Introduction

The Brontës were a nineteenth-century literary family associated with the village of Haworth in the West Riding of Yorkshire, England. The sisters, Charlotte (1816–1855), Emily (1818–1848), and Anne (1820–1849), are well known as poets and novelists. Like many contemporary female writers, they originally published their poems and novels under male pseudonyms: Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Their stories immediately attracted attention, although not always the best, for their passion and originality. Charlotte's Jane Eyre was the first to know success, while Emily's Wuthering Heights, Anne's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and other works were later to be accepted as masterpieces of literature.

The three sisters and their brother, Branwell, were very close and during childhood developed their imaginations first through oral storytelling and play set in an intricate imaginary world, and then through the collaborative writing of increasingly complex stories set therein.

The deaths of first their mother, and then of their two older sisters marked them profoundly and influenced their writing, as did the relative isolation in which they were raised.

Their home, the parsonage at Haworth in Yorkshire, now the Brontë Parsonage Museum, has become a place of pilgrimage for hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

Origin of the name

The Brontë family can be traced to the Irish clan Ó Pronntaigh, which literally means "descendant of Pronntach". They were a family of hereditary scribes and literary men in Fermanagh. The version
Ó Proinntigh, which was first given by Father Woulfe in his Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall (Surnames of the Gael and the Foreigner) and reproduced without question by MacLysaght inter alia cannot be accepted as correct, as there were a number of well-known scribes with this name writing in Irish in the 17th and 18th centuries and all of them used the spelling Ó Pronntaigh. The name is derived from the word pronntach or bronntach, which is related to the word bronnadh, meaning giving or bestowal (pronn is given as an Ulster version of bronn in O'Reilly's Irish English Dictionary.) Father Woulfe, the author of Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall, suggested that it derives from proinnteach (a refectory of a monastery). Ó Pronntaigh was earlier anglicised as Prunty and sometimes Brunty.

At some point, the father of the sisters, Patrick Brontë (born Brunty), decided on the alternative spelling with the diaeresis over the terminal e to indicate that the name has two syllables. It is not known for certain what motivated him to do so, and multiple theories exist to account for the change. He may have wished to hide his humble origins. As a man of letters, he would have been familiar with classical Greek and may have chosen the name after the Greek βροντή (“thunder”). One view, put forward by the biographer C. K. Shorter in 1896, is that he adapted his name to associate himself with Admiral Horatio Nelson, who was also Duke of Bronte. Evidence for this may be found in his desire to associate himself with the Duke of Wellington in his form of dress.

Members of the Brontë family

Patrick Brontë

Patrick Brontë (17 March 1777 – 7 June 1861), was born in Loughbrickland, County Down, Ireland, of a family of farm workers of moderate means. His birth name was Patrick Prunty or Brunty. His mother Alice McClory, was of the Roman Catholic faith, whilst his father Hugh was a Protestant, and Patrick was brought up in his father's faith. He eventually became the Church of England perpetual curate of the parish of Haworth, and was also a poet, writer, and polemicist.

An Anglican priest of Irish extraction, he was born on St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1777. He was a bright young man and after being taught by the Rev. Thomas Tighe, he won a scholarship to St John's College, Cambridge, where he studied divinity and ancient and modern history. Attending Cambridge may have made him think his name was too Irish, and he changed its spelling to Brontë, perhaps in honour of Horatio Nelson who held the title of Duke of Bronte, whom Patrick admired. However, a more likely reason may have been that his brother was 'on the run' from the British for his involvement with the United Irishmen and he wanted to distance himself from the name Prunty. Having obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree, he was ordained on 10 August 1806. He is the author of Cottage Poems (1811), The Rural Minstrel (1814), numerous pamphlets and newspaper articles, and various rural poems.

In 1812, he met and married 29-year-old Maria Branwell and by 1820 had moved into the parsonage at Haworth where he took up the post of Perpetual curate (Haworth was an ancient chapelry in the large parish of Bradford, so he could not be rector or vicar.) They had six children. On the death of his wife in 1821, his sister in law, Elizabeth Branwell, came from Penzance, Cornwall to help him bring up the children. Open, intelligent, generous, and personally taking care of their education, he bought all the books and toys the children asked for and accorded them great freedom and unconditional love, but nevertheless embittered their lives due to his eccentric habits and peculiar theories of education.
After several unlucky attempts to seek a new spouse, Patrick came to terms with widowerhood at the age of 47, and spent his time visiting the sick and the poor, giving sermons and administering communion, leaving the three sisters Emily, Charlotte, Anne, and their brother Branwell alone with their aunt and a maid, Tabitha Aykroyd (Tabby), who tirelessly recounted local legends in her Yorkshire dialect while preparing the meals. He survived his entire family, and six years after Charlotte's death he died in 1861 at the age of 84. At the end he was helped by his son-in-law, the Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls.

Maria, née Branwell

Patrick's wife Maria Brontë, née Branwell, (15 April 1783 – 15 September 1821), originated in Penzance, Cornwall and came from a comfortably well off, middle-class family. Her father had a flourishing tea and grocery store and had accumulated considerable wealth. Maria died at the age of 38 from uterine cancer. She married the same day as her younger sister Charlotte, in the church at Guiseley, after her fiancé had celebrated the union of two other couples. She was a literate and pious woman, known for her lively spirit, joyfulness and tenderness, and it was she who designed the samplers that are on display in the museum, and had them embroidered by her children. She left memories with her husband and with Charlotte, the oldest surviving sibling, of a very vivacious woman at the parsonage. The younger ones, particularly Emily and Anne, admitted to retaining only vague images of their mother, especially of her suffering in her sickbed.

