned in the novel. A similar practice was also employed for the other novels in this first illustrated set.

The earliest *Wuthering Heights* that I have that is illustrated with scenes from the novel was published by J. M. Dent and Company of London in 1896. This was part of a complete set of Brontë titles published in a red cloth binding in 12 volumes. Dent was able to publish this set because the copyright on all the Brontë novels had expired by the mid-1890s. The sepia illustrations, drawn by B. S. Grieg and engraved by Water Colls, are rather dull in their execution and are clearly inspired by a similarly illustrated set of Jane Austen's novels that had been published by Dent in 1892. Dent improved on this set with another Brontë set published in 1905, this time with illustrations in colour by Edmund Dulac, a highly regarded Anglo-French artist. The illustrations from the two Dent sets are shown in Figure 11 below. Edmund Dulac (1882-1953) was particularly famous for illustrations of exotic and imaginary scenes. His illustrations for *The Arabian Nights* (1907) and *The Tempest* (1908) were among his most famous work in colour, but I feel that his illustrations for the Brontë novels, which was his first commissioned work in England, have not quite been as successful as his later efforts.

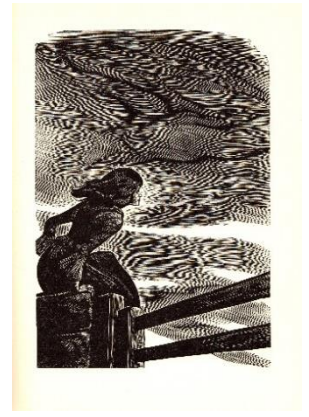
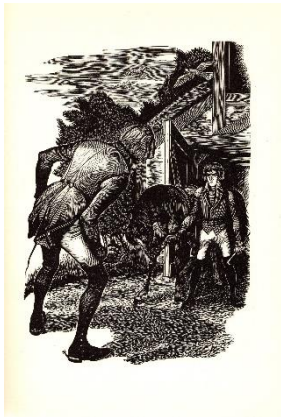
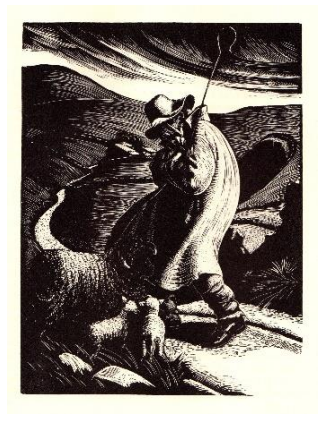
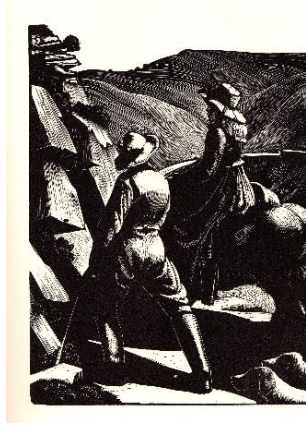
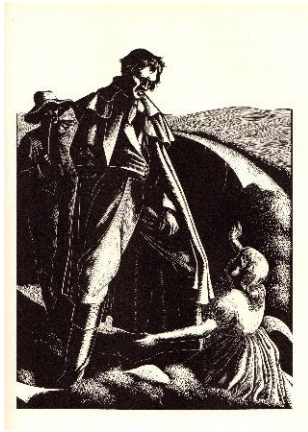


Figure 11. Illustrations in Dent's *Wuthering Heights*: 1896 (upper) and 1905 (lower)

A somewhat more satisfactory set of coloured illustrations of *Wuthering Heights* was created by the artist Percy Tarrant for an edition published by George Harrap in London in 1924, as part of a series of illustrated English classics. These have a pleasing 18th century feel, but perhaps fail to capture the grandeur and menace of the novel.

