PUFFIN CLASSICS

EMILY BRONTË

Wuthering Heights

INTRODUCED BY S. E. HINTON

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Wuthering Heights

‘Let me in – let me in!’

‘Who are you? I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

‘Catherine Linton,’ it replied shiveringly (why did I think of Linton*? I had read* Earnshaw *twenty times for Linton), ‘I’m come home, I’d lost my way on the moor!’*

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INTRODUCTION BY
S. E. HINTON

A romance. A ghost story. A love so fierce and intense it could be mistaken for a nightmare. I've read a few books that seem to sink into my subconscious, to remain there. *Wuthering Heights*, however, seems to have been there all along. Emily Brontë took a chisel to granite (as her sister Charlotte once said) and carved a masterpiece that somehow feels like a memory.

I have to admit I had difficulty getting through *Wuthering Heights* when I first read it as a teenager. There weren't any 'young adult' novels at that time; I was through with the horse books and had to go on to more mature reading if I didn't want to waste my brain on *Mary Sue Goes to the Prom*.

Wuthering Heights was my first experience of an unreliable narrator. Black Beauty, well, he pretty much told it like it was. But Lockwood, the first narrator of *Wuthering Heights* (more about the second one later), is a soft man from a soft place, unable to recognize or understand any of the harsh realities of the land he has chosen for his self-imposed exile. (While holidaying at the seaside, he flirts with a girl until she flirts back, and then he runs as far away as he can.) In fact, within a few pages I was thinking, 'Is this guy an idiot?' and the answer is yes.

Lockwood misreads character – his take on everyone he meets between Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights is wrong. He guesses wrong at relationships. He mistakes guard dogs for pets, and is stupid enough to make faces at them after he's been rescued from being torn limb from limb (resulting in the need for another rescue). He mistakes dead rabbits for kittens; there's no need for cuddly things on the moors, but there *is* a need for food and warmth – it is a matter of life and death.

Location, location, location. This story could not have happened anywhere else. The desolate and dangerous moors (where the wind-warped trees bend 'as if craving alms of the sun') strengthen those who respect them, but seem to leech the life of those who shun them.

Lockwood blithely assumes that he can navigate this wilderness like it's a city park, and it almost costs him his life.

I love the outdoors, but coming from Oklahoma I don't always consider nature a source of comfort. In fact, there is nothing more natural than a rattlesnake curled up on a piece of poison ivy. In *Wuthering Heights* it is the people who respect nature who deserve to live amongst it. It is when the free-roaming children of the moors, Cathy and Heathcliff, leave them, that their slow disintegration begins.

Wuthering Heights is haunted: by a ghost, by memories, by scenes of violence and despair. Even Lockwood, insensitive as he is, realizes it. Partly curious, partly bored, he coaxes the story of the Earnshaws, the Lintons and the dark 'gipsy brat', Heathcliff, from Nelly Dean.

Nelly Dean, the servant who grew up at Wuthering Heights, is a great choice for the other narrator. Honest, though tending to gloss over her own transgressions (her betrayals cost Cathy Earnshaw both her love and her life), Nelly Dean is the domestic anchor that holds this storm-tossed story in reality. The use of the domestic to keep a foothold in reality is something I can relate to, as a writer and as a person. It is said that Emily Brontë was a great baker and loved a clean house, and she was rumoured to be a good shot. And yet, as she did these things, she held a whole other universe in her head, moving from one to the other with the ease of stepping from one room to the next because to her *they coexisted*. So the thundering passion, the treachery, the revenge visited on the next generation, all take place in a setting where fires are essential, pans are scoured clean, the kitchen smells of cooking food. Necessity and imagination *coexist.*

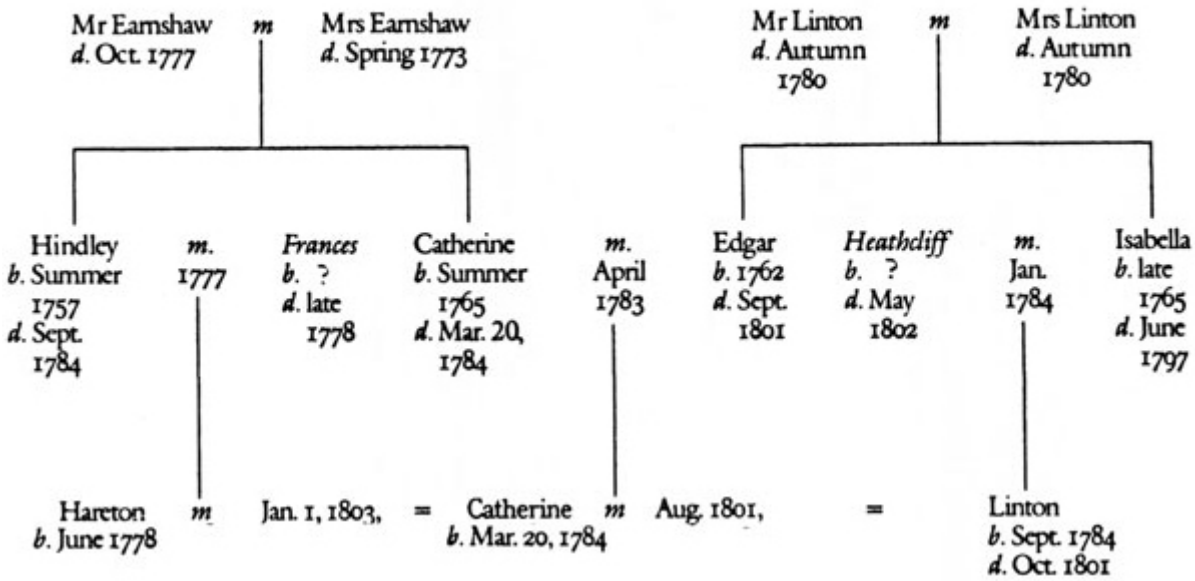
Nelly, who witnessed it all, calmly tells of Catherine Earnshaw, the 'wild, wicked slip' of a girl, and dangerous, sadistic Heathcliff (surely the darkest of heroes) and their passion for each other that destroyed themselves, many who came between them and, almost, those who came after.

Nelly Dean is a little flabbergasted (like the rest of us) that Catherine is miffed because her husband is resentful of her lover, and because her lover detests her husband, but she relates it cheerfully and without question. She never runs screaming, 'Enough of these crazy people!' – her acceptance of this story fuels our acceptance.