Elizabeth Branwell

Elizabeth Branwell (2 December 1776 – 29 October 1842) arrived from Penzance in 1821, aged 45, after the death of Maria, her younger sister, to help Patrick look after the children, and was known as 'Aunt Branwell'. Elizabeth Branwell, who raised the children after the death of their mother, was a Methodist. It seems, nevertheless, that her denomination did not exert any influence on the children. It was Aunt Branwell who taught the children arithmetic, the alphabet, how to sew, embroidery and cross-stitching appropriate for ladies. Aunt Branwell also gave them books and subscribed to Fraser's Magazine, less interesting than Blackwood's, but, nevertheless, providing plenty of material for discussion. She was a generous person who dedicated her life to her nieces and nephew, neither marrying nor returning to visit her relations in Cornwall. She died from bowel obstruction on October 1842, after a brief agony, comforted by her beloved nephew Branwell. In her last will, Aunt Branwell, left to her three nieces the considerable sum of £900, which allowed them to stop their previous, low paid jobs as governesses and teachers.

The children

Maria, the eldest, was born in Clough House, High Town on 23 April 1814. She suffered hunger, cold, and privation at Cowan Bridge School. Charlotte describes her as very lively, very sensitive, and particularly advanced in her reading. She returned from school with an advanced case of
tuberculosis, and died at Haworth at the age of eleven on 6 May 1825.

Elizabeth (1815–1825), the second child, joined her sister Maria at Cowan Bridge where she suffered the same fate. Elizabeth was less vivacious than her brother and her sisters, and apparently less advanced for her age. She died on 15 June 1825 within two weeks of returning home to her father.

Charlotte, born in Thornton near Bradford, West Riding of Yorkshire on 21 April 1816, was a poet and novelist and is the author of Jane Eyre, her best known work, and three other novels. She died on 31 March 1855 just before reaching the age of 39.

Patrick Branwell was born in Thornton on 26 June 1817. Known as Branwell, he was a painter, writer and casual worker. He became addicted to alcohol and laudanum and died at Haworth on 24 September 1848 at the age of 31.

Emily Jane, born in Thornton, 30 July 1818, was a poet and novelist. She died in Haworth on 19 December 1848 at the age of 30. Wuthering Heights was her only novel.

Anne, born in Thornton on 17 January 1820, was a poet and novelist who died at the age of 29. She wrote a largely autobiographical novel entitled Agnes Grey. Her second novel, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848), was far more ambitious. She died on 28 May 1849 in Scarborough, North Riding of Yorkshire.

Education

Early education

Patrick Brontë faced a challenge in arranging for the education of the girls of his family, which was barely middle class. They had no significant connections and he could not afford the fees for them to attend an established school for young ladies. One solution was the schools where the fees were reduced to a minimum – so called "charity schools" – with a mission to assist families such as those of the lower clergy. One cannot accuse Mr. Brontë of not having done everything possible to find a solution that he thought would be best for his daughters. As Barker comments, he had read in the Leeds Intelligencer of 6 November 1823 the reports of cases in the Court of Commons in Bowes, and he later read other cases decided on 24 November 1824 near Richmond, two towns in the county of Yorkshire, where pupils had been discovered gnawed by rats, and suffering from malnutrition to the extent that some of them had lost their sight. There was nothing to suggest that the Reverend Carus Wilson's Clergy Daughters' School would not provide a good education and good care for his daughters. The school was not expensive, and its patrons (supporters who allowed the school to use their names) were all respected people, including the daughter of Hannah Moore, an author of recognised works and a close friend of the poet William Cowper, both proponents of a correct education for young girls; and the offspring of different prelates and even certain acquaintances of Patrick Brontë including William Wilberforce, young women whose fathers had also been educated at St John's College, Cambridge. Thus Brontë believed Wilson's school to have a number of the necessary guarantees.
In 1824, the four eldest girls (excluding Anne) entered the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, which educated the children of less prosperous members of the clergy, which had been recommended to Mr Brontë. The following year, Maria and Elizabeth fell gravely ill and were removed from the school, but died shortly afterwards within a few weeks of each other on 6 May and 15 June 1825. Charlotte and Emily were also withdrawn from the school and returned to Haworth. The loss of their sisters was a trauma that showed in Charlotte's writing. In Jane Eyre, Cowan Bridge becomes Lowood, Maria is represented by the character of the young Helen Burns, the cruelty of the mistress Miss Andrews by that of Miss Scatcherd, and the tyranny of the headmaster, the Rev. Carus Wilson, by that of Mr Brocklehurst.

Tuberculosis, which afflicted Maria and Elizabeth in 1825, was the eventual cause of death of the surviving Brontës: Branwell in September 1848, Emily in December 1848, Anne eight months later in May 1849, and finally Charlotte in 1855.

In 1831, 14-year-old Charlotte was enrolled at the school of Miss Wooler in Roe Head, Mirfield. Patrick could have sent his daughter to a less costly school in Keighley nearer home but Miss Wooler and her sisters had a good reputation and he remembered the building which he passed when strolling around the parishes of Kirklees, Dewsbury, and Hartshead-cum-Clifton where he was vicar. Margaret Wooler showed fondness towards the sisters and she accompanied Charlotte to the altar at her marriage. Patrick's choice of school was excellent – Charlotte was happy there and studied well. She made many lifelong friends, in particular Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor who later went to New Zealand before returning to England. Charlotte returned from Roe Head in June 1832, missing her friends, but happy to rejoin her family.

