

THE PRESENCE OF PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTË IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

by

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Charlotte and Branwell Brontë, unlike their sister Emily, made devoted friends and kept up a wide correspondence. The little we know about Emily Brontë is drawn from the impressions of others, not revelations she made personally. Therefore, any study of Emily Brontë necessitates delving into the writings of her relations and their friends. Such evidence is not always trustworthy. For example, Francis Henry Grundy, a friend of Branwell's, wrote in his Pictures of the Past that the Brontë sisters were "distant and distraught, large of nose, small of figure, red of hair, prominent of spectacles."¹ We know that parts of this description are false because none of those more intimately connected with the Brontës concur with it; only Charlotte and Branwell wore spectacles and Branwell alone had red hair. Proceeding, then, with care I have attempted in this paper to show to what extent Branwell Brontë is present in his sister Emily's sole novel, Wuthering Heights. I believe it is advisable, at least by way of introduction, to establish what Branwell and Emily's relationship was like.

However, before establishing the nature of Emily's

relationship to Branwell, one might do well to explode a few of the legends which surround them. These legends seem to have been encouraged by A. Mary F. Robinson's biography of Emily, which was published in 1883. In writing this biography Miss Robinson, according to C. K. Shorter, "had access to no material other than that contained in printed volumes."² Besides the fact that she did not deal with any new material, her biography of Emily has at least two other weaknesses:

In the first place she sometimes embroiders a doubtful tale, already told by somebody else, with matter of her own invention, the purpose of such embroidery being, apparently, to keep her narrative on a high level of pathos In the second place she occasionally makes large assumptions and treats them as established facts, without warning her readers that she has strayed into the realm of pure conjecture.³

Thus we can see that in using Miss Robinson's biography for scholarly work some restraint is necessary.

One of the tales encouraged by Miss Robinson recounts Emily's heroic efforts in saving Branwell's life from a fire which he started accidentally while reading in bed and then falling into a drunken stupor. He must have "upset the light on to the sheets, for they and the bed were all on fire."⁴ I believe that G. F. Bradby in his The Brontës and Other Essays successfully discredits this legend. He points out the fact that Branwell, "as he grew worse and wilder,"⁵ slept with his father. Rev. Brontë, incidentally, had a deep-seated

fear of fire, and the interior of the parsonage, according to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte's life-long friend, "lacked drapery of all kinds. Mr. Brontë's horror of fire forbade curtains to the windows. There was not much carpet anywhere except in the sittingroom and on the study floor. The hall floor and stairs were sandstoned." ⁶ Bradby wonders how Rev. Brontë, a nervous man, could sleep through all the hysterics, noise, and smoke being produced right outside his door. It also seems strange that Branwell, who was in the center of the blaze, was not burned.

The second legend, also perpetrated by Miss Robinson, is the attribution of Emily's death to the crushing blow of Branwell's own death. I see at least three separate viewpoints one can hold in dealing with Emily's death. The known facts are that Emily caught a cold at Branwell's funeral, refused all medical attention, and continued to perform her daily tasks until the very day of her death. She joined Branwell under the stones of Haworth church only eighty-six days after his own demise. Charlotte, in her letters, gives a blow by blow account of Emily's illness. On September 30, 1848, we would have found Emily in church, listening to Branwell's funeral sermon. A week or two later, Charlotte wrote: "Emily has a cold and cough at present . . . Emily's cold and cough are very obstinate. I fear she has pain in her chest, and I sometimes catch a shortness in her breathing when she has moved at all quickly." ⁷ By November, Emily had "not rallied yet. She

is very ill I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in all the world." In December, Charlotte wrote sadly that:

Emily suffers no more from pain or weakness now . . . there is no Emily in time, or on earth now We are very calm at present. Why should we be otherwise? The anguish of seeing her suffer is gone by: the funeral day is past. We feel she is at peace. No need to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them. She died in a time of promise But it is God's will, and the place where she has gone is better than that which she has left.⁸

One can look at the facts objectively and believe that Emily died of "galloping consumption," whatever that is, and refused medical aid because she was either too courageous or too stubborn.