Extraordinary stories can take place in ordinary places, the wilderness can breed wild passions, and mild observers can witness the clash of Titans.

There are quite a few books on my favourites list, but *Wuthering Heights* is the only one I wish I had written. I would like to believe I once had that kind of courage. But I didn't.

Family Tree


Mr Earnshaw
d. Oct. 1777
m
Mrs Earnshaw
d. Spring 1773
Mr Linton
d. Autumn 1780
m
Mrs Linton
d. Autumn 1780
Hindley
b. Summer 1757
d. Sept. 1784
m.
1777
Frances
b. ?
d. late 1778
Catherine
b. Summer 1765
d. Mar. 20, 1784
m.
April 1783
Edgar
b. 1762
d. Sept. 1801
Heathcliff
b. ?
d. May 1802
m.
Jan. 1784
Isabella
b. late 1765
d. June 1797
Hareton
b. June 1778
m
Jan. 1, 1803,
=
Catherine
b. Mar. 20, 1784
m
Aug. 1801,
=
Linton
b. Sept. 1784
d. Oct. 1801

Biographical notice of Ellis and acton bell

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. This mistake I endeavoured to rectify by a few words of disclaimer prefixed to the third edition of *Jane Eyre*. These, too, it appears, failed to gain general credence, and now, on the occasion of a reprint of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, I am advised distinctly to state how the case really stands.

Indeed, I feel myself that it is time the obscurity attending those two names – Ellis and Acton – was done away. The little mystery, which formerly yielded some harmless pleasure, has lost its interest; circumstances are changed. It becomes, then, my duty to explain briefly the origin and authorship of the books written by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.

About five years ago, my two sisters and myself, after a somewhat prolonged period of separation, found ourselves reunited, and at home. Resident in a remote district where education had made little progress, and where, consequently, there was no inducement to seek social intercourse beyond our own domestic circle, we were wholly dependent on ourselves and each other, on books and study, for the enjoyments and occupations of life. The highest stimulus, as well as the liveliest pleasure we had known from childhood upwards, lay in attempts at literary composition; formerly we used to show each other what we wrote, but of late years this habit of communication and consultation had been discontinued; hence it ensued, that we were mutually ignorant of the progress we might respectively have made.

One day, in the autumn of 1845, I accidentally lighted on a MS. volume of verse in my sister Emily's handwriting. Of course, I was not surprised, knowing that she could and did write verse: I looked it over, and something more than surprise seized me, – a deep conviction that these were not common affusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write. I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and

genuine. To my ear, they had also a peculiar music – wild, melancholy, and elevating.

My sister Emily was not a person of demonstrative character, nor one, on the recesses of whose mind and feelings, even those nearest and dearest to her could, with impunity, intrude unlicensed; it took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication. I knew, however, that a mind like hers could not be without some latent spark of honourable ambition, and refused to be discouraged in my attempts to fan that spark to flame.

Meantime, my younger sister quietly produced some of her own compositions, intimating that since Emily's had given me pleasure, I might like to look at hers. I could not but be a partial judge, yet I thought that these verses too had a sweet sincere pathos of their own.

We had very early cherished the dream of one day becoming authors. This dream, never relinquished even when distance divided and absorbing tasks occupied us, now suddenly acquired strength and consistency: it took the character of a resolve. We agreed to arrange a small selection of our poems, and, if possible, get them printed. Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because – without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine' – we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise.

The bringing out of our little book was hard work. As was to be expected, neither we nor our poems were at all wanted; but for this we had been prepared at the outset; though inexperienced ourselves, we had read the experience of others. The great puzzle lay in the difficulty of getting answers of any kind from the publishers to whom we applied. Being greatly harassed by this obstacle, I ventured to apply to the Messrs Chambers, of Edinburgh, for a word of advice; *they* may have forgotten the circumstance, but *I* have not, for from them I received a brief and business-like, but civil and sensible reply, on which we acted, and at last made a way.

The book was printed: it is scarcely known, and all of it that merits to be known are the poems of Ellis Bell. The fixed conviction I held, and hold, of the worth of these poems has not indeed received the

confirmation of much favourable criticism; but I must retain it notwithstanding.

Ill-success failed to crush us: the mere effort to succeed had given a wonderful zest to existence; it must be pursued. We each set to work on a prose tale: Ellis Bell produced *Wuthering Heights*, Acton Bell, *Agnes Grey*, and Currer Bell also wrote a narrative in one volume. These MSS were perseveringly obtruded upon various publishers for the space of a year and a half; usually, their fate was an ignominious and abrupt dismissal.

At last *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were accepted on terms somewhat impoverishing to the two authors; Currer Bell's book found acceptance nowhere, nor any acknowledgment of merit, so that something like the chill of despair began to invade his heart. As a forlorn hope, he tried one publishing house more – Messrs Smith and Elder. Ere long, in a much shorter space than that on which experience had taught him to calculate – there came a letter, which he opened in the dreary expectation of finding two hard hopeless lines, intimating that Messrs Smith and Elder 'were not disposed to publish the MS,' and, instead, he took out of the envelope a letter of two pages. He read it trembling. It declined, indeed, to publish that tale, for business reasons, but it discussed its merits and demerits to courteously, so considerately, in a spirit so rational, with a discrimination so enlightened, that this very refusal cheered the author better than a vulgarly-expressed acceptance would have done. It was added, that a work in three volumes would meet with careful attention.

I was then just completing *Jane Eyre*, at which I had been working while the one volume tale was plodding its weary round in London: in three weeks I sent it off; friendly and skilful hands took it in. This was in the commencement of September 1847 it came out before the close of October following, while *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, my sisters' works, which had already been in the press for months, still lingered under a different management.

They appeared at last. Critics failed to do them justice. The immature but very real powers revealed in *Wuthering Heights* were scarcely recognized; its import and nature were misunderstood; the identity of its author was mis-represented; it was said that this was an earlier and ruder attempt of the same pen which had produced *Jane Eyre*. Unjust and grievous error! We laughed at it at first, but I deeply lament it now. Hence, I fear, arose a prejudice against the book. That writer who could attempt to palm off an inferior and immature production under cover of

one successful effort, must indeed be unduly eager after the secondary and sordid result of authorship, and pitiably indifferent to its true and honourable meed. If reviewers and the public truly believed this, no wonder that they looked darkly on the cheat.

