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TEXTOS I
COMENTARIS

Wuthering Heights

A novel by Emily Brontë

Edited with an Introduction by
A. Moya, G. López & J. A. Hurtley

experience a thrill of horror
before we saw that the little
wretch was he. Heathcliff
arrived und h just at the
critical moment. by a natural
impulse, he his descent
and setting his feet
looked up to discover the autho



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Introduction

Part I

... and she
... whose soul
Knew no fellow for might,
Passion, vehemence, grief,
Daring, since Byron died.

M. Arnold, 'Haworth Churchyard'¹

Free my heart my spirit free

E. Brontë, 'Strong I stand ...'²

Schools inspector, poet and critic Matthew Arnold visited Haworth in March 1855, in the wake of Charlotte Brontë's death, subsequently producing the lines quoted above. His conviction with regard to Charlotte's sister highlighted qualities which made her, as well as her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, memorable, thus: strength, passion, intensity - even to the point of severity - , sorrow or suffering and, perhaps above all, courage. As Arnold asserts in the poem, he had found such qualities lacking since the death of Lord Byron but is unwavering in recognising in the Yorkshire lass, granddaughter of an Irish peasant farmer on her father's side, a worthy match for the flamboyant Anglo-Scot aristocrat. Moreover, the latter's Romantic assertion of individual freedom is also embraced and made manifest in the life and work, in the death of Emily Jane Brontë.

¹ First published in *Fraser's Magazine*, May 1855.

² The first line of the poem is 'Strong I stand though I have borne'. It is in four quatrains and was first published in 1902 (Gezari 1992: 56, 246).

The Reverend Patrick Brontë (1777-1861) was the eldest of ten children fathered by Hugh Brunty, Prunty or O'Pronty, born in the parish of Drumballyrone-cum-Drumgooland in County Down, today one of the six counties of Northern Ireland.³ He took to handloom-weaving, the blacksmith's trade and school teaching before managing to enrol at St. John's College Cambridge in 1802. He had risen far above his station by the time he met Maria Branwell (1782-1821), his future wife, having graduated from Cambridge, become a clergyman and published as a poet. He would go on to publish pamphlets, sermons and prose fictions and one of the latter is evocative of his Irish roots: *The Maid of Killarney, or Albion and Flora* but, it has been claimed, none of his works suggest "the genius of two of his daughters, Charlotte and Emily" (Andrews 1987: 3). Hailing from Penzance, in Cornwall, the fifth daughter of Thomas and Anne Branwell, Maria's milieu was more middle-class in origin than her husband's. She was staying with her uncle at Woodhouse Grove School, at Apperley Bridge in Yorkshire, when Patrick Brontë met her in 1812 and they were married in December of the same year. Maria Branwell has been described as "an intrepid young woman with high ideals who regarded poverty as a positive advantage in the pursuit of perfection" (Gérin 1991: 3).⁴ Between 1814 and 1820 Maria bore Patrick six children, five daughters and a son: Maria (1814); Elizabeth (1815); Charlotte (1816); Patrick Branwell (1817); Emily Jane (1818) and Anne (1820). It was in the year of Anne's birth that the family moved from Thornton, a village near Bradford, to the parsonage at Haworth, which would become the Brontë home until the death of the Reverend, destined to outlive not only his wife but all his children. The parsonage⁵ had a solitary setting being situated at the top of a steep village, surrounded on three sides by the graveyard and exposed to wild moorland winds - a cold and bleak landscape, indeed, as

³ It has been claimed that Patrick came to spell his surname Brontë because his hero, Lord Nelson, had been made Duke of Brontë (Andrews 1987: 3). It is also on record that Patrick's father was "an Irish *shanachie*, or story-teller" (O'Byrne 1970: 13). See Chitham (1987), for a discussion of the Irish heritage in the Brontës.

⁴ Indeed, she had written an essay in this connection, entitled 'The Advantages of Poverty in Religious Concerns', with a view to publication (Gérin 1991: 3).

⁵ Today the Brontë Parsonage Museum. See <http://www.bronte.org.uk>

perceived by Cornishwoman Maria Branwell, yet one which bore inspiration for her daughter Emily.

The future poet and novelist was three years and two months old when her mother passed away as a result of cancer of the stomach. Her place was occupied, though far from compensated for, by Elizabeth Branwell; an unmarried sister of Maria Branwell's, who had headed north from Penzance with the dutiful purpose of taking care of her sister and now took on her brother-in-law's children. Her methods have been described as "strictly Calvinistic, punitive and morally astringent" (Davies 1983: 8). Emily's strategy in the face of such severity was to withdraw into herself and this mechanism of self-defence may be regarded as the beginning of her lifelong and ever-increasing tendency to be reserved in her dealings with others, apparently preferring to frequent the natural environment and the company of animals to that of human beings. Prominent exceptions were her father's (she was his favourite child), her sister Anne's (to whom she was very close in childhood) and her brother Patrick's (towards whom she was able to manifest a far higher degree of compassion than her elder sister, Charlotte).