Interpreted romantically, one would have to start from the premise that Branwell and Emily were kindred spirits, that when he died she had no raison d'etre, and promptly withered away. Miss Robinson, it must be noted, helped to establish this viewpoint, a viewpoint upon which other legends have, in turn, been built. Her theorizing on the tender relationship which supposedly existed between Emily and Branwell laid the foundation for this viewpoint. After Branwell died unreclaimed and unrepentent, Emily, "she who so mourned her brother," decided to follow him quickly to the grave because "The motive of her life seemed gone."⁹ This is pure conjecture on the part of Miss Robinson, because the only recorded comments of Emily's on Branwell's condition do not reveal such sentiments.

Bradby feels that Miss Robinson was led to such conjectures because she "was convinced that her heroine's refusal to be nursed must have had its roots in some gentler feeling than an obstinate pride in self. Miss Robinson found the cause in a broken heart."¹⁰

Viewed psychologically, Emily caught a "psychosomatic chill" and not only allowed herself to die, but actually had a very strong death wish. The sensitive Emily, viewed from this angle, was emotionally unprepared for the unfavorable reviews received by Wuthering Heights; she was depressed and her fellow failure Branwell died, making her realize how impossible the struggle was. The famous review which Charlotte read to the dying Emily from The North American Review seems to give us the impression that all the reviews were unfavorable. We remember Ellis Bell being characterized as the "man of uncommon talents, but dogged, brutal and morose."¹¹ Actually Emily must have read the English reviews which appeared sometime before any review in an American paper and these were not totally discouraging.

In the rosewood desk which was Emily's, and upon which she probably wrote most of Wuthering Heights, five reviews, totalling fifteen thousand words, were found. Four of these reviews were from The Atlas, The Examiner, Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper and Britannia (there is no name on the fourth cutting, but it has been identified). The fifth cannot be traced. These reviews do contain some favorable passages.

The review in Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper

reads as follows:

. . . we strongly recommend all our readers who love novelty to get this story, for we can promise that they never had read anything like it before. It is very puzzling and very interesting, and if we had space we would willingly devote a little more time to the analysis of this remarkable story, but we must leave it to our readers to decide what sort of book it is.¹²

The review from an unknown source states that:

It is not every day that so good a novel makes its appearance and to give its contents in detail would be depriving many a reader of half the delight he would experience from the perusal of the work itself. To its pages we must refer him then. There he will have ample opportunity of sympathising-- if he has one touch of nature that 'makes the whole world kin'--with the feelings of childhood, youth, manhood, and age, and all the emotions and passions which agitate the restless bosom of humanity. May he derive from it the delight we have ourselves experienced, and be equally grateful to its author for the genuine pleasure he has afforded him.¹³

The Britannia critic feels that:

He [Ellis Bell] displays considerable power in his creations. They have all the angularity of misshapen growth, and form in this respect a striking contrast to those regular forms we are accustomed to meet with in English fiction. They are so new, so wildly grotesque, so entirely without art that they strike us as proceeding from a mind of limited experience, but of original energy and of a singular and distinctive cast.¹⁴

Only The Atlas review is decidedly unflattering. While these reviews do not rapturously extoll the virtues of Ellis Bell and Wuthering Heights, some phrases or passages would please a new author, one who had just published his first

work. I personally doubt that Emily Jane thought herself judged an artistic failure.

Though the reason for Emily's firm decision not to seek medical help can be blamed on pride, or on a belief that Nature would heal her, or on a belief that she was immutable, or on some type of mania, there seems to be no doubt that in the very last hours before her death she clung tenaciously to life. She finally called for a doctor. It was, however, too late. Throughout the rest of her life, Charlotte herself returned over and over again to the day on which Emily died. She says:

I cannot forget Emily's death-day; it becomes a more fixed, a darker, a more frequently recurring idea in my mind than ever. It was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute out of a happy life.¹⁵

Although Charlotte has rhetorically heightened the dramatic effect of her last sentence, the central idea remains: Emily died unwillingly, she did not long for death.