Yet I must not be understood to make these things subject for reproach or complaint; I dare not do so; respect for my sister's memory forbids me. By her any such querulous manifestation would have been regarded as an unworthy, and offensive weakness.

It is my duty, as well as my pleasure, to acknowledge one exception to the general rule of criticism. One writer,* endowed with the keen vision and fine sympathies of genius, has discerned the real nature of *Wuthering Heights*, and has, with equal accuracy, noted its beauties and touched on its faults. Too often do reviewers remind us of the mob of Astrologers, Chaldeans, and Soothsayers gathered before the 'writing on the wall,' and unable to read the characters or make known the interpretation. We have a right to rejoice when a true seer comes at last, some man in whom is an excellent spirit, to whom have been given light, wisdom, and understanding; who can accurately read the 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin' of an original mind (however unripe, however inefficiently cultured and partially expanded that mind may be); and who can say with confidence, 'This is the interpretation thereof.'

Yet even the writer to whom I allude shares the mistake about the authorship, and does me the injustice to suppose that there was equivoque in my former rejection of this honour (as an honour, I regard it). May I assure him that I would scorn in this and in every case to deal in equivoque; I believe language to have been given us to make our meaning clear, and not to wrap it in dishonest doubt.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Acton Bell, had likewise an unfavourable reception. At this I cannot wonder. The choice of subject was an entire mistake. Nothing less congruous with the writer's nature could be conceived. The motives which dictated this choice were pure, but, I think, slightly morbid. She had, in the course of her life, been called on to contemplate, near at hand and for a long time, the terrible effects of talents misused and faculties abused; hers was naturally a sensitive, reserved, and dejected nature; what she saw sank very deeply into her mind; it did her harm. She brooded over it till she believed it to be a duty to reproduce every detail (of course with fictitious characters, incidents, and situations) as a warning to others. She hated her work, but would pursue it. When reasoned with on the subject, she regarded such reasonings as a temptation to self-indulgence. She must be honest; she

must not varnish, soften, or conceal. This well-meant resolution brought on her misconstruction and some abuse, which she bore, as it was her custom to bear whatever was unpleasant, with mild, steady patience. She was a very sincere and practical Christian, but the tinge of religious melancholy communicated a sad shade to her brief, blameless life.

Neither Ellis nor Acton allowed herself for one moment to sink under want of encouragement; energy nerved the one, and endurance upheld the other. They were both prepared to try again; I would fain think that hope and the sense of power was yet strong within them. But a great change approached: affliction came in that shape which to anticipate is dread; to look back on, grief. In the very heat and burden of the day, the labourers failed over their work.

My sister Emily first declined. The details of her illness are deep-branded in my memory, but to dwell on them, either in thought or narrative, is not in my power. Never in all her life had she lingered over any task that lay before her, and she did not linger now. She sank rapidly. She made haste to leave us. Yet, while physically she perished, mentally, she grew stronger than we had yet known her. Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love. I have seen nothing like it; but, indeed, I have never seen her parallel in anything. Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone. The awful point was, that, while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh; from the trembling hand, the unnerved limbs, the faded eyes, the same service was exacted as they had rendered in health. To stand by and witness this, and not dare to remonstrate, was a pain no words can render.

Two cruel months: of hope and fear passed painfully by, and the day came at last when the terrors and pains of death were to be undergone by this treasure, which had grown dearer and dearer to our hearts as it wasted before our eyes. Towards the decline of that day, we had nothing left of Emily but her mortal remains as consumption left them. She died December 19, 1848.

We thought this enough: but we were utterly and presumptuously wrong. She was not buried ere Anne fell ill. She had not been committed to the grave a fortnight, before we received distinct intimation that it was necessary to prepare our minds to see the younger sister go after the elder. Accordingly, she followed in the same path with slower steps, and with a patience that equalled the other’s fortitude, I have said that she was religious, and it was by leaning on those Christian doctrines in

which she firmly believed, that she found support through her most painful journey. I witnessed their efficacy in her latest hour and greatest trial, and must bear my testimony to the calm triumph with which they brought her through. She died May 28, 1849.

What more shall I say about them? I cannot and need not say much more. In externals, they were two unobtrusive women a perfectly secluded life gave them retiring manners and habits. In Emily's nature the extremes of vigour and simplicity seemed to meet. Under an unsophisticated culture, inartificial tastes, and an unpretending outside, lay a secret power and fire that might have informed the brain and kindled the veins of a hero; but she had no worldly wisdom; her powers were unadapted to the practical business of life; she would fail to defend her most manifest rights, to consult her most legitimate advantage. An interpreter ought always to have stood between her and the world. Her will was not very flexible, and it generally opposed her interest. Her temper was magnanimous, but warm and sudden; her spirit altogether unbending.

Anne's character was milder and more subdued; she wanted the power, the fire, the originality of her sister, but was well-endowed with quiet virtues of her own. Long-suffering, self-denying, reflective, and intelligent, a constitutional reserve and taciturnity placed and kept her in the shade, and covered her mind, and especially her feelings, with a sort of nun-like veil, which was rarely lifted. 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. I may sum up all by saying, that for strangers they were nothing, for superficial observers less than nothing; but for those who had known them all their lives in the intimacy of close relationship, they were genuinely good and truly great.

This notice has been written, because I felt it a sacred duty to wipe the dust off their gravestones, and leave their dear names free from soil.

CURRER BELL

September 19, 1850

Editor's Preface to the New [1850] Edition 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. Men and women who, perhaps, naturally very calm, and with feelings moderate in degree, and little marked in kind, have been trained from their cradle to observe the utmost evenness of manner and guardedness of language, will hardly know what to make of the rough, strong utterance, the harshly manifested passions, the unbridled aversions, and headlong partialities of unlettered moorland hinds and rugged moorland squires, who have grown up untaught and unchecked, except by mentors as harsh as themselves. A large class of readers, likewise, will suffer greatly from the introduction into the pages of this work of words printed with all their letters, which it has become the custom to represent by the initial and final letter only – a blank line filling the interval. I may as well say at once that, for this circumstance, it is out of my power to apologize; deeming it, myself, a rational plan to write words at full length. The practice of hinting by single letters those expletives with which profane and violent people are wont to garnish their discourse, strikes me as a proceeding which, however well meant, is weak and futile. I cannot tell what good it does – what feeling it spares – what horror it conceals.