Maria Branwell's premature death was not the only family loss experienced by Emily at an early age. In 1825 her sisters Maria and Elizabeth died following what had been a traumatic experience for the two girls. They had been sent away by their father, eager to provide wider educational opportunities than the parsonage could provide, to Cowan Bridge School, set up for daughters of the clergy. Maria and Elizabeth had gone to the school in July 1824, Charlotte followed in August and Emily in November. Emily was amongst the youngest pupils and appears to have been regarded rather more kindly, treated as the "pet nursling" (Barnard 2000:13), according to the superintendant Miss Evans, and her talent for reading recognised. However, the regime in force subjected the girls to a fire and brimstone ideology, harsh punishments, poor food and insanitary living conditions. By 1825, typhoid was rife and Patrick Brontë withdrew his daughters, but too late for the elder girls: Maria died in May from consumption and her sister Elizabeth followed in the month of June. It has been claimed that brother Branwell's mental instability can largely be attributed to "the double shock of losing Maria, who

had become a mother-figure to him, and of being present at her death and funeral” (Gérin 1991: 9). Emily’s young age (and, therefore, the fact that she was doted on) appears to have saved her from the suffering experienced by her siblings at Cowan Bridge, either physical or mental, though she was witness to the sorrow expressed by her father, brother and older sister Charlotte as they grieved over the death of the elder children. By this time, however, there was some warmth provided in the household as a consequence of the employment of Tabitha Aykroyd, a Methodist widow of fifty-six, employed by the Reverend in 1824 to compensate for the departure of the Garrs sisters, who had been in his service since Thornton. Thanks to “Tabby”, the Brontës became familiar with the oral tradition of sung ballads. Indeed, Nelly Dean’s singing the child Hareton to sleep in Chapter 9 of *Wuthering Heights* with “The Ghaist’s Warning” may be related to Tabitha’s practice with the Brontë children and, no doubt, there was more of Tabitha which contributed to the construction of the character of the housekeeper in the novel.

In June 1826, a gift brought from Leeds by the Reverend for his only son, a set of wooden soldiers, would spark off a creative role-playing which would bear literary fruits. Each child took possession of a soldier and, interestingly, Emily called hers Parry, in deference to the Arctic explorer Sir William Edward Parry (1790-1855).⁶ The Arctic regions appear to have held a great appeal for Emily and she could have had access to Parry’s *Voyages to the Arctic Region, 1818-1827* since it was available at nearby Keighley’s Mechanics’ Institute Library of which Emily’s father was a founder member. Thomas Bewick’s engravings and descriptions have also been considered seminal in creating “her sense of nature as a presence and power in human destiny” (Gérin 1991: 13).⁷ It might be said that Emily would

⁶ Charlotte Brontë recorded that Emily’s soldier was first called ‘Gravey’ since he wore a grave expression (Gérin 1991: 11).

⁷ Gérin notes that the Reverend Brontë’s copy of Bewick’s *History of British Birds* made a lasting impression on all his children (Guérin 1991: 12). Readers of *Jane Eyre* will remember ten year-old Jane’s enthrallment with the introductory pages of Bewick’s text in which he spoke of “the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space - ...” (Brontë 1985: 40). Jane records forming her own idea of “these death-white realms”, one which she qualifies as “strangely impressive” (Brontë 1985:

make of the moors her Arctic region, a territory subject to exploration, in her case of the potential for untrammelled human expression with regard to the emotions. The arrival of the toy soldiers gave rise to the creation of ‘Glasstown’, subsequently ‘Angria’, an imaginary kingdom situated in West Africa, principally the domain of the older children, Charlotte and Branwell. Emily and Anne (with Emily as elder sister particularly in charge) would go on to produce their own reign of fantasy, ‘Gondal’, situated in the Pacific and ruled over by a woman. Gérin suggests that her choice of a female ruler may have been a consequence of the “‘idea’” of the Princess, soon to be Queen and Emily’s contemporary: “Victoria was the first ‘symbol’ of feminine power she came across” (Gérin 1991: 21). Barnard has noted that Gondal was created in Charlotte’s absence, when she went as a pupil to Roe Head School in 1831 (Barnard 2000: 20) and Gérin sums up the creation of the mythical land in the following terms: “It was a declaration of independence, a first positive step from tutelage, which, at the age of thirteen, was perhaps the first indication Emily gave that she intended to direct her own life” (Gérin 1991: 23).⁸

Whilst attending Roe Head, Charlotte met one of her lifelong friends, Ellen Nussey, who was to make her first visit to Haworth in the summer of 1833. It seems that Charlotte had forewarned Ellen with regard to her sister’s tendency to be reserved and retiring. But Ellen found much more rewarding company than she had anticipated: “Emily could be vivacious in conversation and enjoy giving pleasure ... On the top of a moor or in a deep glen Emily was a child in spirit for glee and enjoyment or when thrown entirely on her own resources to do a kindness.” Ellen later recorded that Emily’s “chief delight was to roam on the moors, followed by her dogs, to whom she would whistle in masculine fashion” (Gérin 1991: 34). It was in this decade of the 30s that, following instruction afforded Branwell and his sisters by the portrait painter William Robinson of Leeds, Emily produced a precise pencil drawing of Grasper, the parsonage dog (1834), and a

40). Thomas Bewick’s *A History of British Birds* appeared in two volumes: in 1797 and 1804.