Not only is Emily's corpse laid at the feet of Branwell, but Emily, in turn, is held responsible, by some, for the death of Anne! In The Three Brontës we read that "As Emily died of Branwell's death, so Emily's death hastened Anne's."¹⁶ Phyllis Bentley in The Brontë Sisters states, in speaking of the deaths of Emily and Anne, that:

. . . when all that has been said, one cannot but feel that these two deaths within six months, of young women thirty and twenty-nine (i.e., past the most dangerous tubercular age), must have had some striking psychological cause. Anne and Emily were inseparable friends in life; it was not altogether surprising that the milder and weaker and younger girl,

who had always been delicate, should make haste to follow the stronger of the pair to the grave.¹⁷

It seems that some critics believe that the Brontës' love for each other was of a particularly deadly nature. I see no reason for Miss Bentley to state that the deaths of Emily and Anne "must have had some striking psychological cause."¹⁸ Charlotte, in her letters, mentions that Anne had a cough and was ailing while Emily, unknown to them, was slowly dying. Anne, who lacked Emily's pride and metaphysic, willingly sought help from doctors. She journeyed to Scarborough, hoping that the sea air would revive her wasted body. All this to no avail: Anne lies buried in Scarborough, the only Brontë not interred at Haworth. It is not apparent that Anne "made haste" to follow Emily in death.

Closely related to these legends is the work of some scholars, such as Edith Kinsley and Norma Crandall. Delving into Emily's poetry these scholars, who evidently do not believe that poets can imagine, can write of things never experienced, find the record of an incestuous relationship between Branwell and Emily. I am afraid that these critics have been driven to such an extreme and, I believe, untenable position by the very dearth of material on Emily. Such stanzas of Emily's verse as the following are quoted in building their argument:

Thy raving, dying victim see,
Lost, cursed, degraded, all for thee!
Gaze on the wretch, recall to mind
His golden days left long behind.

And

There, lingering in the wild embrace
Youth's warm affections gave,
She sits and fondly seems to trace
His features in the wave.¹⁹

One cannot accept the thesis that Branwell and Emily were lovers, without forgetting that they spent a great deal of their lives in imaginary lands where love was an often felt emotion; an emotion which is quite easy to imagine. On this point, Bradby states that:

. . . Emily was a poet, and poets can feel passionately about imagined experiences, as well as about their contacts with real life. If they did not, Tennyson (to take one instance only) could never have written Maud. There is passion and romance in Maud, yet in his actual relations with women, Tennyson was never either passionate or romantic.²⁰

If a critic still feels that he must go on and correlate Emily's personal life with her poetry, he will find several problems awaiting him. One of these problems comes into being upon comparing the biographical material surviving from Emily's own hand to the poems written during the same time period. One of these scraps of biographical material is the birthday letter of July 30, 1841, addressed to Anne. Emily and Anne had the pleasant custom of exchanging letters on their birthdays; these letters were to be opened on their birthdays three or four years later. Muriel Spark believes that the letter of 1841 is characterized by a "buoyancy of spirit"²¹ and I agree wholeheartedly with her. Miss Spark goes on to note the lack of similarity between the hopeful, even cheerful letter, and the "tragic mood of her

recent poems--with their stress on themes of death, remorse, revenge, imprisonment--." Emily was not hiding her true state of mind in the letter from Anne, because Anne would see both the letter and the poems. Miss Spark's conclusion is that Emily's poems were "more objectively conceived than they appear to be."²²

If a critic is willing to restrict his interpretation of the poems to those which are strictly personal he must then distinguish them from the Gondal poems. This is not easily done. In a short article, "The Gondal Story," which appears in The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë, edited by Hatfield, the prestigious Brontë scholar Fannie Ratchford states that most and "perhaps all" of Emily Brontë's poems pertain to Gondal and that "approximately one-half of the one hundred and ninety-three poems and fragments printed by Mr. Hatfield, including the longer and more important pieces, take their places in the Gondal pattern." Miss Ratchford feels that "Thus Emily Brontë's own voice turns into nonsense the hundreds of pages of Brontë's biography based on the subjective interpretation of her poems."²³ Because of the arguments stated in the preceding paragraphs I must reject the use of Emily's poems in establishing her feelings for Branwell. Instead I now turn to an analysis of Emily's character and life.