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 the 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 homebred country girl. Doubtless it would have been wider – more comprehensive: whether it would have been more original or more truthful is not so certain. As far as the scenery and locality are concerned, it could scarcely have been so sympathetic: Ellis Bell did not describe as one whose eye and taste alone found pleasure in the prospect; her native hills were far more to her than a spectacle; they were what she lived in, and by, as much as the wild birds, their tenants, or as the heather, their produce. Her descriptions, then, of natural scenery, are what they should be, and all they should be.

Where delineation of human character is concerned, the case is different. I am bound to avow that she had scarcely more practical knowledge of the peasantry amongst whom she lived, than a nun has of the country people who sometimes pass her convent gates. My sister's disposition was not naturally gregarious; circumstances favoured and fostered her tendency to seclusion; except to go to church or take a walk on the hills, she rarely crossed the threshold of home. Though her feeling for the people round was benevolent, intercourse with them she never sought; nor, with very few exceptions, ever experienced. And yet she knew them; knew their ways, their language, their family histories; she could hear of them with interest and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but *with* them she rarely exchanged a word. Hence it ensued that what her mind had gathered of the real concerning them, was too exclusively confined to those tragic and terrible traits of which, in listening to the secret annals of every rude vicinage, the memory is sometimes compelled to receive the impress. Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done. If the auditor of her work, when read in manuscript, shuddered under the grinding influence of natures so relentless and

implacable, of spirits so lost and fallen; if it was complained that the mere hearing of certain vivid and fearful scenes banished sleep by night, and disturbed mental peace by day, Ellis Bell would wonder what was meant, and suspect the complainant of affectation. Had she but lived, her mind would of itself have grown like a strong tree; loftier, straighter, wider-spreading, and its matured fruits would have attained a mellower ripeness and sunnier bloom; but on that mind time and experience alone could work: to the influence of other intellects, it was not amenable.

Having avowed that over much of *Wuthering Heights* there broods 'a horror of great darkness'; that, in its storm-heated and electrical atmosphere, we seem at times to breathe lightning, let me point to those spots where clouded daylight and the eclipsed sun still attest their existence. For a specimen of true benevolence and homely fidelity, look at the character of Nelly Dean; for an example of constancy and tenderness, remark that of Edgar Linton. (Some people will think these qualities do not shine so well incarnate in a man as they would do in a woman, but Ellis Bell could never be brought to comprehend this notion: nothing moved her more than any insinuation that the faithfulness and clemency, the long-suffering and loving-kindness which are esteemed virtues in the daughters of Eve, become foibles in the sons of Adam. She held that mercy and forgiveness are the divinest attributes of the Great Being who made both man and woman, and that what clothes the Godhead in glory, can disgrace no form of feeble humanity.) There is a dry saturnine humour in the delineation of old Joseph, and some glimpses of grace and gaiety animate the younger Catherine. Nor is even the first heroine of the name destitute of a certain strange beauty in her fierceness, or of honesty in the midst of perverted passion and passionate perversity.

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 farm-house kitchen, to the hour when Nelly Dean found the grim, stalwart corpse laid on its back in the panel-enclosed bed, with wide-gazing eyes that seemed 'to sneer at her attempt to close them, and parted lips and sharp white teeth that sneered too.'

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. These solitary traits omitted, we should say he was child neither of Lascar nor gipsy, but a man's shape animated by demon life – a Ghoul – an Afreet.

Whether it is right or advisable to create things like Heathcliff, I do not know: I scarcely think it is. But this I know; the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master – something that at times strangely wills and works for itself. He may lay down rules and devise principles, and to rules and principles it will perhaps for years lie in subjection; and then, haply without any warning of revolt, there comes a time when it will no longer consent to 'harrow the vallies, or be bound with a band in the furrow' – when it laughs at the multitude of the city, and regards not the crying of the driver – when, refusing absolutely to make ropes out of sea-sand any longer, it sets to work on statue-hewing, and you have a Pluto or a Jove, a Tisiphone or a Psyche, a Mermaid or a Madonna, as Fate or Inspiration direct. Be the work grim or glorious, dread or divine, you have little choice left but quiescent adoption. As for you – the nominal artist – your share in it has been to work passively under dictates you neither delivered nor could question – that would not be uttered at your prayer, nor suppressed nor changed at your caprice. If the result be attractive, the World will praise you, who little deserve praise; if it be repulsive, the same World will blame you, who almost as little deserve blame.

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 the 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

[Charlotte Brontë]

1

1801 – 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 Heathcliff 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.

'Mr Lockwood, 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 Grange is my own, sir,' he interrupted wincing, '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'; even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathizing movement to the words; and I think that circumstances 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 pull 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.'

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

'The Lord help us!' he soliloquized 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.

Wuthering Heights 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 slant of a few stunted firs 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. 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 lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door, above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins, 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.

One step 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 clatter of culinary utensils, deep within; and I observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fire-place; nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders on the walls. One end, indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat, from ranks of immense pewter 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 laid 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 sundry villainous old guns, and a

couple of horse-pistols, and, by way of ornament, three gaudily painted canisters 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 stalwart limbs, set out to advantage in knee-breeches, and gaiters. Such an individual, seated in his armchair, his mug of ale frothing on the round table before him, is to be seen in any circuit of five or six miles among these hills, if you go at the right time, after dinner. But, Mr Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark skinned gypsy, in aspect, in dress, and manners a gentleman, that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure, and rather morose; possibly, some people might suspect him of a degree of underbred 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 seacoast, 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 leg, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a snatch.

My caress provoked a long, guttural snarl.

'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.

'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-à-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, 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 aroused the whole hive. Half-a-dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes, and ages, issued from hidden dens to the common centre. I felt my heels and coat-laps peculiar subjects of assault; and, parrying off the larger combatants, as effectually as I could, with the poker, I was constrained to demand, aloud, assistance from some of the household, in reestablishing 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 dispatch; 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 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!'

‘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 signet 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 loath to yield the fellow further amusement, at my expense; since his humour took that turn.

He – probably swayed by prudential considerations 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, to-morrow.

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

2

Yesterday afternoon set in misty and cold. I had half a mind to spend it by my study fire, instead of wading through heath and mud to Wuthering Heights.