⁸ No Gondal work in prose produced by Emily or Anne has survived though Emily wrote Gondal poems (Bentley 1987: 15-16). For comment on Gondal and the texts of Emily’s poetic output as a whole, see Gezari (1992).

gentle watercolour of another canine companion, Keeper (1838), both of which have been preserved and are indicative of careful attention to detail.⁹ Following her 1833 visit, Ellen also commented on Emily's physical appearance, so that we have a record of how she looked in her fifteenth year, as well as further evidence of her taciturn nature:

Emily had by this time acquired a lithesome graceful figure. She was the tallest person in the house except her father. Her hair, which was naturally as beautiful as Charlotte's, was in the same unbecoming tight curl and frizz, and there was the same want of complexion. She had very beautiful eyes; but she did not often look at you; she was too reserved. Their colour might be said to be dark grey, at other times dark blue, they varied so. She talked very little ... (Gérin 1991: 35)

Gérin remarks, moreover, that Emily had already acquired enough self-confidence in the early 1830s to resist Aunt Branwell's critical onslaughts. Thus, the period has been perceived in idyllic terms, especially in the light of what the following decade would bring: "Life was carefree, and perhaps 1834 marked the peak of the family's happiness" (Gérin 1991: 39).

Another dimension of this relatively rosy time was music. The Reverend Brontë engaged the organist of Keighley Parish Church, Abraham Stansfield Sunderland, to teach the sisters to play the piano. A piano was purchased and Ellen Nussey would claim that, after applying herself: "Emily ... played with precision and brilliancy" (Gérin 1991: 40). Thus, the daughters were acquiring skills which were appropriate for young ladies: drawing and music. Moreover, Aunt Branwell had given them basic instruction in reading and arithmetic as well as teaching them how to sew, examples of which remain in the samplers they produced.¹⁰ As regards reading on their own account, they had access to their father's library as well as to Keighley Mechanics' Institute Library and another public library in

⁹ See Barnard (2000: 20, 41) for reproductions in colour. Also reproduced there is Emily's watercolour of her pet hawk Nero (often referred to, mistakenly, as Hero), which is dated 1841 (Barnard 2000: 48).

¹⁰ See Barnard (2000:12) for a reproduction in colour of a sampler by Emily, finished on March 1st 1829, i.e. when she was ten years old. There are several samplers sewn by the Brontë daughters in the Brontë Parsonage Museum

nearby Ponden. They were also afforded further intellectual nourishment in the home through the generosity of a local doctor who passed on his monthly issue of *Blackwood's Magazine*. Byron's verse and Walter Scott's poetry and novels were major influences on Emily. Scott's Scottish heritage would be exploited by her in the Gondal writings as well as knowledge acquired through *Blackwood's* of Scottish folk tradition:

The Scottish landscape, which she never saw, supplied those distinctive features of Gondal's lakes, inland creeks, and bays that are not a part of the topography of Haworth. The contributions of James Hogg to *Blackwood's* on Scottish folklore, superstitions, customs and beliefs, familiarised her to such a degree with the character of the highland landscape that she wrote of it almost as of home. The names of her Gondal heroes also - Douglas, Rodric Lesley, Gleneden, Alexander, Flora - were predominantly Scots. (Gérin 1991: 21)

Furthermore, Gérin argues that Emily's ideal of womanhood may be traced to Scott's novels, where there are abundant examples of women as fighters for an independent existence. All forty-nine Waverley novels were available at Keighley Mechanics' Institute Library and Gérin deduces that Charlotte's remark to her friend Ellen Nussey in 1834 that "all novels after Scott's are worthless" indicated that by then: "they had obviously read the lot" (Gérin 1991: 27). As regards Byron's influence, Gérin claims that Emily found in him: "the champion of unsociable man" and connects this aspect of his writing to Emily's own growth in unsociability. She further claims: "[Byron's] ill-fated lovers attracted her equally because of their contempt for conventional society and their boldness in defying their unpropitious stars. The mystery of their origins was another source of romantic inspiration to her; ..." (Gérin 1991: 46).

1835 brought a transformation in the Brontë family life. Branwell was to go to the Royal Academy in London to study painting; Charlotte returned to Roe Head to work as a teacher and a place was offered for one of her sisters to attend the school as a pupil in part payment. Emily was the elder after Charlotte and it was seen to be appropriate that she should go. The two sisters left home on the eve of Emily's seventeenth birthday so the younger sibling was to spend

her first birthday outside the family environment. School life in no way compensated for the loss of home and the freedom of the moors. The rigidity of timetables, the learning by rote and lack of stimulation in her peers, together with a loss of appetite, all contributed to a decline in her health and she returned home after only two months. Anne was then sent to the school in her place so that Emily would find herself at home with only her brother for company. Branwell had left London within a few days of his arrival, disappointing his father and other relations' hopes and financial support, but he found consolation in his sister Emily who interpreted his return as that of one unable to conform, to subject himself to the *status quo*. A rebel herself, Emily was disposed to show sympathy towards her charismatic brother, unlike her father and aunt. As Gérin has observed:

She might, at that early stage, be excused for believing in Branwell more than he merited. He had a persuasive tongue, as his friends attested, a vivid personality, enthusiasm and humour - ... When he chose, Branwell could captivate; he was undeniably gifted ... and it is understandable that Emily's imagination was kindled by him in their youthful isolation. (Gérin 1991: 57)