It has been noted that if any one trait marked all the Brontë children it was shyness. In 1833 the Brontës met with Ellen Nussey and her companions at the

Devonshire Arms Hotel at Bolton Bridge. During the journey to their destination the Brontës were in high spirits, however, as

. . . the dog-cart rattles noisily into the open space in front of the Devonshire Arms, and the Brontës see the carriage and its occupants . . . there is silence; Branwell contrasts his humble equipage with that which . . . stands at the inn door, and a flush of mortified pride colours his face; the sisters scarcely note this contrast, but to their dismay they see that their friend is not alone The laughter is stilled; even Branwell's volubility is at an end; the glad light dies from their eyes, and when they alight and submit to the process of being introduced to Miss N's companions, their faces are as dull and as commonplace as their dresses Miss N still recalls that painful moment when the merry talk and laughter of her friends were quenched at the sight of the company awaiting them, and when throughout a day to which all had looked forward with anticipations of delight, the three Brontës clung to each other or to their friend, scarcely venturing to speak above a whisper, and betraying in every look and word the positive agony which filled their hearts when a stranger approached them 24

Grundy characterizes the Brontë girls with their "eyes constantly cast down, very silent, painfully retiring,"²⁵ and speaks of Branwell's "downcast look which never varied, save for a rapid momentary glance at long intervals."²⁶

The "crushing Brontë timidity"²⁷ predominated in Emily and finally grew to "an almost impenetrable aloofness."²⁸ As an adolescent, Ellen Nussey thought that Emily had "very beautiful eyes, kind, kindling liquid eyes . . . she did not often look at you. She was too reserved." Only on the moors was Emily's "reserve replaced by naive delight."²⁹ Apparently Emily never outgrew this shyness completely because when she was twenty-four M. Heger wrote to her

father that: "Miss Emily was learning the piano, receiving lessons from the best professor in Belgium, and she herself had little little pupils. She was losing whatever remained of ignorance, and also of what was worse--timidity."³⁰

This statement, incidentally, contrasts starkly with the one M. Hegér made about Emily fifteen years later. The now famous passage begins with "She should have been a man-- a great navigator . . ."³¹ The once timid young woman after having attained literary success had become, in retrospect, a "great navigator," a strong masculine spirit.

Phyllis Bentley has noted the number of times the word lone or one of its derivatives appears in key positions in the poems of Emily Brontë^N. While I believe that Emily felt herself to be alone, I do not believe that her façade of shyness and timidity hid a strong desire to be with other people and communicate with them. According to Ellen Nussey, Emily had "a strength of self-containment seen in no other . . . and talked very little."³² Muriel Spark states that Emily "had no apparent desire for any company outside her family."³³ Bradby says that Emily "did not care for people. She had no curiosity to enter into and explore their minds; and her own she instinctively bolted and barred in their presence. She was more alone in company than in solitude which she could people with her fancies."³⁴

If we accept this delineation of Emily Brontë["] we realize that she did not find strangers appealing and,

therefore, did not go out of her way to make herself appealing. It is not surprising then that "most of those of her own social standing who came in contact with her found her most difficult to get on with."³⁵ In 1924, Sir Clifford Allbutt wrote: "It was not Charlotte who was 'gey ill to live with' but Emily. No human being . . . could get along with Emily Brontë."³⁶ Because Emily's extreme shyness often bordered on rudeness, Charlotte's anxious question to a visitor who had just returned from a walk with Emily was, "How did Emily behave?"³⁷

In the biographical notice to the second edition of Wuthering Heights, Charlotte says of Emily:

. . . 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.³⁸

It was Charlotte who arranged and planned two of Emily's three ventures into the world outside Haworth. Charlotte, determined that the Brontë sisters would make their own way in the world, brought Emily to the Roe Head School and to the Pensionat Hegér in Brussels. In 1845 Charlotte accidentally found Emily's poetry.

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.³⁹

Charlotte then states that she had to beg Emily for days in order to gain her permission to have the poems published. Permission was finally, but reluctantly, given. Emily was,

as Charlotte had said, unconcerned with the ways of the world; her world was centered around the moors and craigs of Yorkshire; Haworth and its inmates. In fact, Charlotte compares Emily to a nun, a nun who is unaware of the traffic outside her convent gates.