The most successful illustrated edition of *Wuthering Heights* that I have found to date is a 1931 edition published by Random House in New York. It features twelve dramatic woodcuts by the excellent English wood engraver Claire Leighton, one of the leaders of the British wood engraving renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s. Leighton's illustrations do real justice to the text and capture the wildness of the moorlands and the hardiness of the West-Riding hill farmers. Many collectors regard this volume as the most desirable of all the illustrated versions of *Wuthering Heights*. Furthermore, the look and feel of Leighton's woodcuts is said to have had a major influence on the design of the sets for the 1939 film version starring Lawrence Olivier and Merle Oberon.

Random House published another successfully illustrated edition of *Wuthering Heights* in 1943, which featured dramatic woodcut illustrations by an American wood engraver, Fritz Eichenberg. His illustrations were more dramatic than those of Leighton and were indeed at times terrifying. Examples of both artists are shown below.



***Figure 12. Illustrations of Wuthering Heights
published by Random House Claire Leighton (upper row)
and Fritz Eichenberg (lower row)***

An intriguing copy of Jane Eyre from 1875

The final book that I will discuss is a copy of Jane Eyre from the 1875 illustrated seven-volume set published by Smith Elder that I mentioned above. I obtained this book in February 2024 in the UK. The illustrations are of real buildings, known to Charlotte Brontë, that may have inspired some of the locations in Jane Eyre, such as Thornfield Hall and Moor House. But the main interest of this copy of Jane Eyre is that it is an “association copy”, that is a copy with a direct connection with the author, even though it was published 20 years after her death.

The first clue is an ownership signature in pencil which reads “John Herbert Ralph Barlow”, with the date 1878 written in the same hand, also in pencil, on the free front endpaper. Family history research reveals that this was the Reverend John Herbert Ralph Barlow B.A, a Church of England clergyman born in Ireland, making a nice parallel with Patrick Brontë, father of the three famous sisters. John Herbert Ralph Barlow was born in Dublin on 26th April 1852 to James Thomas Barlow and Maria Dorothea Bushe. In 1878, he was studying at Oxford for his B.A., and was recorded as still living in Headington, Oxford in the 1881 census. He served in England as a clergyman for the rest of his life. He never married or had any children and died on 1st April 1920 at Bovey Tracy in Devon at the age of 67. He had a single sibling, a younger brother, Charles Mervyn Barlow, who joined the army and retired as a Major in the Royal Artillery, married late in life and, like his brother, left no children. Major Charles Barlow RA died in rural Worcestershire in 1934.

I have given these details because inside the book, I found two photos which are shown below. The first photo shows three women dressed in the style of the late nineteen twenties, who are standing on

a sandy beach with a palm tree in the background. The women are marked with the numbers 1, 2 and 3. The second photo is a head-and-shoulders portrait of a woman. Fortunately, each photo is inscribed on the back. The first photo is dated “Juan-les-Pins – 6th Sept. 1928. Juan-les-Pins was, and still is, a fashionable resort on the French Riviera, 13km west of Nice, close to Antibes. The three women can be identified by the numbers written on the front of the photo: The woman on the right is identified as Kate C Barlow. The woman in the centre is identified as Anna Bronte, and the woman on the left is identified as Emilie (*sic*) Bronte. Beneath the names, someone has written “1st cousins of the famous Brontes”. The ink and the handwriting of the inscription with the names and the inscription with the date seem to indicate a different hand. The second photo is inscribed on the back in another hand as follows: “Emily Bronte friend of Lily α Katy”.