Three years later, Miss Wooler offered her former pupil a position as her assistant. The family decided that Emily would accompany her to pursue studies that would otherwise have been unaffordable. Emily's fees were partly covered by Charlotte's salary. Emily was 17 and it was the first time she had left Haworth since leaving Cowan Bridge. On 29 July 1835, the sisters left for Roe Head. The same day, Branwell wrote a letter to the Royal Academy of Art in London, to present several of his drawings as part of his candidature as a probationary student.

Charlotte taught, and wrote about her students without much sympathy. Emily did not settle and after three months she seemed to decline and had to be taken home to the parsonage. Anne took her place and stayed until Christmas 1837.

Charlotte avoided boredom by following the development of Angria which she received in letters from her brother. During holidays at Haworth, she wrote long narratives while being reproached by her father who wanted her to become more involved in parish affairs. These were coming to a head over the imposition of the Church rates, a local tax levied on parishes where the majority of the population were dissenters. In the meantime, Miss Wooler moved to Heald's House, at Dewsbury Moor, where Charlotte complained about the humidity that made her unwell. Upon leaving the establishment in 1838 Miss Wooler presented her with a parting gift of The Vision of Don Roderick and Rokeby, a collection of poems by Walter Scott.
The children became interested in writing from an early age, initially as a game which later matured into a passion. Although they all displayed a talent for narrative, it was the younger ones whose pastime it became to develop them. At the centre of the children's creativity were twelve wooden soldiers which Patrick Brontë gave to Branwell at the beginning of June 1826. These toy soldiers instantly fired their imaginations and they spoke of them as the Young Men, and gave them names. However, it was not until December 1827 that their ideas took written form, and the imaginary African kingdom of Glass Town came into existence, followed by the Empire of Angria. Emily and Anne created Gondal, an island continent in the North Pacific, ruled by a woman, after the departure of Charlotte in 1831. In the beginning, these stories were written in little books, the size of a matchbox (about 1.5 x 2.5 inches—3.8 x 6.4 cm), and cursorily bound with thread. The pages were filled with close, minute writing, often in capital letters without punctuation and embellished with illustrations, detailed maps, schemes, landscapes, and plans of buildings, created by the children according to their specialisations. The idea was that the books were of a size for the soldiers to read. The complexity of the stories matured as the children's imaginations developed, fed by reading the three weekly or monthly magazines to which their father had subscribed, or the newspapers that were bought daily from John Greenwood's local news and stationery store.

These fictional worlds were the product of fertile imagination fed by reading, discussion, and a passion for literature. Far from suffering from the negative influences that never left them and which were reflected in the works of their later, more mature years, the Brontë children absorbed them with open arms.

The press

The periodicals that Patrick Brontë read were a mine of information for his children. The Leeds Intelligencer and Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, conservative and well written, but better than the Quarterly Review that defended the same political ideas whilst addressing a less refined readership (the reason Mr. Brontë did not read it), were exploited in every detail. Blackwood's Magazine in particular, was not only the source of their knowledge of world affairs, but also provided material for the Brontës' early writing. For instance, an article in the June, 1826 number of Blackwood's, provides commentary on new discoveries from the exploration of central Africa. The map included with the article highlights geographical features the Brontës reference in their tales: the Jibbel Kumera (the Mountains of the Moon), Ashantee, and the rivers Niger and Calabar. The author also advises the British to expand into Africa from Fernando Po, where, Christine Alexander notes, the Brontë children locate the Great Glass Town. Their knowledge of geography was completed by Goldsmith's Grammar of General Geography, which the Brontës owned and
heavily annotated.

Lord Byron

From 1833, Charlotte and Branwell's Angrian tales begin to feature Byronic heroes who have a strong sexual magnetism and passionate spirit, and demonstrate arrogance and even black-heartedness. Again, it is in an article in Blackwood's Magazine from August 1825 that they discover the poet for the first time; he had died the previous year. From this moment, the name Byron became synonymous with all the prohibitions and audacities as if it had stirred up the very essence of the rise of those forbidden things. Branwell's Charlotte Zamorna, one of the heroes of Verdopolis, tends towards increasingly ambiguous behaviour, and the same influence and evolution recur with the Brontës, especially in the characters of Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, and Mr. Rochester in Jane Eyre, who display the traits of a Byronic hero. Numerous other works have left their mark on the Brontës—the Thousand and One Nights for example, which inspired jinn in which they became themselves in the centre of their kingdoms, while adding a touch of exoticism.

John Martin

The children's imagination was also influenced by three prints of engravings in mezzotint by John Martin around 1820. Charlotte and Branwell made copies of the prints Belshazzar's Feast, Déluge, and Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon (1816), which hung on the walls of the parsonage.

Martin's fantastic architecture is reflected in the Glass Town and Angrian writings, where he appears himself among Branwell's characters and under the name of Edward de Lisle, the greatest painter and portraitist of Verdopolis, the capital of Glass Town. One of Sir Edward de Lisle's major works, Les Quatre Genii en Conseil, is inspired by Martin's illustration for John Milton's Paradise Lost. Together with Byron, John Martin seems to have been one of the artistic influences essential to the Brontës' universe.