Emily's life did revolve around Haworth. However, we must understand that even at Haworth her realm of experience was severly limited. The other Brontës taught Sunday school or belonged to organizations in the village, e. g., Branwell belonged to and was an active member of a Masonic lodge at Haworth and a boxing club, whereas Emily rarely ventured outside the parsonage door "except to go to church or take a walk on the hills . . . Though her feeling for the people round was benevolent, intercourse with them was never sought; nor, with very few exceptions, ever experienced."⁴⁰

Emily left her beloved Haworth only three times. The first instance occurred when Charlotte taught at Roe Head School and obtained free tuition for her sister. However, Emily's health quickly began to fail. Speaking of Emily, Charlotte notes that

Every morning when she woke, the vision of home and the moors rushed on her, and darkened and saddened the day that lay before her. Nobody knew what ailed her but me. I knew only too well. In this struggle her health was quickly broken: her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home, and with this conviction obtained her recall. She had only been three months at school.⁴¹

At the Pensionat Hegér Emily was miserable. Away from her

accustomed surroundings, surroundings which had provided "the only media they had for expressing their creative genius," Emily's literary output dwindled to almost nothing. 42
At the death of their Aunt Branwell, Emily and Charlotte returned to Haworth. Emily's third absence from Haworth lasted six months. She taught at Law Hill School, Southowram, near Halifax. In all, Emily spent approximately two of her thirty years away from Haworth.

In these two years away from Haworth what man or men came within the circumference of Emily's narrow experiences? Could any other men outside of Haworth have influenced Emily in her portrayal of various men in Wuthering Heights? We do not find any mention or suggestion of the unsociable Emily having made any lasting contact with a male outside of the family.

We get no clue from her work that she ever experienced a love affair, far less that she ever entertained amorous feelings for a living person; love is a conceptual though passionate emotion in Emily Brontë's work. In contemporary reports, there is no indication of her falling in love with anyone; moreover, there is no sign that, merely lacking the opportunity of meeting men, she did not fall in love. She does not appear to have needed any object of amorous or sexual attention. That is not to say she was without passion, but to say that passion in her, was not focussed towards attachments to her fellowmen. In other words, she appears to have been a born celibate . . . 43

Some critics, however, have attempted to link her name with M. Hegér and with William Weightman, her father's young curate. This can only be attributed to some type of carry over because Hegér was Charlotte's mentor and Anne has traditionally thought to have been in love with Weightman,

who flirted with her, and with other girls in the Haworth area.

The most ridiculous connection of Emily Brontë with a male centers around the name Louis Parensell. Louis may be referred to as Emily's lost love: the wretch, "whom she met at Miss Patchet's school at Law Hill," who caused her death.⁴⁴ Poor Louis is so lost he, in fact, never existed. The two words Louis Parensell are found, according to Virginia Moore, on a poem of Emily's in Charlotte's handwriting. This poem was eventually printed after Emily's death as "Last Words." Unfortunately for the manufacturers of legend, experts in the manuscript department of the British Museum say that the words Louis Parensell have been misread for Love's Farewell. Louis, therefore, is written out of existence. Apparently there is no one to take his place.

If Emily was physically, at least, contained at the Haworth parsonage, if most of her experience with other human beings could be equated with her experiences and relationships with her brother and sisters, we can see how important these relationships are. And what were Emily's relationships with her brother and sisters? Two of Emily's sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, died when Emily was but seven. Though it is certain that the death of Maria had a traumatic effect on Branwell, the death of these two sisters is not known to have effected Emily greatly. They did, however, set the tone of death and desperation which overclouded the parsonage.

Together, Emily and Anne wrote the Gondal material. Anne, the least imaginative of the Brontës, was used by Emily as a sounding board. That is, Emily would write a poem on a certain subject and then Anne would, two or three months later, write a poem on the same or a closely related theme. This was one aspect of their literary relationship. Did Anne ever penetrate behind Emily's aloofness and read her soul?

It is impossible to say, for Anne died within a few months of Emily, leaving no records except her simple poems and her two novels. Ellen Nussey says that in their childhood the two youngest of the Bronte girls were like twins, always together and always in harmony. They had collaborated over the Gondal stories and paced arm-in-arm round the parlour table. Probably Anne understood her sister's moods better than anybody else; but it is difficult to believe that she could have sympathized with, or even understood, that sister's deepest and most daring thoughts.⁴⁵

It is doubtful whether the pious Anne could or did probe into the depths of Emily's complex personality.

Charlotte herself was surprised that Emily wrote poetry not "at all like the poetry women generally write."⁴⁶ At the time of Charlotte's discovery of Emily's poems, Emily had only two more years to live. By then an impasse is believed to have been formed between the quiet, strong, and philosophic Emily and Charlotte, who was more successful in adapting herself to the real world.