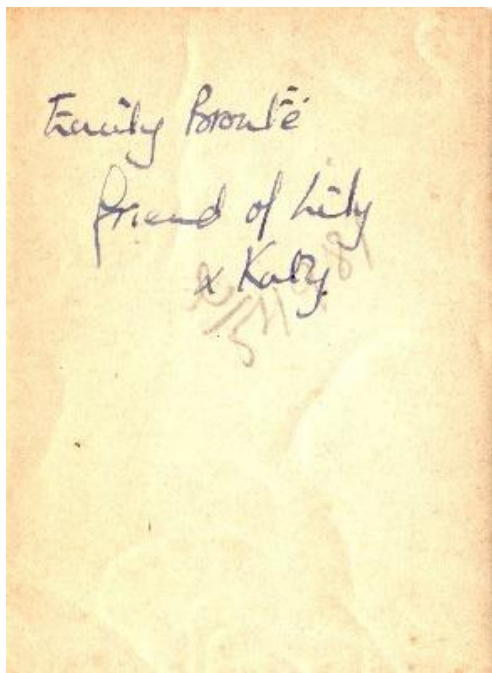
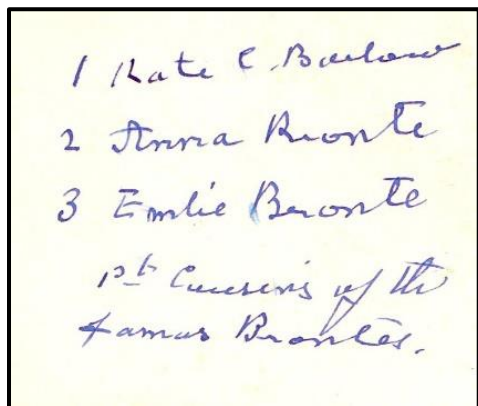


Figure 13. The Brontë photographs and their inscriptions.

My incomplete investigations have allowed me to identify the two Brontë women as Anna Isabella Brontë (1868-1962) and Emily Kate Brontë (1876-1960). Their closest ancestor in common to the three famous Brontë sisters was Hugh Brontë or Brunty, the father of Patrick Brontë and therefore the grandfather of Charlotte, Emily and Anne. Hugh was the great-great-grandfather of the two Brontë women in the photos, which, in genealogical parlance, makes these two women second cousins, twice removed with respect to the “famous Brontës”. Their great-grandfather was William Brontë, the brother of Patrick Brontë. William was the second son of Hugh Brontë, whereas Patrick was the eldest son.

A few other thoughts and observations need to be recorded here. John Ralph Herbert Barlow had died in 1920, and so could not

have written inscriptions on a photo dated 1928. His brother, Charles, was still alive in 1928, so he could have inherited the book, following John's death, and could have been involved in the inscriptions. Katy C Barlow must be a relative of John Ralph Herbert Barlow, but John Barlow and his brother Charles had neither children, nor any other siblings.

At the time of my talk on 9th November 2024, I had not yet been able to identify who Kate C Barlow was, nor could I identify Lily (Barlow?), remembering that "Katy" and "Lily" were friends of Emily Kate Brontë. However, by the 20th November, I had discovered who Kate C Barlow was and have positively identified her link with Emily Jane Brontë.

"Katy C Barlow" was born Florence Caroline Kate May Barlow on 11th June 1873 in Dublin, Ireland. She was the daughter of Captain John Barlow and Agnes Florence Smythe. Captain John Barlow was the brother of James Thomas Barlow, the father of Reverend John Herbert Thomas Barlow. This means that John Herbert Thomas Barlow and "Katy C Barlow" were first cousins. On her death certificate following her death on 4th January 1959, she is called Kate C. M. Barlow. Presumably she changed the precise form of her name from her original birth name. The friendship between her and Emily Kate Brontë is established in the 1911 UK census. In 1911, both women are living with the widowed Agnes Florence Barlow, nee Smyth in Battersea, together with Kate C. Barlow's younger sister Agnes Miriam Wolfe Barlow. Both Emily Kate Brontë and Florence Caroline Kate May Barlow are described as typists and Emily Kate Brontë is also described as a friend, born in Armagh, Ireland. The four women are living in 7 rooms at 70 Primrose Mansions, Battersea. A copy of part of the census return is shown below.