Anne's morals and realism

The influence revealed by Agnes Grey and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is much less clear. Anne's works are largely founded on her experience as a governess and on that of her brother's decline. Furthermore, they demonstrate her conviction, a legacy from her father, that books should provide moral education. This sense of moral duty and the need to record it, are more evident in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. The influence of the gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, Gregory "Monk" Lewis and Charles Maturin is noticeable, and that of Walter Scott too, if only because the heroine, abandoned and left alone, resists not only by her almost supernatural talents, but mainly due to the power drawn from her temperament.
Jane Eyre, Agnes Grey, then The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Shirley, Villette and even The Professor present a linear structure concerning a character who advances through life after several trials and tribulations, to find a kind of happiness in love and virtue, recalling the works of religious inspiration of the 17th century such as John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress or his Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners. In a more profane manner, the hero or heroine follows a picaresque itinerary such as in Miguel de Cervantes (1547–16), Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), Henry Fielding (1707–1764) and Tobias Smollett (1721–1771). This lively tradition continued into the 19th century with the rags to riches genre to which almost all the great Victorian romancers have contributed. The protagonist is thrown by fate into poverty and after many difficulties achieves a golden happiness. Often an artifice is employed to effect the passage from one state to another such as an unexpected inheritance, a miraculous gift, grand reunions, etc. and in a sense, it is the route followed by Charlotte's and Anne's protagonists, even if the riches they win are more those of the heart than of the wallet. Apart from its Gothic elements, Wuthering Heights moves like a Greek tragedy and possesses its music, the cosmic dimensions of the epics of John Milton, and the power of the Shakespearian theatre. One can hear the echoes of King Lear as well as the completely different characters of Romeo and Juliet. The Brontës were also seduced by the writings of Walter Scott, and in 1834 Charlotte exclaimed, "For fiction, read Walter Scott and only him – all novels after his are without value."

Governesses, and Charlotte's idea

Early teaching opportunities

Through their father's influence and their own intellectual curiosity, they were able to benefit from an education that placed them among knowledgeable people, but Mr Brontë's emoluments were modest. The only options open to the girls were either marriage or a choice between the professions of school mistress or governess. The Brontë sisters found positions in families educating often rebellious young children, or employment as school teachers. The possibility of becoming a paid companion to a rich and solitary woman might have been a fall-back role but one which would have bored any of the sisters intolerably. Janet Todd's Mary Wollstonecraft, a revolutionary life mentions the predicament, and none of the Brontë girls seems seriously to have considered a similar eventuality.

Only Emily never became a governess. Her sole professional experience would be an experiment in teaching during six months of intolerable exile in Miss Patchett's school at Law Hill (between Haworth and Halifax). In contrast, Charlotte had teaching positions at Miss Margaret Wooler's school, and in Brussels with the Hegers. She became governess to the Sidgwick, the Stonegappes, and the Lotherdales where she worked for several months in 1839, then with Mrs White, at Upperhouse House, Rawdon, from March to September 1841. Anne became a governess and worked for Mrs Ingham, at Blake Hall, Mirfield from April to December 1839, then for Mrs Robinson at Thorp Green Hall, Little Ouseburn, near York, where she also obtained employment for her brother in an attempt to stabilise him; an attempt that proved futile.

Working as governesses
The family's finances did not flourish, and Aunt Branwell spent the money with caution. Emily had a visceral need of her home and the countryside that surrounded it, and to leave it would cause her to languish and wither. Charlotte and Anne, being more realistic, did not hesitate in finding work and from April 1839 to December 1841 the two sisters had several posts as governesses. Not staying long with each family, their employment would last for some months or a single season. However, Anne did stay with the Robinsons in Thorp Green where things went well, from May 1840 to June 1845.

In the meantime, Charlotte had an idea that would place all the advantages on her side. On advice from her father and friends, she thought that she and her sisters had the intellectual capacity to create a school for young girls in the parsonage where their Sunday School classes took place. It was agreed to offer the future pupils the opportunity of correctly learning modern languages and that preparation for this should be done abroad, which led to a further decision. Among the possibilities Paris and Lille were considered, but were rejected due to aversion to the French. Indeed, the French revolution and the Napoleonic wars had not been forgotten by the Tory spirited and deeply conservative girls. On the recommendation of a pastor based in Brussels, who wanted to be of help, Belgium was chosen, where they could also study German, and music. Aunt Branwell provided the funds for the Brussels project.

School project and study trip to Brussels

Emily and Charlotte arrived in Brussels in February 1842 accompanied by their father. Once there, they enrolled at Monsieur and Madame Heger's boarding school in the Rue d'Isabelle, for six months. Claire Heger was the second wife of Constantin, and it was she who founded and directed the school while Constantin had the responsibility for the higher French classes. According to Miss Wheelwright, a former pupil, he had the intellect of a genius. He was passionate about his auditorium, demanding many lectures, perspectives, and structured analyses. He was also a good-looking man with regular features, bushy hair, very black whiskers, and wore an excited expression while sounding forth on great authors about whom he invited his students to make a pastiche on general or philosophical themes.

The lessons, especially those of Constantin Heger, were very much appreciated by Charlotte, and the two sisters showed exceptional intelligence, although Emily hardly liked her teacher and was somewhat rebellious. Emily learned German and to play the piano with natural brilliance and very quickly the two sisters were writing literary and philosophical essays in an advanced level of French. After six months of study, Mme Heger suggested they stay at the boarding school free of charge, in return for giving some lessons. After much hesitation, the girls accepted. Neither of them felt particularly attached to their students, and only one, Mademoiselle de Bassompierre, then aged 16, later expressed any affection for her teacher, which in Emily's case appeared to be mutual, and made her a gift of a signed, detailed drawing of a storm ravaged pine tree.