On coming up from dinner, however (N.B. I dine between twelve and one o'clock; the housekeeper, a matronly lady taken as a fixture along with the house, could not, or would not comprehend my request that I might be served at five) – on mounting the stairs with this lazy intention, and stepping into the room, I saw a servant-girl on her knees, surrounded by brushes and coal-scuttles and raising an infernal dusk as she extinguished the flames with heaps of cinders. This spectacle drove me back immediately; I took my hat, and, after a four miles' walk, arrived at Heathcliff's garden gate just in time to escape the first feathery flakes of a snow shower.

On that bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over, and, running up the flagged causeway bordered with straggling gooseberry bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled, and the dogs howled.

'Wretched inmates!' I ejaculated, mentally, 'you deserve perpetual isolation from your species for your churlish inhospitality. At least, I would not keep my doors barred in the day time – I don't care – I will get in!'

So resolved, I grasped the latch, and shook it vehemently. Vinegar-faced Joseph projected his head from a round window of the barn.

'Whet are ye for?' he shouted. 'T' maister's dahn i' t' fowld. Goa rahned by th' end ut' laith, if yah went tuh spake tull him.'

'Is there nobody inside to open the door?' I hallooed, responsively.

'They's nobbut t' missis; and shoo'll nut oppen 't and ye mak yer flaysome dins till neeght.'

'Why? cannot you tell her who I am, eh, Joseph?'

'Nor-ne me! Aw'll hae hend wi't,' muttered the head vanishing.

The snow began to drive thickly. I seized the handle to essay another trial; when a young man, without coat, and shouldering a pitchfork, appeared in the yard behind. He hailed me to follow him, and, after marching through a washhouse, and a paved area containing a coal-shed, pump, and pigeon cote, we at length arrived in the huge, warm, cheerful apartment, where I was formerly received.

It glowed delightfully in the radiance of an immense fire, compounded of coal, peat, and wood: and near the table, laid for a plentiful evening meal, I was pleased to observe the 'missis', an individual whose existence I had never previously suspected.

I bowed and waited, thinking she would bid me take a seat. She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and remained motionless and mute.

'Rough weather!' I remarked. 'I'm afraid, Mrs Heathcliff, the door must bear the consequence of your servants' leisure attendance: I had hard work to make them hear me!'

She never opened her mouth. I stared – she stared also. At any rate, she kept her eyes on me, in a cool, regardless manner, exceedingly embarrassing and disagreeable.

'Sit down,' said the young man, gruffly. 'He'll be in soon.'

I obeyed; and hemmed, and called the villain Juno, who deigned, at this second interview, to move the extreme tip of her tail, in token of owning my acquaintance.

'A beautiful animal!' I commenced again. 'Do you intend parting with the little ones, madam?'

'They are not mine,' said the amiable hostess more repellingly than Heathcliff himself could have replied.

'Ah, your favourites are among these!' I continued, turning to an obscure cushion full of something like cats.

'A strange choice of favourites,' she observed scornfully.

Unluckily, it was a heap of dead rabbits – I hemmed once more, and drew closer to the hearth, repeating my comment on the wildness of the evening.

'You should not have come out,' she said, rising and reaching from the chimney-piece two of the painted canisters.

Her position before was sheltered from the light: now, I had a distinct view of her whole figure and countenance. She was slender, and apparently scarcely past girlhood: an admirable form, and the most exquisite little face that I have ever had the pleasure of beholding: small features, very fair; flaxen ringlets, or rather golden, hanging loose on her

delicate neck; and eyes – had they been agreeable in expression, they would have been irresistible – fortunately for my susceptible heart, the only sentiment they evinced hovered between scorn and a kind of desperation, singularly unnatural to be detected there.

The canisters were almost out of her reach; I made a motion to aid her; she turned upon me as a miser might turn, if any one attempted to assist him in counting his gold.

'I don't want your help,' she snapped, 'I can get them for myself.'

'I beg your pardon,' I hastened to reply.

'Were you asked to tea?' she demanded, tying an apron over her neat black frock, and standing with a spoonful of the leaf poised over the pot.

'I shall be glad to have a cup,' I answered.

'Were you asked?' she repeated.

'No,' I said, half smiling. 'You are the proper person to ask me.'

She flung the tea back, spoon and all, and resumed her chair in a pet, her forehead corrugated, and her red underlip pushed out, like a child's, ready to cry.

Meanwhile, the young man had slung onto his person a decidedly shabby upper garment, and, erecting himself before the blaze, looked down on me, from the corner of his eyes, for all the world as if there were some mortal feud unavenged between us, I began to doubt whether he were a servant or not; his dress and speech were both rude, entirely devoid of the superiority observable in Mr and Mrs Heathcliff; his thick, brown curls were rough and uncultivated, his whiskers encroached bearishly over his cheeks, and his hands were embrowned like those of the common labourer: still his bearing was free, almost haughty; and he showed none of a domestic's assiduity in attending on the lady of the house.

In the absence of clear proofs of his condition, I deemed it best to abstain from noticing his curious conduct, and, five minutes afterwards, the entrance of Heathcliff relieved me, in some measure, from my uncomfortable state.

'You see, sir, I am come according to promise!' I exclaimed, assuming the cheerful, 'and I fear I shall be weatherbound for half an hour, if you can afford me shelter during that space.'

'Half an hour?' he said, shaking the white flakes from his clothes; 'I wonder you should select the thick of a snowstorm to ramble about in. Do you know that you run a risk of being lost in the marshes? People familiar with these moors often miss their road on such evenings, and, I can tell you, there is no chance of a change at present.'

‘Perhaps I can get a guide among your lads, and he might stay at the Grange till morning – could you spare me one?’

‘No, I could not.’

‘Oh, indeed! Well, then, I must trust to my own sagacity.’

‘Umph!’

‘Are you going to mak’ th’ tea?’ demanded he of the shabby coat, shifting his ferocious gaze from me to the young lady.

‘Is *he* to have any?’ she asked, appealing to Heathcliff.

‘Get it ready, will you?’ was the answer, uttered so savagely that I started. The tone in which the words were said, revealed a genuine bad nature. I no longer felt inclined to call Heathcliff a capital fellow.

When the preparations were finished, he invited me with –

‘Now, sir, bring forward your chair,’ and we all, including the rustic youth, drew round the table, an austere silence prevailing while we discussed our meal.