Agnes Florence Barlow, nee Smyth died in Wandsworth, South London in the last quarter of 1928. It is just possible that she wrote one or both of the inscriptions on the photos, given that the photo taken at Juan-les Pins is dated September 1928 and depicts her only surviving daughter “Kate C Barlow”, for Agnes Miriam Wolfe Barlow died in 1914. However, the census entry shown below is written by Agnes Florence Barlow, nee Smyth. I am not convinced that this writing matches any of the inscriptions on the photos.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Agnes Florence Barlow ^{Widow}	Head		58	Widow
Florence Caroline Kate May Barlow	daughter		38	Spinster
Agnes Miriam Wolfe Barlow	daughter		36	Spinster
Emily Kate Brontë	friend		34	Spinster

Figure 14. 1911 Census return for Emily Kate Brontë

I have found out a lot about Anna Isabella Brontë and Emily Kate Brontë. They were half-sisters, born in Ireland. Their common father was Matthew Brontë. The mother of Anna Isabella Brontë was also named Anna Isabella Brontë, nee Woods, who died in 1868, around the time of her daughter’s birth. There had been an elder daughter, called naturally enough, Charlotte Brontë (1866-1887), who sadly died at age 21. Matthew Brontë was remarried three years after the death of his first wife to Catherine Jane Steele, who bore him another seven children, of whom Emily Kate Brontë was the fifth child. She was born in Armagh, whereas Charlotte and Anna Isabella were both born in Dublin.

Both of the half-sisters were living in England by the time of the 1911 census, but do not appear on the 1901 English census; they both remained in England for the rest of their lives. They never married. Anna Isabella worked at Harrogate Ladies College in Yorkshire as a Matron between 1911 and her retirement in the 1930s. Emily Kate lived in Battersea in South London for many years, where she worked as a typist and then as a personal secretary. Following her retirement, Emily Kate lived with her younger brother Matthew's widow, Jane Brontë, in Hendon in North London. Both Anna Isabella and Emily Kate died in Devon, Anna in Newton Abbot and Emily in Exeter. Interestingly, The Rev. John Barlow had also died in Devon. So far, I have not been able to positively identify "Lily", but I will continue to pursue my research in this area. One possibility is that Lily had been a nickname for Agnes Miriam Wolfe Barlow, but I have found no evidence to support that idea.

When I first found this simple little copy of *Jane Eyre*, I had no idea that it would have any links to the Brontë family. I hope that this story of my encounter with the Brontë family and their friendship with the Barlow family will encourage others to collect old books and to examine their provenance and any possible historical links that could be of particular interest. It is all part of the joy of collecting books.

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Emily Brontë in Recent Biographical Fiction

– By Stephanie Russo

This paper is a summary of a talk presented to the Australian Brontë Association in Sydney on Saturday 14th September 2024.

There is perhaps no other novelist who has beguiled and confused readers as much as Emily Brontë. The most enigmatic of the Brontë sisters, readers, critics and biographers have struggled to account for the woman who wrote *Wuthering Heights* since its publication in 1847. Emily's apparently intense need for privacy has also proven irresistible for writers of biofiction, keen to fill in the myriad gaps in her biography and provide some kind of clue to unlocking the "mystery" of the inspiration for Heathcliff and Catherine.

As Lucasta Miller writes of Emily's biographical image:

One, based on mystical readings of her visionary poetry, saw her as a creature not of this world, while the other, based on *Wuthering Heights*, instead insisted that she had known earthly love. Often both views of Emily were found operating rather in tandem, with little attempt on the part of biographers to explain or even acknowledge the apparent paradox (Miller 2020, 240).

That same bifurcation of Emily's afterlife is replicated in contemporary biographical novels, or biofictions. While some authors try to account for the passion that underpins the Catherine and Heathcliff relationship in *Wuthering Heights*, others represent Emily as a quasi-mystical being of preternatural strength and independence. However, another strain has recently emerged: the representation of Emily—and, to a lesser extent, her sisters—as feminist forebears. This strain is more closely related to the mystical vision of Emily but differs somewhat in its emphasis on the material and cultural context in which

the Brontës operated. In this paper, I will explore these three interlinked images of Emily—Emily in love, Emily as mystic and Emily the feminist forebear—in a range of contemporary biofictions.