Emily's biographer also highlights, alongside his persuasive tongue and other seductive characteristics, "a morbid fancy" which, presumably, was not understood by, if, indeed, known to, his younger sister at this stage. However, over years of repeated failure in both employment and with regard to his relationships, coupled with his becoming addicted to opium and alcohol, Emily became witness to it - and saw it through. In 1835, however, much that would surface was unsuspected and Emily settled back at home, delighted to find herself in her only brother's company, a favourite sibling with whom she could enjoy reading (they shared a taste for *Blackwood's* and Anne Radcliffe's Gothic romances), music (Emily could play the piano and accompany Branwell on the flute), and writing (for instance, Branwell would produce a long Byronic poem entitled "Misery" in which he dwelt on past sorrows and disappointments and Emily developed her Gondal poems). On her own account, she taught herself German and had acquired a fair knowledge of French by the time she went to Brussels with Charlotte in 1842. In the meantime, she was able to spend two years with her brother before he set up as a portrait painter

in Bradford in 1838.¹¹ He would return home in debt in 1839 but Emily would no longer be there to console him: the nineteen year old had left to take up a teaching post at Law Hill School at Southowram, Halifax, in September 1838. Again, Emily was unhappy away from home but on this occasion she had every reason to feel so given the timetable she was subjected to. In a letter to her sister Charlotte, she explained that she was obliged to work from six in the morning until eleven at night with only half an hour's rest over the day. Charlotte expressed her indignation in a letter to Ellen Nussey: "This is slavery: I fear she will never stand it" (Gérin 1991: 74). Emily stood it for six months bringing home inspiration for *Wuthering Heights* in the shape of local family histories as well as architectural features of High Sunderland Hall, situated to the north of Law Hill.¹²

Whilst at Law Hill, Emily continued to write poetry, one which conveyed her nostalgia, but: "already ... other visions [were] being evoked, other longings ... beginning to obsess her, ..." (Gérin 1991: 85). This relation with and pursuit of otherness would lead to Emily withdrawing increasingly into herself, leading to her sister Charlotte's labelling her "something of a recluse" (Gérin 1991: 94) by 1844. From the time of her return home from Law Hill in 1838 until February 1842 when Charlotte and herself headed for Brussels, Emily remained at home, revealing a practical nature in administering domestic affairs: looking after her ageing father and aunt, her brother (following yet another failure in employment and his growing addiction to opium from 1839 on), feeding the animals (of which there was a fair variety by 1841: apart from the dog, a cat, two tame geese and the hawk which Emily had domesticated) and exercising the dog as well as attending to emergencies. Her contribution was recognised by Charlotte who, like her sister Anne, now earned her living as a governess: "Emily is the only one left at home, where her usefulness and willingness make her indispensable" (Gérin 1991: 115). It was in 1841 that the idea of the three daughters setting up a

¹¹ Patrick Branwell Brontë's portrait of Emily (c. 1833) may be viewed in the National Portrait Gallery in London. It is reproduced on the front cover of Gérin (1991).

¹² Details of the façade of High Sunderland Hall, in particular, may have been influential in determining features on the front of "Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling" (Brontë 1998: 2), *Wuthering Heights*.

school was mooted and Miss Branwell was found to be disposed to contributing funds for the enterprise. There was enthusiasm for the project and this led to Charlotte arguing for Emily and herself to be allowed to go to Brussels for six months.¹³ The argument in favour of a six-month stay was that it would enable them to improve their French and German so that they might offer languages on the school syllabus. Following the recommendation of the British Chaplain in Brussels, with whom Reverend Brontë had been in touch, it was decided that Charlotte and Emily should go to the Pensionnat Heger. Charlotte and Emily arrived there in the company of their father on 15 February 1842, a week after their departure from Haworth, having engaged in some sight-seeing in London en route.

The Pensionnat Heger, situated in a prosperous Brussels neighbourhood (Gordon 1989: 33) and run by Constantin Heger and his wife Zoë, assisted by ten other teachers, was superior in material terms to Charlotte and Emily's experiences of boarding schools in England. The school was also successful from an academic point of view: Monsieur Heger had high standards and was demanding of those in his charge. Charlotte recognised that her sister "[worked] like a horse" (Gérin 1991: 123) whilst she was studying there but Constantin Heger and Emily did not take easily to one another since he was accustomed to his female pupils bowing to his authority whereas Emily challenged his methods. However, in spite of certain reservations about her character, he did recognise his pupil's outstanding talent, as his words to Mrs Gaskell, Charlotte's first biographer, reveal: "She should have been a man - a great navigator. [...] Her powerful reason would have deduced new spheres of discovery from the knowledge of the old; and her strong, imperious will would never have been daunted by opposition or difficulty; never have given way but with life" (Gérin 1991: 127). Seven essays, produced by Emily for Constantin Heger, as teacher of French language and literature at the Pensionnat, remain as proof of the efforts she made in producing work for her exacting teacher, some of

¹³ Brussels was chosen after Charlotte's old school friend, Mary Taylor, had rhapsodised about art galleries and old churches there having visited her sister who was at finishing-school at the converted Château Koekelberg, on the outskirts of Brussels.