I thought, if I had caused the cloud, it was my duty to make an effort to dispel it. They could not every day sit so grim and taciturn, and it was impossible, however ill-tempered they might be, that the universal scowl they wore was their everyday countenance.

‘It is strange,’ I began in the interval of swallowing one cup of tea and receiving another, ‘it is strange how custom can mould our tastes and ideas; many could not imagine the existence of happiness in a life of such complete exile from the world as you spend, Mr Heathcliff; yet, I’ll venture to say, that, surrounded by your family, and with your amiable lady as the presiding genius over your home and heart –’

‘My amiable lady!’ he interrupted, with an almost diabolical sneer on his face. ‘Where is she – my amiable lady?’

‘Mrs Heathcliff, your wife, I mean.’

‘Well, yes – Oh! you would intimate that her spirit has taken the post of ministering angel, and guards the fortunes of Wuthering Heights, even when her body is gone. Is that it?’

Perceiving myself in a blunder, I attempted to correct it. I might have seen that there was too great a disparity between the ages of the parties to make it likely that they were man and wife. One was about forty; a period of mental vigour at which men seldom cherish the delusion of being married for love, by girls: that dream is reserved for the solace of our declining years. The other did not look seventeen.

Then it flashed upon me – ‘The clown at my elbow, who is drinking his tea out of a basin, and eating his bread with unwashed hands, may be her husband. Heathcliff, junior, of course. Here is the consequence of

being buried alive: she has thrown herself away upon that boor, from sheer ignorance that better individuals existed! A sad pity – I must beware how I cause her to regret her choice.'

The last reflection may seem conceited; it was not. My neighbour struck me as bordering on repulsive. I knew, through experience, that I was tolerably attractive.

'Mrs Heathcliff is my daughter-in-law,' said Heathcliff, corroborating my surmise. He turned, as he spoke, a peculiar look in her direction, a look of hatred unless he has a most perverse set of facial muscles that will not, like those of other people, interpret the language of his soul.

'Ah, certainly – I see now; you are the favoured possessor of the beneficent fairy,' I remarked, turning to my neighbour.

This was worse than before: the youth grew crimson, and clenched his fist with every appearance of a meditated assault.

But he seemed to recollect himself, presently; and smothered the storm in a brutal curse, muttered on my behalf, which, however, I took care not to notice.

'Unhappy in your conjectures, sir!' observed my host; 'we neither of us have the privilege of owning your good fairy; her mate is dead. I said she was my daughter-in-law, therefore, she must have married my son.'

'And this young man is –'

'Not my son, assuredly!'

Heathcliff smiled again, as if it were rather too bold a jest to attribute the paternity of that bear to him.

'My name is Hareton Earnshaw,' growled the other; 'and I'd counsel you to respect it!'

'I've shown no disrespect,' was my reply, laughing internally at the dignity with which he announced himself.

He fixed his eye on me longer than I cared to return the stare, for fear I might be tempted either to box his ears, or render my hilarity audible. I began to feel unmistakably out of place in that pleasant family circle. The dismal spiritual atmosphere overcame, and more than neutralized the glowing physical comforts round me; and I resolved to be cautious how I ventured under those rafters a third time.

The business of eating being concluded, and no one uttering a word of sociable conversation, I approached a window to examine the weather.

A sorrowful sight I saw; dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingled in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow.

'I don't think it possible for me to get home now, without a guide,' I could not help exclaiming. 'The roads will be buried already; and if they

were bare, I could scarcely distinguish a foot in advance.'

'Hareton, drive those dozen sheep into the barn porch. They'll be covered if left in the fold all night; and put a plank before them,' said Heathcliff.

'How must I do?' I continued, with rising irritation.

There was no reply to my question; and on looking round, I saw only Joseph bringing in a pail of porridge for the dogs and Mrs Heathcliff, leaning over the fire, diverting herself with burning a bundle of matches which had fallen from the chimney-piece as she restored the tea-canister to its place.

The former, when he had deposited his burden, took a critical survey of the room; and, in cracked tones, grated out:

'Aw woonder hagh yah can faishion tuh stand thear i' idleness un war, when all on 'em's goan aght! Bud yah're a nowt, and it's noa use talking – yah'll niver mend uh yer ill ways; bud, goa raight tuh t' divil, like yer mother afore ye!'

I imagined, for a moment, that this piece of eloquence was addressed to me; and, sufficiently enraged, stepped towards the aged rascal with an intention of kicking him out of the door.

Mrs Heathcliff, however, checked me by her answer.

'You scandalous old hypocrite!' she replied. 'Are you not afraid of being carried away bodily, whenever you mention the devil's name? I warn you to refrain from provoking me, or I'll ask your abduction as a special favour. Stop, look here, Joseph,' she continued, taking a long, dark book from a shelf. 'I'll show you how far I've progressed in the Black Art – I shall soon be competent to make a clear house of it. The red cow didn't die by chance; and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations!'

'Oh, wicked, wicked!' gasped the elder; 'may the lord deliver us from evil!'

'No, reprobate! you are a castaway – be off, or I'll hurt you seriously! I'll have you all modelled in wax and clay; and the first who passes the limits I fix, shall – I'll not say what he shall be done to – but, you'll see! Go, I'm looking at you!'

The little witch put a mock malignity into her beautiful eyes, and Joseph, trembling with sincere horror, hurried out praying and ejaculating 'wicked' as he went.

I thought her conduct must be prompted by a species of dreary fun; and, now that we were alone, I endeavoured to interest her in my distress.

‘Mrs Heathcliff,’ I said, earnestly, ‘you must excuse me for troubling you – I presume, because, with that face, I’m sure you cannot help being good-hearted. Do point out some landmarks by which I may know my way home – I have no more idea how to get there than you would have how to get to London!’

‘Take the road you came,’ she answered, ensconcing herself in a chair, with a candle, and the long book open before her. ‘It is brief advice; but as sound as I can give.’

‘Then, if you hear of me being discovered dead in a bog, or a pit full of snow, your conscience won’t whisper that it is partly your fault?’

‘How so? I cannot escort you. They wouldn’t let me go to the end of the garden-wall.’

‘*You!* I should be very sorry to ask you to cross the threshold, for my convenience, on such a night,’ I cried. ‘I want you to *tell* me my way, not to *show* it; or else to persuade Mr Heathcliff to give me a guide.’