What underpins the insistent quest for a secret, hitherto unknown Emily Brontë romance is the perception that women write from their life experiences; while men are assumed to write about the general or the universal, women are always associated with the biographical or the specific. The film *Emily* (2022), directed by Frances O'Connor, is an example of this phenomenon. Notoriously, this film centres on the contention that Emily had a sexual relationship with her father's curate, William Weightman. The film is not the first to posit a relationship between the pair. As Miller points out, Isabel C. Clarke's *Haworth Parsonage*—a non-fiction account—also speculates that Weightman aroused Emily's erotic interest (Miller 2020, 240). However, there is no evidence that the pair ever had any kind of romantic relationship, and most scholars now believe that Anne is more likely to have had some kind of interest in Weightman. However, in the film Weightman (played by Oliver Jackson-Cohen) and Emily (Emma Mackey) have first an antagonistic and then a passionate affair, which is first consummated in an abandoned farmhouse on the moors. William grows uneasy about the sexual and forbidden nature of their relationship and breaks it off, only to reconsider and write a last-minute letter declaring his love before Emily leaves for Belgium. Branwell fails to pass on this letter, which William understands to be a rejection. Emily has a prophetic dream about William on the day he dies and she is later given the letter by Branwell on his deathbed. Shortly thereafter she completes and publishes *Wuthering Heights*, presumably inspired by her own tragedy.

Susan Fermi's 2006 *Emily's Journal* cites research as a justification for the invention of a romance for Emily. In the foreword, Fermi writes that

the enormous ‘gap’ between what is known of her life and the extraordinary nature of her work (both her novel, *Wuthering Heights*, and her poetry) points inexorably to the probable existence of some unrecorded but formative event or events which would begin to explain the hidden ‘secret pleasure, secret tears’ which appear to be the wellspring of her work (Fermi 2006, xvii-xviii).

Fermi soon finds a candidate: a Robert Clayton is mentioned in the Haworth Burial Records. Clayton died in December 1836, and Fermi argues that Emily’s poems turn to the subject of grief around this time. Of course, Fermi admits that the fact that a working-class boy died in late 1836 does not constitute proof that he was Emily’s “unsuitable” lover, but maintains that, “although my story cannot be true in every detail, I hope it plausibly suggests that Emily Brontë had a close and tragic relationship in her adolescence which haunted the rest of her life and which provided much of the material for her great novel and many of her most moving poems” (Fermi 2006, xxi). Robert and his brother become entangled in Emily and Anne’s Gondal world, and he and Emily soon find themselves drawn together. However, the pair are immediately discovered and Emily is forced to part from her lower-class lover. In order to make the parallels to *Wuthering Heights* even clearer, her father and aunt try to force her to make a more respectable match: a local man named James Greenwood. Emily’s head is briefly turned by parties and dresses, and when she secretly meets up with Robert he comments that, “I don’t know who you are any more” (Fermi 2006, 40). The clear suggestion here is that James is the model for Edgar Linton.

Denise Giardina’s 2009 *Emily’s Ghost* might appear to be, from the title, an exemplar of the Emily-as-mystic trope. The novel does begin and end with accounts of Emily communing with ghosts. In the first section of the novel, the young Emily recounts being able to speak to ghosts at school in Cowan Bridge, while the final section of the novel sees Emily once again communing with a spirit—in this case,

the ghost of William Weightman. However, most of the novel is concerned with more domestic matters: Emily's developing relationship with Weightman, here represented as a political agitator, social justice advocate and secret Chartist. While he initially captures the attention of all three women, his relationship with Emily deepens into a mutual love. However, Weightman worries about Emily's capacity to become the wife of a clergyman and sends her away to Belgium in order that she learn more about the world and, presumably, become more amenable as a wife. As history tells us, while Emily is away he contracts cholera and dies, and in the novel he leaves a note in which he promises them everlasting happiness. Emily soon begins to hear William's voice whisper to her. However, in this case the man that Emily loves is not the model for Heathcliff: instead, it is Emily herself that informs the character of Heathcliff. Emily muses that "Heathcliff was her primeval self, made of moor grass and earth, the passionate outsider" (Giardina 2009, 313). Instead, William provides the model for Catherine Earnshaw, dreaming of being flung out of heaven to return to the moors: "Emily thought the dreamer could have been Weightman" (Giardina 2009, 313).