which carry his corrections.¹⁴ There are other impressions of Emily, recorded by fellow pupils at the Pensionnat: Louise de Bassompierre found Emily less brilliant than her sister but kinder though she recognised that she lacked popularity among her peers (Gérin 1991: 131); Laetitia Wheelright, the fourteen year-old daughter of an English Dr. Wheelright who had taken his daughters to Brussels to be educated at the Pensionnat, took an instant dislike to Emily, who comes over in the pupil's comments as characteristically self-assertive, revealing this even in her dress, and as arrogant in her speech and attitudes. Laetitia gives her something of an ogre-like edge in alluding to the latter's insensitivity to her little sisters:

I simply disliked her from the first; her tallish, ungainly, ill-dressed figure contrasting so strongly with Charlotte's small, neat, trim person, although their dresses were alike; always answering our jokes with 'I wish to be as God made me.' She taught my three young sisters music¹⁵ for four months, to my annoyance, as she would only take them in play hours so as not to curtail her own school hours, naturally causing many tears to young children, the eldest 10 and the youngest 7 ... (Gérin 1991: 130)

Emily and Charlotte spent nine months in Brussels in all. They would have stayed longer had their aunt not passed away in October 1842, which took them home, Charlotte fondly hoping that she would be able to return to Brussels if Emily would stay at home to care for their father. Indeed, Emily did, and Charlotte returned to Brussels in January of 1843.

It was no deprivation for Emily to be back in Haworth: "it was not museums, art galleries or the opportunity for higher studies that satisfied her longings; for her there was no place that liberated her mind like her boundless moors" (Gérin 1991: 144). She set to cooking, baking, ironing, and, when Tabby was no longer able, she also made the family's bread. Furthermore, she found time to read aloud to her father the political comment in *Blackwood's* as his sight gradually failed. Indeed, according to the Haworth stationer John

¹⁴ The seven essays are published in the original French as "Appendix A" in Gérin (1991: 266-274). They may be read in English translation in Lonoff (1996).

¹⁵ Emily was offered music tuition at the Pensionnat when Charlotte and herself stayed on after the summer.

Greenwood, the Brontë household came to rely on her “promptitude, firmness and presence of mind” (Gérin 1991: 146). One task she did not perform was teaching in the Sunday school and neither did her father oblige her to attend church regularly. Moreover, she refused to enter into discussions on conventional religion. However, the idea of creating a school had not been abandoned so Emily kept up her music, French and German, but she was not of a greatly studious nature. As she confessed in a diary entry of July 1841, she had “a good many books on hand, but I am sorry to say that - as usual - I make small progress with any.” This self-assessment is borne out by Charlotte’s comments on both her sisters after their deaths: “Neither Emily nor Anne was learned; they had no thought of filling their pitchers at the well-spring of other minds; they always wrote from the impulse of nature, the dictates of intuition, and from such stores of observation as their limited experience had enabled them to amass” (Gérin 1991: 145). However, as was pointed out earlier, when referring to Byron and Scott, Emily did read for herself, as well as for her father in later life; presumably Charlotte was the greater reader!

Emily spent 1843 alone with her father before being joined by Charlotte in early January 1844. Both her sisters were burdened by disappointment in love: Anne’s beloved, the Reverend William Weightman was dead and Charlotte’s devotion to her Belgian employer, Constantin Heger, unrequited. Since none of the sisters had marriage in view, the idea of the school was further pondered but given Reverend Brontë’s eyesight, they would have to set it up at the parsonage, hardly a spacious setting. As it turned out, the project fell through as no pupils came forward. Nonetheless, Emily’s sense of her self as a poet continued to grow over this period, in spite of domestic duties and her sisters’ pain and disappointment (Barnard speaks of the “brilliant poems” (Barnard 2000: 67) produced by Emily in the year and a half following Charlotte’s return). In 1844 she collected her Gondal poems together in a notebook, copying her non-Gondal output into another¹⁶ but publication was Charlotte’s initiative in 1846 when poems by Emily, Anne and herself were published pseudonymously

¹⁶ The Gondal poems are now in the British Library; the non-Gondal collection is unlocatable.

as *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (that is Charlotte, Emily and Anne, respectively), in the last week of May. The sisters opted for androgynous forenames, anticipating prejudice on the part of male critics with regard to women's writing, but not simply opting for masculine ones, as in the case of George Eliot, or anonymity, as practised by Jane Austen. The publication of the sisters' poetry was a further blow to Branwell's sense of pride. He had been dismissed from his employment in July of 1845, accused by his employer of intrigue with the latter's wife. Whereas Charlotte considered her brother unredeemable, Emily again showed faith in him, aided by a sense of satisfaction in her own lot at this time, as a text she wrote for herself reveals:

I am quite contented for myself, not as idle as formerly, altogether as hearty, and having learnt to make most of the present and long for the future with the fidgetiness that I cannot do all I wish; seldom or never troubled with nothing to do, and merely desiring that everybody could be as comfortable as myself and as undemanding and then we should have a very tolerable world of it. (Gérin 1991: 111)

At this time Emily had just shared a journey to York in the month of June with her sister Anne, their first "long" journey together.