Return and recall
The death of their aunt in October of the same year forced them to return once more to Haworth. Aunt Branwell had left all her worldly goods in equal shares to her nieces and to Eliza Kingston, a cousin in Penzance, which had the immediate effect of purging all their debts and providing a small reserve of funds. Nevertheless, they were asked to return to Brussels as they were regarded as being competent and were needed. They were each offered teaching posts in the boarding school, still English for Charlotte and music for Emily. However, Charlotte returned alone to Belgium in January 1843, while Emily remained critical of Monsieur Heger, in spite of the excellent opinion he held of her. He later stated that she 'had the spirit of a man', and would probably become a great traveller due to her being gifted with a superior faculty of reason that allowed her to deduce ancient knowledge of new spheres of knowledge, and her unbending willpower would have triumphed over all obstacles.

Charlotte returns

Almost a year to the day, enamoured already for some time of Monsieur Heger, Charlotte resigned and returned to Haworth. Her life there had not been without suffering, and on one occasion she ventured into the cathedral and entered a confessional. She may have had intention of converting to Catholicism, but it would only have been for a short time.

Life at Haworth had become more difficult during her absence. Mr. Brontë had lost his sight although his cataract had nevertheless been operated on with success in Manchester, and it was there in August 1846, when Charlotte arrived at his bedside that she began to write Jane Eyre. Meanwhile, her brother Branwell fell into a rapid decline punctuated by dramas, drunkenness, and delirium. Due partly to Branwell's poor reputation, the school project failed and was abandoned.

Charlotte wrote four long, very personal, and sometimes vague letters to Monsieur Héger that never received replies. The extent of Charlotte Brontë's feelings for Heger were not fully realised until 1913, when her letters to him were published for the first time. Heger had first shown them to Mrs. Gaskell when she visited him in 1856 while researching her biography The Life of Charlotte Brontë, but she concealed their true significance. These letters, referred to as the "Heger Letters", had been ripped up at some stage by Heger, but his wife had retrieved the pieces from the wastepaper bin and meticulously glued or sewn them back together. Paul Heger, Constantin's son, and his sisters gave these letters to the British Museum, and they were shortly thereafter printed in The Times newspaper.

Brontë sisters' literary career

First publication: Poems, by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell

The writing that had begun so early never left the family. Charlotte had ambition like her brother (though Branwell was kept at a distance from her project) and wrote to the poet laureate Robert Southey to submit several poems of his style; she received a hardly encouraging reply after several months. Southey, still illustrious although his star has somewhat waned, was one of the great figures of English Romanticism, with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and
shared the prejudice of the times: literature, or more particularly poetry (for women had been publishing fiction and enjoying critical, popular and economic success for over a century by this time), was considered a man's business, and not an appropriate occupation for ladies.

However, Charlotte did not allow herself to be discouraged. Furthermore, coincidence came to her aid. One day in autumn 1845 while alone in the dining room she noticed a small notebook lying open on in the drawer of Emily's portable writing desk and of my sister Emily's handwriting. She read it and was dazzled by the beauty of the poems that she did not know. The discovery of this treasure was what she recalled five years later, and according to Juliet Barker, she erased the excitement that she had felt, more than surprise […], a deep conviction that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write. I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and genuine. To my ear, they had a peculiar music – wild, melancholy, and elevating. In the following paragraph Charlotte describes her sister's indignant reaction at her having ventured into such an intimate realm with impunity. It took Emily hours to calm down and days to be convinced to publish the poems.

Charlotte envisaged a joint publication by the three sisters. Anne was easily won over to the project, and the work was shared, compared, and edited. Once the poems had been chosen, nineteen for Charlotte and twenty-one each for Anne and Emily, Charlotte went about searching for a publisher. She took advice from William and Robert Chambers of Edinburgh, directors of one of their favourite magazines, Chambers's Edinburgh Journal. It is thought, although no documents exist to support the claim, that they advised the girls to contact Aylott & Jones, a small publishing house at 8, Paternoster Row, London, who accepted but rather at the authors' own risk as they felt the commercial risk to the company was too great. The work thus appeared in 1846, published using the male pseudonyms of Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily), and Acton (Anne) Bell. These were very uncommon forenames but the initials of each of the sisters were preserved and the patronym could have been inspired by that of the vicar of the parish, Arthur Bell Nicholls. It was in fact on 18 May 1845 that he took up his duties at Haworth, at the moment when the publication project was well advanced.

The book attracted hardly any attention. Only three copies were sold, of which one was purchased by Fredrick Enoch, a resident of Cornmarket, Warwick, who in admiration, wrote to the publisher to request an autograph – the only extant single document carrying the three author's signatures in their pseudonyms, and they continued creating their prose, each one producing a book a year later. The three girls always worked in secret, unceasingly discussing their writing for hours at the dinner table, after which their father would open the door at 9 p. m. with Don't stay up late, Girls!, then rewinding the clock and taking the stairs to his room upstairs.

Fame

1847

Charlotte's Jane Eyre, Emily's Wuthering Heights, and Anne's Agnes Grey, appeared in 1847 after many tribulations, again for reasons of finding a publisher. The packets containing the manuscripts often returned to the parsonage and Charlotte simply added a new address and did this at least a dozen times during the year. The first one was finally published by Smith, Elder & Co in London, of which the 23-year-old owner George Smith had been specialised until then in
publishing scientific revues aided by his perspicacious reader, William Smith Williams and remained faithful to the family. Those of Emily and Anne were confided to Thomas Cautley Newby who intended to compile a three-decker, more economical for sale and for loan in the circulating libraries the two first volumes to include Wuthering Heights and the third one Agnes Grey. Both the novels attracted critical acclaim, occasionally harsh about Wuthering Heights, praised for the originality of the subject and its narrative style, but viewed with suspect because of its outrageous violence and immorality – surely, the critics wrote, a work of a man with a depraved mind – fairly neutral about Agnes Grey, more flattering in spite of certain commentators denouncing it as an affront to morals and good mores, for Jane Eyre which soon became what would be called today a best-seller.