‘Who? There is himself, Earnshaw, Zillah, Joseph, and I. Which would you have?’

‘Are there no boys at the farm?’

‘No, those are all.’

‘Then, it follows that I am compelled to stay.’

‘That you may settle with your host. I have nothing to do with it.’

‘I hope it will be a lesson to you, to make no more rash journeys on these hills,’ cried Heathcliff’s stern voice from the kitchen entrance. ‘As to staying here, I don’t keep accommodations for visitors; you must share a bed with Hareton, or Joseph, if you do.’

‘I can sleep on a chair in this room,’ I replied.

‘No, no. A stranger is a stranger, be he rich or poor – it will not suit me to permit any one the range of the place while I am off guard!’ said the unmannerly wretch.

With this insult, my patience was at an end. I uttered an expression of disgust, and pushed past him into the yard, running against Earnshaw in my haste. It was so dark that I could not see the means of exit, and, as I wandered round, I heard another specimen of their civil behaviour amongst each other.

At first, the young man appeared about to befriend me.

‘I’ll go with him as far as the park,’ he said.

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

‘A man’s life is of more consequence than one evening’s neglect of the horses; somebody must go,’ murmured Mrs Heathcliff, more kindly

than I expected.

‘Not at your command!’ retorted Hareton. ‘If you set store on him, you’d better be quiet.’

‘Then I hope his ghost will haunt you; and I hope Mr Heathcliff will never get another tenant, till the Grange is a ruin!’ she answered sharply.

‘Hearken, hearken, shoo’s cursing on ’em!’ muttered Joseph, towards whom I had been steering.

He sat within earshot, milking the cows by the light of a lantern, which I seized unceremoniously, and, calling out that I would send it back on the morrow, rushed to the nearest postern.

‘Maister, maister, he’s staling t’ lantern!’ shouted the ancient, pursuing my retreat. ‘Hey, Gnasher! Hey, dog! Hey, Wolf, holld him, holld him!’

On opening the little door, two hairy monsters flew at my throat, bearing me down and extinguishing the light, while a mingled guffaw, from Heathcliff and Hareton, put the copestone on my rage and humiliation.

Fortunately, the beasts seemed more bent on stretching their paws, and yawning, and flourishing their tails, than devouring me alive; but, they would suffer no resurrection, and I was forced to lie till their malignant masters pleased to deliver me: then hatless, and trembling with wrath, I ordered the miscreants to let me out – on their peril to keep me one minute longer – with several incoherent threats of retaliation that, in their indefinite depth of virulency, smacked of King Lear.

The vehemence of my agitation brought on a copious bleeding at the nose, and still Heathcliff laughed, and still I scolded. I don’t know what would have concluded the scene had there not been one person at hand rather more rational than myself, and more benevolent than my entertainer. This was Zillah, the stout housewife; who at length issued forth to inquire into the nature of the uproar. She thought that some of them had been laying violent hands on me and, not daring to attack her master, she turned her vocal artillery against the younger scoundrel.

‘Well, Mr Earnshaw,’ she cried, ‘I wonder what you’ll have agait next! Are we going to murder folk on our very door-stones? I see this house will never do for me – look at t’ poor lad, he’s fair choking! Wisht, wisht! you mun’n’t go on so – come in, and I’ll cure that. There now, hold ye still.’

With these words she suddenly splashed a pint of icy water down my neck, and pulled me into the kitchen. Mr Heathcliff followed, his accidental merriment expiring quickly in his habitual moroseness.

I was sick exceedingly, and dizzy and faint; and thus compelled, perforce, to accept lodgings under his roof. He told Zillah to give me a glass of brandy, and then passed on to the inner room, while she condoled with me on my sorry predicament, and having obeyed his orders, whereby I was somewhat revived, ushered me to bed.

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Wuthering Heights

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AUTHOR FILE

NAME: Emily Jane Brontë
BORN: 30 July 1818 in Thornton, Yorkshire
DIED: 19 December 1848 in Haworth, Yorkshire
NATIONALITY: English
LIVED: almost exclusively at her family home at Haworth in Yorkshire, apart from brief spells at a boarding school in Brussels, Belgium and teaching in Halifax.
SIBLINGS: four sisters: Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Anne, and one older brother, Branwell. Her elder sisters Maria and Elizabeth both died when still at boarding school, and her brother, Branwell, died of tuberculosis when he was only thirty-one years old.

What was she like?

Emily Brontë was a quiet and unsociable woman, but was very strong-willed and known to be quite stubborn. Her sisters Charlotte and Anne were her closest friends and the three of them wrote stories together from a young age. Emily was especially close to her youngest sister, Anne, and the two were often mistaken for twins. After catching a cold at her brother's funeral and refusing to see a doctor, Emily died of tuberculosis when she was only thirty years old.

Where did she grow up?

Emily was born in Thornton in Yorkshire and later moved to Haworth when her father was made the curate of a local parish. Her mother died when Emily was three years old, so her aunt moved in to help raise the children. Although her family was quite poor, Emily entertained herself by exploring the moors that surrounded Haworth with her siblings.

What did she do apart from writing books?

When she was twenty, Emily worked as a governess at Law Hill school in Halifax. The Brontë sisters dreamed of opening their own school, and Charlotte, Anne and Emily all spent time teaching at different points in their lives. Unfortunately, this dream was never realized, and when Emily's aunt died she returned to Haworth to help her father. When she wasn't writing she spent her time helping out with housework and caring for her father and brother.

Where did she get the idea for Wuthering Heights?

No one knows for certain where Emily got her inspiration for *Wuthering Heights*, but most people think that events in local history and her strong connection with the Yorkshire moors helped to form her ideas for the story and its locations.

What did people think of Wuthering Heights *when it was first published?*

Wuthering Heights was first published under the pseudonym Ellis Bell and received mixed reviews. Some people praised its passionate portrayal of Heathcliff and Cathy's destructive love for one another, with one reviewer saying that 'it is not every day that so good a novel makes its appearance'. However, others censured it for its violence and brutality, with one reviewer even saying that 'we know nothing in the whole range of our fictitious literature which presents such shocking pictures of the worst forms of humanity'. In 1850, two years after Emily's death, her sister Charlotte edited and published *Wuthering Heights* under Emily's real name. Nowadays it is considered to be one of the greatest works in English literature.

What other books did she write?