Gérin speculates that Emily may have been writing *Wuthering Heights* between 1845 and 1846. She sees that the poems of 1843-5 read like a preface to the novel and in those of 1844 and 1845 contents and imagery may be identified in common between the poems and the novel. Certainly nature looms large in both (the moors, trees, birds, flowers, winds, colours, the moon, dew, the scent of flowers, sunshine, clouds, stormy skies, a lake, starlight, spring grass) and, as Gérin asserts, the preoccupation with the themes of separation and union, of life in death, of the oneness of all life in nature, of the indestructibility of the soul (Gérin 1991: 188). In July of 1847 *Wuthering Heights*, together with Anne's *Agnes Grey*, were accepted for publication by the London publisher Thomas Newby and in December the two novels appeared, following Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, published by Smith, Elder & Co in London in the month of September. Reviews began to appear in January of 1848 and they were poor though a number recognised that this disturbing text

authored by Ellis Bell conveyed a talent. The article published in *Britannia* is a case in point: the novel was seen as “strangely original” and it was claimed: “The tale ... is but a fragment, yet of colossal proportions and bearing evidence of some great design” (Barnard 2000: 86). The novel continued to be treated with lack of understanding well into the twentieth century, F.R. Leavis’s assessment of it in a footnote to *The Great Tradition* as “a kind of sport” being perhaps the most notorious. However, as was the case with a number of the reviews referred to above on the publication of the novel, Leavis recognised something more substantial than sport in both novel and author. Thus, he spoke of Emily as a “genius” and of *Wuthering Heights* as “astonishing” (Leavis 1948: 39). It is an ongoing tribute to the woman writer, who already foregrounded her Yorkshire roots by introducing a provincial adjective into the title¹⁷ of what is undoubtedly an extraordinary text, that in the summer of 2005 the novel should be hailed as the first great nineteenth century novel in English fiction (Guelbenzu 2005: 2). The claim is no doubt debatable, but the conviction with which it was pronounced may certainly be regarded as significant in the light of our times. The novel which endlessly explores and insistently defies fixed boundaries and identities, which tirelessly questions convention, and so powerfully asserts feeling in an age of technology and wellnigh inquisitorial restraint,¹⁸ is seen to be “great”, a measure, on the one hand, of what preoccupies us in the west today as well as indicative of what may be found lacking.

Emily’s sense of satisfaction, as recorded by her in 1845, was forfeited in 1848. She was upset by Charlotte’s revelation to her London publisher in July that Ellis Bell was another Brontë sister. Her beloved Branwell died in the month of September and from then on she gradually withered away, deteriorating into a state in which she did not answer when spoken to and, further, resolutely refused to be visited by a doctor. She appears to have willed her death - freely -

¹⁷ “Wuthering” is the adjective in question. As the novel’s first narrator, Lockwood, explains: “‘Wuthering’ [is] a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather” (Brontë 1998: 2).

¹⁸ See Williams (1984: 62) for the “tightening world” of the Brontë sisters’ own time too.

following Branwell before three months had passed, on 19th December 1848.

Part II

At a time when other English novelists were responding to both the positive and negative effects of technology and urbanization (the railways in *Dombey and Son*, urban poverty in *Mary Barton*), Emily Brontë wrote out of the Romanticism of earlier generations, drawing on the sublime terror of the Gothic novel, the tragic rebellion of Byron's dark heroes, and the narrative techniques with which Scott experimented, in *The Black Dwarf* (1816), for example. Ironically, *Wuthering Heights* is also anachronistic in the quite opposite sense of being more accessible to readers familiar with the techniques of Henry James in the *Turn of the Screw* and Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, both published at the turn of the twentieth century, than to her own contemporaries. An old-fashioned novel, it was fifty years ahead of its time in its radical indeterminacy. (Wheeler 1985: 67)

Though Emily Brontë has been treated by literary historians as a Victorian novelist, she was born at the end of the reign of George III and died when Queen Victoria had been on the throne for only a decade.¹⁹ She lived, therefore, through the reigns of George IV and William IV. George IV ascended the throne in 1820, when Emily was only two, though he had been Prince Regent since 1811.²⁰ He was a man of literary taste and possessed an interest in the arts in general. His donation of George III's library became the basis of the British Museum Library and he also encouraged the government to buy the Angerstein collection of pictures which would contribute to the launching of the National Gallery. George IV was on the throne until 1830, when William IV became King. The latter's reign lasted only six years.

¹⁹ Victoria ascended the throne in 1837.

²⁰ The period came to be known as the Regency. It was the decade in which Jane Austen published all her novels, of which the Regent king was a fervent admirer.

Wuthering Heights

Volume One

Chapter 1

1801¹ - I have just returned from a visit to my landlord - the solitary neighbour that I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist's Heaven - and Mr Heathcliff² and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us. A capital fellow! He little imagined how my heart warmed towards him when I beheld his black eyes withdraw so suspiciously under their brows, as I rode up, and when his fingers sheltered themselves, with a jealous resolution, still further in his waistcoat, as I announced my name.

'Mr Heathcliff?' I said.

A nod was the answer.

¹ The action of the novel is situated between the years 1801 and 1802. However, *Wuthering Heights* is a retrospective family saga covering the story of two generations.

² The surname Heathcliff (we shall never know his forename) may be seen to be drawn from *heath* (area of open land covered with heather or rough grass) and *cliff* (rising land / steep face of rock, particularly at the edge of the sea). Therefore, it may be said that his name suggests the untamed or wild nature of his character as well as his inaccessibility.