Jane Eyre and rising fame

The anonymous (Currer Bell) publication in 1847 of Jane Eyre, An Autobiography, established a dazzling reputation for Charlotte. In July 1848, Charlotte and Anne (Emily had refused to go along with them) travelled by train to London to prove to Smith, Elder & Co that each sister was indeed an independent author, for Thomas Cautley Newby, the publisher of Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey, had launched a rumour that the three novels were the work of one author, understood to be Ellis Bell (Emily). George Smith was extremely surprised to find two gawky, ill-dressed country girls paralysed with fear, who, to identify themselves, held out the letters addressed to Messrs. Acton, Currer and Ellis Bell. Taken by such surprise, he introduced them to his mother with all the dignity their talent merited, and invited them to the opera for a performance of Rossini's Barber of Seville.

Wuthering Heights

Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights was published in 1847 under the masculine pseudonym Ellis Bell, by Thomas Cautley Newby, in two companion volumes to that of Anne's (Acton Bell), Agnes Grey. Controversial from the start of its release, its originality, its subject, narrative style and troubled action raised intrigue. Certain critics condemned it, but sales were nevertheless considerable for a novel from an unknown author and which defied all conventions.

It is a work of black Romanticism, covering three generations isolated in the cold or the spring of the countryside with two opposing elements: the dignified manor of Thrushcross Grange and the rambling dilapidated pile of Wuthering Heights. The main characters, swept by tumults of the earth, the skies and the hearts, are strange and often possessed of unheard of violence and deprivations. The story is told in a scholarly fashion, with two narrators, the traveller and tenant Lockwood, and the housekeeper/governess, Nelly Dean, with two sections in the first person, one direct, one cloaked, which overlap each other with digressions and sub-plots that form, from apparently scattered fragments, a coherently locked unit.

1848, Anne's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall
One year before her death in May 1849, Anne published a second novel. Far more ambitious than her previous novel, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall was a great success and rapidly outsold Emily's Wuthering Heights. However, the critical reception was mixed — praise for the novel's "power" and "effect" and sharp criticism for being "coarse". Charlotte Brontë herself, Anne's sister, wrote to her publisher that it "hardly seems to me desirable to preserve ... the choice of subject in that work is a mistake." After Anne's death, Charlotte prevented the novel's republication and thus condemned her sister to temporary oblivion.

The master theme is the alcoholism of a man who causes the downfall of his family. Helen Graham, the central character, gets married for love to Arthur Huntingdon, whom she soon discovers to be lecherous, violent, and alcoholic. She is forced to break with the conventions that keep her in the family home that has become hell, and to leave with her child to seek secret refuge in the old house of Wildfell Hall. When the alcohol causes her husband's ultimate decline, she returns to care for him in total abnegation until his death.

Today, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is considered by most of the critics to be one of the first sustained feminist novels.

Charlotte Brontë

Denunciation of boarding schools (Jane Eyre)

Conditions at the school at Cowan Bridge, where Maria and Elizabeth may have contracted the tuberculosis from which they died, were probably no worse than those at many other schools of the time. (For example, several decades before the Brontë sisters' experience at Cowan Bridge, Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra contracted typhus at a similar boarding school, and Jane nearly died. The Austen sisters' education, like that of the Brontë sisters, was continued at home.) Nevertheless, Charlotte blamed Cowan Bridge for her sisters' deaths, especially its poor medical care – chiefly, repeated emetics and blood-lettings – and the negligence of the school's doctor – who was the director's brother-in-law. Charlotte's vivid memories of the privations at Cowan Bridge were poured into her depiction of Lowood School in Jane Eyre: the scanty and at times spoiled food, the lack of heating and adequate clothing, the periodic epidemics of illness such as low fever (probably typhus), the severity and arbitrariness of the punishments, and even the harshness of particular teachers (a Miss Andrews who taught at Cowan Bridge is thought to have been Charlotte's model for Miss Scatcherd in Jane Eyre). While Elizabeth Gaskell, a personal friend and the first biographer of Charlotte, confirmed that Cowan Bridge was Charlotte's model for Lowood and insisted that conditions there in Charlotte's day were egregious, more recent biographers have argued that the food, clothing, heating, medical care, discipline, etc. at Cowan Bridge were not considered sub-standard for religious schools of the time. One scholar has even commended Patrick Brontë for his perspicacity in removing all his daughters from the school, a few weeks before the deaths of Maria and Elizabeth.

Literary encounters
Following the overwhelming success of Jane Eyre, Charlotte was pressured by George Smith, her publisher, with whom she was in love, to travel to London to meet her public. Despite the extreme timidity that paralysed her among strangers and made her almost incapable of expressing herself, Charlotte consented to be lionised, and in London was introduced to other great writers of the era, including Harriet Martineau and William Makepeace Thackeray, both of whom befriended her. Charlotte especially admired Thackeray, whose portrait, given to her by Smith, still hangs in the dining room at Haworth parsonage.

On one occasion Thackeray apparently introduced Charlotte to his mother during a public gathering as Jane Eyre and when Charlotte called on him the next day, received an extended dressing-down, in which Smith had to intervene.

During her trip to London in 1851 she visited the Great Exhibition and The Crystal Palace. In 1849 she published Shirley and in 1853 Villette.