Wuthering Heights is Emily's only novel. It is believed that she had begun work on a second book shortly before she died, but no trace of it remains today.

WHO'S WHO IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Heathcliff – the brooding, passionate and violent protagonist of *Wuthering Heights,* Heathcliff is first brought to the Heights as an orphan, and instantly forms an unbreakable bond with Cathy, which later develops into an all-consuming love. After Cathy marries Edgar Linton, Heathcliff spends the rest of his life seeking revenge on all those who have denied him his happiness – including Cathy herself.

Catherine Earnshaw – the object of Heathcliff's violent affections, and the heroine of *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine, or Cathy, grows up at Wuthering Heights with her adored companion Heathcliff under the tyrannical eye of her brother, Hindley. She marries Edgar Linton when she is only seventeen, but she constantly struggles to suppress her passion for Heathcliff.

Edgar Linton – a spoilt boy who later proves to be a tender and loving husband, Edgar is the opposite of Heathcliff in every respect. He is the master of Thrushcross Grange and he marries Cathy, despite his suspicions of her love for Heathcliff.

Isabella Linton – Edgar's sister, Isabella is another character to be manipulated by Heathcliff. She runs away and marries him, and later lives at Wuthering Heights where Heathcliff constantly berates and torments her.

Nelly Dean – the narrator of most of the novel, Nelly (Ellen) Dean has served both the Linton and Earnshaw families during her life. She grows up with Cathy and Heathcliff and feels deeply involved in their story.

Hindley Earnshaw – Cathy's older brother, Hindley inherits Wuthering Heights when their father dies. He is deeply

resentful of Heathcliff and treats him very badly.

Hareton Earnshaw – the son of Hindley Earnshaw, Hareton is raised at Wuthering Heights into a life of violence and neglect. When Hindley dies, Heathcliff gains custody of Hareton but treats him as little better than a slave.

Cathy Linton – the daughter of Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar Linton, Cathy is similar to her mother in many respects, but also has a compassionate and caring side to her character.

Linton Heathcliff – the son of Heathcliff and Isabella, Linton spends the first thirteen years of his life away from the Heights in London with his mother. When Isabella dies, Heathcliff forces Linton to live with him at Wuthering Heights.

Joseph – the elderly servant who works at Wuthering Heights. Joseph speaks with a strong Yorkshire accent and is cruel and stubborn.

Mr Lockwood – the first character we meet in the book, Mr Lockwood is *Wuthering Heights*' other narrator, and provides us with an outsider's perspective on the story of Cathy and Heathcliff.

A GOTHIC GUIDE

A crumbling mansion, dramatic landscapes, the supernatural, violence and death – welcome to the world of the gothic novel…

Wuthering Heights is often referred to as a gothic novel – a name given to a type of book that was very popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many writers have tried their hand at writing one, and almost any book that is part of this genre is sure to contain the following:

- A mysterious, passionate hero is essential to the gothic romance. Many authors took their cue from the Romantic poet Lord Byron (1788–1824), who was said to be 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know' – can you think of anyone in *Wuthering Heights* who matches that description?
- There's nothing very scary about a sweet little cottage with roses around the door, is there? But put your characters into an old, dark house – or, even better, a castle – and you're guaranteed to set an atmospheric tone from the first page. Some of the most famous gothic settings include Count Dracula's castle in Transylvania, Thornfield Hall in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and, of course, Wuthering Heights.
- Hauntings and the supernatural are very popular in almost every gothic novel. Think of Mr Lockwood's first encounter with the young Catherine Earnshaw in the middle of the night… *Spooooky*.
- In a time where travel to remote places was still very difficult, writers set their stories in dramatic and forbidding landscapes to add to the drama. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is set around the spectacular Lake Geneva in Switzerland, and the dark, cold Yorkshire moors prove to be a fabulous gothic setting for the novels of the Brontë sisters.

SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT…

Why do you think *Wuthering Heights* is often described as a great love story? How is it different from other romance novels that you might have read before?

Which character do you care most about in *Wuthering Heights* and why? Do you think that any of the characters could be said to have a 'happy ending'?

Isabella Linton describes Heathcliff as 'only half a man'. Can you think of any other characters who suggest that he isn't human? Do you think this is a fair assessment?

Wuthering Heights is famous for its unconventional narrative, and the number of characters that tell the story. Think about who is telling the story at each point, and whether they are a reliable narrator. Do you think that other characters would have told the story in a different way?

When Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights in Chapter 9, he disappears for three years and returns a wealthy man. What do you think he did for that time? How do you think he made his money?

SOME THINGS TO DO…

Emily Brontë uses vivid language to describe the weather and the geography of the Yorkshire moors. Pick out some of your favourite quotes about the landscape of *Wuthering Heights* and draw or paint a picture – let your imagination run wild!

Imagine that you have been asked to write a modern version of *Wuthering Heights*. Where would you set the story? What would the characters do differently, or do the same? How could you present Heathcliff and Cathy to a twenty-first century audience?

The two families in *Wuthering Heights* – the Earnshaws and the Lintons – overlap and interlink at many points in the story. Write down the names of the Earnshaw family in one column and the Linton family in another and draw lines between anyone who is connected in the story. It will be quite a busy page!

Pick a dramatic moment in the novel – for example, when Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights or when Cathy first sees Heathcliff again – and write an account of it from that character's point of view.

Using the 'Gothic Guide', write a plan for your own gothic novel. Think of the location, characters and supernatural elements you would include.

DID YOU KNOW…

Wuthering Heights holds the library record for being the most widely available book written by a woman – there are over 26,000 copies available for borrowing in libraries all over the world!

The places in *Wuthering Heights* are based on real places in Haworth, the village where Emily Brontë lived. *Wuthering Heights* itself is modelled on a remote farm called Top Withens – you can even visit it.

There have been many different interpretations of *Wuthering Heights* over the years, including several films, sequels and even a song written about Heathcliff and Cathy! The first film of *Wuthering Heights* was made way back in 1939, and starred the famous Shakespearean actor Laurence Olivier as Heathcliff and Hollywood beauty Myrna Loy as Cathy.

Wuthering Heights was named Britain's favourite love story in a poll by a national newspaper in 2007, beating *Romeo and Juliet and Pride and Prejudice* to the number-one slot.

*See the *Palladium* for September 1850. [Charlotte Brontë's note.]