'Mr Lockwood³, your new tenant, sir - I do myself the honour of calling as soon as possible after my arrival, to express the hope that I have not inconvenienced you by my perseverance in soliciting the occupation of Thrushcross Grange: I heard yesterday you had had some thoughts - '

'Thrushcross Grange⁴ is my own, sir,' he interrupted, wincing⁵. 'I should not allow any one to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it - walk in!'

The 'walk in' was uttered with closed teeth and expressed the sentiment, 'Go to the Deuce!'⁶ Even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathising movement to the words; and I think that circumstance determined me to accept the invitation: I felt interested in a man who seemed more exaggeratedly reserved than myself.

When he saw my horse's breast fairly pushing the barrier, he did put out his hand to unchain it, and then sullenly preceded me up the causeway, calling, as we entered the court:

'Joseph, take Mr Lockwood's horse; and bring up some wine.'

'Here we have the whole establishment of domestics, I suppose,' was the reflection suggested by this compound order. 'No wonder the grass grows up between the flags, and cattle are the only hedge- cutters.'⁷

Joseph was an elderly, nay, an old man, very old, perhaps, though hale and sinewy.⁸

'The Lord help us!' he soliloquised in an undertone of peevish displeasure, while relieving me of my horse: looking, meantime, in my face so sourly that I charitably conjectured he must have need of divine aid to digest his dinner, and his pious ejaculation had no reference to my unexpected advent.

³ The surname Lockwood may be related to *lock* (close with a key) and *wood* (large expanse of trees growing close to one another). Lockwood may be seen as locked out, an outsider in Wuthering Heights but he may also represent the common reader, one to whom the world in which he finds himself is alien.

⁴ A *thrush* is a small bird. References to Thrushcross Grange in Brontë's text have to do most of the time with domesticity (*grange*) and fragility (as *thrush* would seem to suggest).

⁵ Showing bodily or mental pain or distress (by a movement or by loss of composure).

⁶ *Deuce* is associated with the spirit of mischief here, with the devil.

⁷ A *hedge* is a row of bushes or small trees forming the boundary to a garden or a field.

⁸ Strong and muscular.

Wuthering Heights⁹ is the name of Mr Heathcliff's dwelling, 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant¹⁰ of a few stunted firs¹¹ at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun.¹² Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.

Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished¹³ over the front, and especially about the principal door, above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins¹⁴ and shameless little boys, I detected the date '1500,' and the name 'Hareton Earnshaw.' I would have made a few comments, and requested a short history of the place from the surly owner, but his attitude at the door appeared to demand my speedy entrance, or complete departure, and I had no desire to aggravate his impatience previous to inspecting the penetralium.¹⁵

One stop brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory lobby or passage: they call it here 'the house' pre-eminently. It includes kitchen and parlour, generally; but I believe at Wuthering Heights the kitchen is forced to retreat altogether into another quarter: at least I distinguished a chatter of tongues, and a

⁹ *Wuthering* (Northern British Dialect) is a variant of *whiterin*, from *whither*, meaning blow; from Old Norse *huitra*, related to *huitra*, meaning squall of wind; of *hweothy*, which means wind. The imagery used here, as in the choice of names seen so far, is mostly drawn from nature. This is a constant in *Wuthering Heights*.

¹⁰ Inclination (prably due to the wind).

¹¹ Prevented from growing.

¹² Brontë anthropomorphises the thorns here as thin (*gaunt*) people appealing for (*craving*) charity (*alms*).

¹³ Generously spread (*lavished*) exaggerated (*grotesque*) decorative objects in wood or stone (*carving*).

¹⁴ Disintegrated *griffins* (fabulous animals, having the head and wings of an eagle and the body and hind quarters of a lion).

¹⁵ Lockwood's choice of words reveals him as a pedantic character, artificial in manners and speech.

clatter of culinary utensils, deep within; and I observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fireplace; nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders¹⁶ on the walls. One end, indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter¹⁷ dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, in a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The latter had never been underdrawn: its entire anatomy lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood laden with oatcakes and clusters of legs of beef, mutton, and ham, concealed it. Above the chimney were sundry¹⁸ villainous old guns, and a couple of horse-pistols: and, by way of ornament, three gaudily-painted canisters¹⁹ disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone; the chairs, high-backed, primitive structures, painted green: one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses.

The apartment and furniture would have been nothing extraordinary as belonging to a homely, northern farmer, with a stubborn countenance, and stalwart²⁰ limbs set out to advantage in knee-breeches²¹ and gaiters.²² Such an individual seated in his arm-chair, his mug of ale frothing on the round table before him, is to be seen in any circuit of five or six miles among these hills, if you go at the right time after dinner. But Mr Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly,²³ perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure; and

¹⁶ Colanders.

¹⁷ Grey alloy of lead and tin. Pewter was often used in the nineteenth century to make receptacles for food and drink.

¹⁸ Various.

¹⁹ Containers with a lid to store foods.

²⁰ Strong and firm in appearance.

²¹ Trousers which reach down to the knee.

²² Cloth or leather covering for the leg from knee to ankle, or for the ankle.