Michaela MacColl's Young Adult novel *Always Emily* (2014) is a somewhat unique exemplar of the Emily-in-love mode of biofiction in that it postulates a real-life romantic model not for Heathcliff, but for Hareton Earnshaw. The novel revolves around a scandal relating to the Heaton family of Ponden Hall. Emily is given a romance plot with Rachel's son, Hareton (called Harry). However, by the end of the novel, Harry has been scarred in a fire and moves to Scotland. When Charlotte expresses her surprise over Emily's decision to calmly relinquish Harry, she explains that, "I did care for him a little, but Harry deserves someone to love him with a whole heart" (MacColl 2014, 263). She also tells Charlotte that Harry's main function in her life was to inspire her writing: "Even when it was most exciting with

Harry, I was thinking all the time about how to tell the story on paper” (MacColl 2014, 264).

Karen Powell’s 2023 novel *Fifteen Wild Decembers* uses first-person narration to explore Emily’s life from her entry into Cowan Bridge School as a child until her death. A subplot of *Fifteen Wild Decembers* sees her repeatedly seeing a strange man on the moors and following him from afar, evidently intrigued. At one stage she reflects that “I was as foolish as Charlotte, disappointed as Anne, deluded like Branwell, with my lost words and wild thoughts, my ungovernable feet, forever carrying me towards the shadow of a stranger” (Powell 2023, 174). Later, she spies the man having sex with a woman in an abandoned isolated building on the moors and masturbates as she watches them. It becomes clear that this incident inspires Catherine and Heathcliff’s relationship in *Wuthering Heights* when the couple emerges from the building only to have an argument that sees the man violently kick the woman’s dog, and the women retaliate by striking him with a riding crop.

In the popular imagination, Emily is often conceived of as the Brontë sister who enjoyed walking by herself across the moors, communing with nature, dog at her side, apparently unable or unwilling to operate within the wider social world. In Jude Morgan’s 2009 *Charlotte and Emily*, Emily is represented as simultaneously entirely unconcerned with the world and always in control of herself and what she wants. Even when she is a very young child she possesses the ability to somehow remove herself from the world. Morgan’s Emily also knows from a very young age that she has absolutely no romantic or sexual inclinations. While discussing the first stirrings of puberty and sexual desire with Charlotte, Emily remarks that such feelings are “not for me” (Morgan 2009, 88). Emily is also unable or unwilling to play along with social graces, and almost always totally silent. Morgan represents Emily’s art as coming from a private imaginative wellspring that is entirely detached from the world. In one

scene, Emily is so fulfilled by her Gondal writings that she does not eat. Interestingly, Morgan is the only novelist to provide an explanation for why Emily stopped writing. While Anne immediately moves from *Agnes Grey* to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Emily finds her imaginative capacity has essentially been destroyed by her engagement with the outside world. After Charlotte and Anne travel to London to reveal their identities to Charlotte's publisher, Emily finds that she cannot write.

Jane Eagland's 2015 novel *The World Within* does not claim that Emily is unconscious of her art; instead, her writing is one of the few things in her life that she is able to control. However, there is repeated emphasis on her complete distaste at even the prospect of a romance or marriage: "fancy not being able to please yourself, but to have to put your husband's wishes before your own...Emily winces at the thought" (Eagland 2015, 193). When a local boy, Robert Taylor, tries to kiss her, she finds herself responding with disgust: "inwardly recoiling from the warm moistness of his mouth pressed against hers" (Eagland 2015, 305). This Emily is so self-controlled and introverted that she seems completely detached from all human relationships.

The most startling recent exploration of the Emily-as-mystic prototype is Tim Powers's *My Brother's Keeper* (2023). This novel turns on Emily's association with the supernatural and the contemporary reimagination of her detachment from the world as an indicator of a kind of preternatural strength and independence. At the beginning of the book, Branwell attempts to engage Emily and Anne in a ritual that he tells them aims to revive Maria from the dead. However, as the novel unfolds it becomes clear that Branwell has been possessed by much darker forces: after a dog bite and a chance encounter with a mysterious woman, the novel dramatizes Emily's attempts to save Branwell from becoming a werewolf. The novel tells a convoluted tale of mysterious ghosts, pagan goddesses and werewolf hunting, and it is only Emily who can save Branwell from the forces

of darkness. At her deathbed, she tells Alcuin Curzon, a werewolf hunter, that “I was always my brother’s keeper,” and discusses the fact that she at least partially modelled Heathcliff on an actual demon who stalks the Brontës in the form of a small dark boy (Powers 2023, 297).