Marriage and death

The Brontë sisters were highly amused by the behaviour of the curates they met. Arthur Bell Nicholls (1818–1906) had been curate of Haworth for seven and a half years, when contrary to all expectations, and to the fury of Patrick Brontë (their father), he proposed to Charlotte. Although impressed by his dignity and deep voice, as well as by his near complete emotional collapse when she rejected him, she found him rigid, conventional, and rather narrow-minded 'like all the curates' – as she wrote to Ellen Nussey. After she declined his proposal Nicholls, pursued by the anger of Patrick Brontë, left his functions for several months. However, little by little her feelings evolved and after slowly convincing her father, she finally married Nicholls on 29 June 1854.

On return from their honeymoon in Ireland where she had been introduced to Mr. Nicholls' aunt and cousins, her life completely changed. She adopted her new duties as a wife that took up most of her time, she wrote to her friends telling them that Nicholls was a good and attentive husband, but that she nevertheless felt a kind of holy terror at her new situation. In a letter to Ellen Nussey (Nell), in 1854 she wrote Indeed-indeed-Nell-it is a solemn and strange and perilous thing for a woman to become a wife.

The following year she died aged 38. The cause of death given at the time was tuberculosis, but it may have been complicated with typhoid fever (the water at Haworth being likely contaminated due to poor sanitation and the vast cemetery that surrounded the church and the parsonage) and her pregnancy that was in its early stage.

The first biography of Charlotte was written by Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell at the request of Patrick Brontë, and published in 1857, helping to create the myth of a family of condemned genius, living in a painful and romantic solitude. After having stayed at Haworth several times and having accommodated Charlotte in Plymouth Grove, Manchester, and become her friend and confidant, Mrs Gaskell had certainly had the advantage of knowing the family.
Branwell Brontë

Patrick Branwell Brontë (1817–1848) was considered by his father and sisters to be a genius. On the other hand, the book by Daphne du Maurier (1986), The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë, contains numerous references to his addiction to alcohol and laudanum. He was an intelligent boy with many talents and interested in many subjects, especially literature. He was often the driving force in the Brontë siblings' construction of the imaginary worlds. He was artistic and encouraged by his father to pursue this.

Whilst trying to make a name as an artist, he left for London but in several days used up in cafés of ill-repute the allowance provided by his father. His attempts to obtain low paid work failed, and very quickly he foundered in alcohol and laudanum and was unable to regain his stability.

Anne Brontë obtained employment for him in January 1843, but nearly three years later he was dismissed. In September 1848, after several years of decline, he died from tuberculosis. On his death, his father tearfully repeated, "My brilliant boy", while the clearheaded and totally loyal Emily wrote that his condition had been "hopeless".

Branwell is the author of Juvenilia, which he wrote as a child with his sister Charlotte, Glass Town, Angria, poems, pieces of prose and verse under the pseudonym of Northangerland, such as "Real Rest", published by the Halifax Guardian (8 November 1846) from several articles accepted by local newspapers and from an unfinished novel probably from around 1845 entitled And the Weary are at Rest.

Emily Brontë

Emily Brontë (1818–1848) has been called the "Sphinx of Literature", writing without the slightest desire for fame and only for her own satisfaction. She was obsessively timid outside the family circle to the point of turning her back on her partners in conversation without saying a word.

With a single novel, Wuthering Heights (1847), and poems of an elementary power, she reached the heights of literature. Almost unknown during her life, posterity classes her as "top level" in the literary canon of English literature. Simone de Beauvoir, in The Second Sex (1949), wrote that—of all women who ever lived—only three female writers: Brontë, Virginia Woolf and "sometimes" Katherine Mansfield actually explored "the given".

Above all, Emily loved to wander about the wild landscape of the moors around Haworth. In September 1848 her health began to decline rapidly. Consumptive, but refusing all treatment, with the exception of a visit from a London doctor – because although it was already too late, her relatives insisted.[citation needed] Despite popular belief, Emily did not die on the dining room sofa. There is no contemporary evidence for the story and Charlotte, in her letter to William Smith Williams, mentions Emily's dog Keeper lying at the side of her dying-bed. It is possible that she left an unfinished manuscript which Charlotte burned to avoid such controversy as followed the publication of Wuthering Heights. Several documents exist that allude to the possibility, although no proof corroborating this suggestion has ever been found.
Emily Brontë's poems

Emily's poems were probably written to be inserted in the saga of Gondal, with which she identified herself with several of the characters right into her adulthood. At the age of 28 she still acted out scenes from the little books with Anne while travelling on the train to York. "Remembrance" was one of the 21 of Emily's poems that were chosen for the 1846 joint publication before which, Emily had deleted all references to Gondal.

Anne Brontë

Anne wasn't as celebrated as her other two sisters. Her second novel, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, was prevented from being republished after Anne's death by her sister Charlotte. Charlotte wrote to her publisher that "Wildfell Hall it hardly appears to me desirable to preserve. The choice of subject in that work is a mistake, it was too little consonant with the character, tastes and ideas of the gentle, retiring inexperienced writer." This prevention is considered to be the main reason for Anne's being less renowned than her sisters.

Anne's health began to decline rapidly, like that of her brother and sister some months earlier. On 5 April 1849, she wrote to Ellen Nussey asking her to accompany her to Scarborough on the east coast. Anne hoped that the sea air would improve her health, as recommended by the doctor, and Charlotte finally agreed to go.