²³ Of or like a sloven, i.e. a person who is untidy, dirty, careless or slipshod in his appearance, dress, habits.

rather morose.²⁴ Possibly, some people might suspect him of a degree of under-bred pride; I have a sympathetic chord within that tells me it is nothing of the sort: I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling - to manifestations of mutual kindness. He'll love and hate equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again. No, I'm running on too fast: I bestow my own attributes over-liberally on him. Mr Heathcliff may have entirely dissimilar reasons for keeping his hand out of the way when he meets a would-be acquaintance, to those which actuate me. Let me hope my constitution is almost peculiar: my dear mother used to say I should never have a comfortable home; and only last summer I proved myself perfectly unworthy of one.

While enjoying a month of fine weather at the sea-coast, I was thrown into the company of a most fascinating creature, a real goddess in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me. I 'never told my love' vocally; still, if looks have language, the merest idiot might have guessed I was over head and ears; she understood me at last, and looked a return - the sweetest of all imaginable looks. And what did I do? I confess it with shame - shrunk icily into myself, like a snail, at every glance retired colder and farther; till finally the poor innocent was led to doubt her own senses, and, overwhelmed with confusion at her supposed mistake, persuaded her mamma to decamp.

By this curious turn of disposition I have gained the reputation of deliberate heartlessness; how undeserved, I alone can appreciate.

I took a seat at the end of the hearthstone opposite that towards which my landlord advanced, and filled up an interval of silence by attempting to caress the canine mother, who had left her nursery, and was sneaking wolfishly to the back of my legs, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a snatch.

My caress provoked a long, guttural gnarl.²⁵

'You'd better let the dog alone,' growled Mr Heathcliff in unison, checking fiercer demonstrations with a punch of his foot. 'She's not accustomed to be spoiled - not kept for a pet.'

Then, striding to a side door, he shouted again,

²⁴ Moody. Not willing to communicate with other people.

²⁵ Snarl. Growl. The fierce, rough sound made by an animal in a menacing attitude.

'Joseph!'

Joseph mumbled indistinctly in the depths of the cellar, but gave no intimation of ascending; so, his master dived down to him, leaving me *vis-a-vis* the ruffianly bitch and a pair of grim shaggy sheep-dogs, who shared with her a jealous guardianship over all my movements.

Not anxious to come in contact with their fangs,²⁶ I sat still; but, imagining they would scarcely understand tacit insults, I unfortunately indulged in winking and making faces at the trio, and some turn of my physiognomy so irritated madam, that she suddenly broke into a fury and leapt on my knees. I flung her back, and hastened to interpose the table between us. This proceeding roused the whole hive: half-a-dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes and ages, issued from hidden dens²⁷ to the common centre. I felt my heels and coat-laps peculiar subjects of assault; and parrying off²⁸ the larger combatants as effectually as I could with the poker,²⁹ I was constrained to demand, aloud, assistance from some of the household in re-establishing peace.

Mr Heathcliff and his man climbed the cellar steps with vexatious phlegm: I don't think they moved one second faster than usual, though the hearth was an absolute tempest of worrying and yelping.

Happily, an inhabitant of the kitchen made more despatch: a lusty dame, with tucked-up gown, bare arms, and fire-flushed cheeks, rushed into the midst of us flourishing a frying-pan; and used that weapon, and her tongue, to such purpose, that the storm subsided magically, and she only remained, heaving like a sea after a high wind, when her master entered on the scene.

'What the devil is the matter?' he asked, eyeing me in a manner that I could ill endure, after this inhospitable treatment.

'What the devil, indeed!' I muttered. 'The herd of possessed swine could have had no worse spirits in them than those animals of yours, sir. You might as well leave a stranger with a brood of tigers!'

²⁶ Long sharp teeth.

²⁷ Home of certain wild animals like foxes.

²⁸ Pushing or turning aside.

²⁹ Metal bar used to move the wood or coal in a fire.

'They won't meddle with persons who touch nothing,' he remarked, putting the bottle before me, and restoring the displaced table. 'The dogs do right to be vigilant. Take a glass of wine?'

'No, thank you.'

'Not bitten, are you?'

'If I had been, I would have set my signet³⁰ on the biter.'

Heathcliff's countenance relaxed into a grin.

'Come, come,' he said, 'you are flurried, Mr Lockwood. Here, take a little wine. Guests are so exceedingly rare in this house that I and my dogs, I am willing to own, hardly know how to receive them. Your health, sir!'

I bowed and returned the pledge; beginning to perceive that it would be foolish to sit sulking for the misbehaviour of a pack of curs; besides, I felt loth³¹ to yield the fellow further amusement at my expense; since his humour took that turn.

He - probably swayed by prudential consideration of the folly of offending a good tenant - relaxed a little in the laconic style of chipping off his pronouns and auxiliary verbs, and introduced what he supposed would be a subject of interest to me, a discourse on the advantages and disadvantages of my present place of retirement.

I found him very intelligent on the topics we touched; and before I went home, I was encouraged so far as to volunteer another visit tomorrow.

He evidently wished no repetition of my intrusion. I shall go, notwithstanding. It is astonishing how sociable I feel myself compared with him.

³⁰ Ring with a seal in it.

³¹ Reluctant.