The most recent development in the Emily Brontë myth is her emergence as a feminist heroine of sorts. The most significant exemplar of this version of Emily is to be found in Bella Ellis’s mystery series, in which the Brontë sisters are reimagined as intrepid Victorian detectives. They call themselves “detectors”; a kind of reversal of the suggestion in James Tully’s infamous 1999 *The Crimes of Charlotte Bronte* that Charlotte and Arthur Bell Nicholls were secret serial killers (Tully 1999). Bella Ellis’s Brontë Sisters Mystery series consists of four books: *The Vanished Bride* (2019), *The Diabolical Bones* (2020), *The Red Monarch* (2021) and *A Gift of Poison* (2023). In *The Vanished Bride*, the sisters discover that the solution to the mystery is that the bride of the title has escaped her abusive husband with the aid of another woman. These women, content to risk their names and reputations in order to exercise their own agency, provide a model for the sisters to consider the possibility of another kind of life. Not long afterwards, the sisters decide to embark on the publication of their poetry. While all three sisters are represented as independent, clever and capable, it is always Emily whose proto-feminist credentials are stressed; it is she who is the most radical sister. In *The Diabolical Bones*, Emily is represented as fierce and fearless: “Emily never seemed to be afraid of anything, so certain was she of her own immortality” (Ellis 2020, 46). To underline Emily’s feminist credentials, at one point in the fourth novel, Ellen Nussey reflects on the inhumanity of man given that he was made in God’s image, to which Emily replies, “perhaps She thought it would be amusing” (Ellis 2023, 89).

Ellis, however, still cannot resist giving Emily a love interest. In the third book, the sisters travel to London to investigate an

underground criminal group. Emily meets Louis Parensell, who works as an actor, and the pair are almost immediately drawn to each other. After a complicated chain of events, in which Emily briefly thinks Louis has betrayed her, he saves her life from an underground crime figure—later revealed to be Queen Victoria’s former comptroller Sir John Conroy—and dies in her arms. With his dying words Louis asks Emily if she could have loved him, to which she tearfully responds, “It is just as I lose you that I know I do” (Ellis 2021, 292). As Brontë scholars will know, Louis Parensell is a mistranscription of the name of Emily’s poem “Love’s Farewell,” by the biographer Virginia Moore, who published *The Life and Eager Death of Emily Brontë* in 1936. Despite the movement away from a detached, ethereal, supernatural Emily represented in these novels, the impulse to read *Wuthering Heights* as a passionate love story inspired by Emily’s biography remains.

Biofiction reinvents its subject for new audiences, reflecting the interests of the contemporary in its representation of the past. Rachel Cantor’s 2023 novel *Half-Life of a Stolen Sister* makes the situatedness of the biofiction in the present explicit by relocating the sisters in time into the twenty-first century and in a city that seems to be, although is never explicitly named, New York. In the last chapter, Patrick Brontey, alone after the death of all his children, watches some old home videos of the six children. In one video, he asks the children to envision their lives when they are older. Emily (here called Em) declares that: “I shall never marry. I shall live in the woods with my dog. I shall have a stable of dogs, and live maybe on a mountaintop, where none shall find me. I will sing songs there and be alone” (Cantor 2023, 370). The novel thus gives us a vision of a thoroughly modern Emily Brontë: a woman who wanted nothing more than to live alone in the woods with her dog.

It is tempting to speculate about what Emily, a notoriously private woman, might make of these novels. However, what these

biofictions reveal is not Emily Brontë herself, who is largely unknown to us, but what we want her to have been at this moment in time. The “real” Emily remains, as ever, elusive.