On the Sunday morning she felt weaker and asked if she could be taken back to Haworth. The doctor confirmed that she was near to death and Anne thanked him for his candour. "Take courage, take courage" she murmured to Charlotte. She died at 2 pm on Monday 18 May. She is buried in the cemetery of St Mary's of Scarborough. Her gravestone carried an error in her age in the inscription because she died at the age of 29 and not at 28. It was noticed by Charlotte during her only visit, and she had the intention of asking the mason to correct it. Ill health did not leave him time to effect the repair and the tombstone remained in the same state until replaced by the Brontë Society in April 2013.

Northern England at the time of the Brontës

In her 1857 biography The Life of Charlotte Brontë, Mrs Gaskell begins with two explanatory and descriptive chapters. The first one covers the wild countryside of the West Riding of Yorkshire, the little village of Haworth, the parsonage and the church surrounded by its vast cemetery perched on the top of a hill. The second chapter presents an overview of the social, sanitary, and economic conditions of the region. The following works up to the most recent: The Brontës by Juliet Barker (1994) : bound volume, 1995, occupy a large place in these elements which in several ways have contributed to mould and create in them the extraordinary characters which they became.
Social, sanitary, and economic conditions in Haworth

The death toll within the Brontë family was not unusual and left little impression on the village population, who were confronted with death on a daily basis. When Patrick Brontë arrived, the parish suffered from unemployment. The men sought work in the quarries and local handicrafts. The only businesses were the pharmacy which supplied Branwell, and John Greenwood's stationery store in which the Brontës were the best customers.

Haworth's population grew rapidly during the first half of the 18th century, from hardly 1,000 to 3,365 in 50 years. The village did not have a sewage system and the well water was contaminated by faecal matter and the decomposition of bodies in the cemetery on the hilltop. Life expectancy was less than 25 years and infant mortality was around 41% of children under six months of age. Most of the population lived from working the poorly fertile land of the moors and supplemented their incomes with work done at home, such as spinning and weaving wool from the sheep that were farmed on the moors. Conditions changed and the textile industry, already present since the end of the 17th century, grew in the mills on the banks of the River Worth, whose waters turned the wheels which consequently required fewer people to work them.

The Brontës were a nineteenth-century literary family associated with the village of Haworth in the West Riding of Yorkshire, England. The sisters, Charlotte (1816–1855), Emily (1818–1848), and Anne (1820–1849), are well known as poets and novelists. Like many contemporary female writers, they originally published their poems and novels under male pseudonyms: Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Their stories immediately attracted attention, although not always the best, for their passion and originality. Charlotte's Jane Eyre was the first to know success, while Emily's Wuthering Heights, Anne's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and other works were later to be accepted as masterpieces of literature.

The three sisters and their brother, Branwell, were very close and during childhood developed their imaginations first through oral storytelling and play set in an intricate imaginary world, and then through the collaborative writing of increasingly complex stories set therein.

The deaths of first their mother, and then of their two older sisters marked them profoundly and influenced their writing, as did the relative isolation in which they were raised.

Their home, the parsonage at Haworth in Yorkshire, now the Brontë Parsonage Museum, has become a place of pilgrimage for hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.
JANE EYRE by Charlotte Bronte author of Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette, Professor (Annotated) by her sister's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Agnes Grey and Wuthering Heights eBook: CHARLOTTE BRONTE, DAN DYER: Amazon.in: Kindle Store. THE PROFESSOR by Charlotte Bronte author of Jane Eyre - Of all the prefaces, that written for Emily's Wuthering Heights' merits particular interest; to Villette; Introduction to The Professor; Introduction to Wuthering Heights But Charlotte Brontë« is Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe.... since he attributes to Emily the book of her sister Anne, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. PDF Wuthering Heights by Shirley Isherwood - dyndns.co.za - (Annotated) by her sisters The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Agnes Grey and ieucoaoiaoa83 PDF AGNES GREY by Anne Bronte author of The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, sister's Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette, Professor and Wuthering Heights by Anne Anne Brontë« : tous les produits - Page 4 - Compre AGNES GREY by Anne Bronte author of The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Agnes Grey (Annotated) by her sister's Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette, Professor and success, while Emily's Wuthering Heights, Anne's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and *** PDF Jane Eyre Classis Version Annotated Quotes Author s - THE PROFESSOR by Charlotte Bronte author of Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette, Professor (Annotated) by her sister's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Agnes Grey and Some Common Features in the Brontë« Sisters' Novels: Brontë« - Best shirley by charlotte bronte author of jane eyre shirley villette professor annotated by her sisters the tenant of wildfell hall agnes grey and wuthering heights THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL by Anne Bronte author of - A new deluxe publication of the works of the Bronte sisters. Includes Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Shirley, The Professor, Villette, Agnes Grey, Poems. Home Emily Bronte, Anne Bronte, Charlotte Bronte Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Shirley, .. Books for your passion. THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL by Anne Bronte author of - After their mother's death in 1821, Charlotte and her sisters, Maria and Heights by Emily Brontë«, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Anne Brontë«, Villette by Ch Here The Bronte Sisters: Three Novels: Jane Eyre; Wuthering Heights; and Agnes books,Shirley',Villette' and the posthumously-publishedThe Professor' are all JANE EYRE by Charlotte Bronte author of Jane Eyre, Shirley - of Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette, Professor (Annotated) by her sister's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Agnes Grey and Wuthering. Heights file PDF Book only if you are JANE EYRE by Charlotte Bronte author of Jane Eyre, Shirley - Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte are three of the most remarkable Sign up for LibraryThing to find out whether you'll like this book. The Professor Shirley The Tenant of Wildfell Hall Villette Wuthering Heights. Original title. The Bronte Sisters - The Complete Novels (Annotated) + Extras (Annotated)
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