Charlotte was, though she did not know it, just the kind of elder sister to whom a rather shy and sensitive genius could never have opened its secret doors--practical, critical, and quietly, kindly, but persistently dominating. She and Emily could never have been kindred spirits. Their minds and imaginations moved on different planes.⁴⁷

It has been suggested that Emily did not like Charlotte. She disagreed, for example, with Charlotte on the aesthetic values of paintings in the various London galleries. She also enjoyed seeing Charlotte frightened at the prospect of being near strange, unknown animals. However, Emily went along with Charlotte's plans for her study at Roe Head and Brussels. Charlotte enthusiastically conceived of the idea of the Brontë sisters opening their own school. This idea was met with less than wholehearted approval from Emily and Anne. Writing to M. Heger about the school, Charlotte says that

Emily does not care much for teaching, but she would look after the housekeeping, and, although something of a recluse, she is too goodhearted not to do all she could for the well-being of the children.⁴⁸

That Emily was going to contribute in her own way to Charlotte's proposed Brontë⁴¹ school is certain; that she breathed a sigh of relief when the dream shattered is probable.

On December 1, 1827, Charlotte and Emily established their "best plays." These "best plays" meant "secret plays; they are very nice ones. All our plays are very strange ones."⁴⁹ Eventually, however, Charlotte gravitated to Branwell and they collaborated in writing the Angria legends. In childhood, Branwell was Charlotte's idol. Scholars do not imagine that Branwell, who had an egocentric nature, had an early affinity for the shy and tight-lipped Emily.

If Branwell and Emily cannot be thought of as incestuous lovers or literary collaborators in childhood,

together they could be regarded as religious rebels. Branwell's cynicism about religion and his refusal to attend religious services undoubtedly hurt his father. Regardless of what Branwell really believed or the torments and doubts he endured, he did put forth a rebellious attitude toward religion. An early verse demonstrates this:

We say the world was made by one
Who's seen or heard or known by none;
We say that He, the Almighty God,
Has framed creation with a nod,
And that he loves our race so well
He hurls our spirits into Hell.
No, Heaven is but an earthly dream.
'Tis Man makes God--not God makes him.⁵⁰

In Pattern for Genius, Edith Kinsley says that:

If the early enmity between Branwell and Emily often terrified their sisters, it was not so terrifying as their later affinity. From infancy they had united in truancy, in running away to the moors. It was intellectual revolt which effected an inseparable alliance between them. Emily was the more rational and resolute of the two. In becoming an unbeliever--and this was a colossal adventure for the child of a clergyman in the 1820's--she formed new concepts for herself, concepts greater and more satisfying than she had lost; therefore, she took her freedom of thought without guilt. It was otherwise with Branwell. Perhaps, for that reason, he was the more daring.⁵¹

In contrast to Branwell, Emily attained the most sophisticated and individual metaphysic of all the Brontës.¹¹ Her ideas on religion, on God, are very much different from the Hellfire and Damnation of her Aunt Branwell, who raised the Brontës, or her father, the Rev. Patrick Brontë. Poems such as "No Coward Soul is Mine" and the philosophical and theological implications of Wuthering Heights make us

realize that Emily "was far removed from orthodoxy, and that what faith she retained she held, not with the help of, but in spite of, religious formulae."⁵² Mary Taylor, a friend of Charlotte's and quite a rebel herself, remembered that on a visit to Haworth she

. . . mentioned that someone has asked me what religion I was (with a view to getting me for a partisan). I had said that was between God and me. Emily, who was lying on the hearth rug, exclaimed; 'That's right.' This was all I ever heard Emily say on religious subjects . . .⁵³

With similar exterior attitudes coming from drastically divergent sources, I believe that Emily could at least respect Branwell's opinions on religion and his rebellious attitude, since she was a religious rebel herself.

In the eyes of the world and according to the world's standards, Emily and Branwell were both failures. We have already mentioned Emily's inability to survive outside of Haworth. Anne was strong enough to serve as a governess for four years at Thorp Green; Charlotte continued her studies at the Pensionat Heger without Emily and acted in various positions as governess. Emily was quite happy to stay at home and perform in the role of housewife and nurse; Rev. Brontë⁴ was then suffering from failing eyesight.

Branwell, who was raised with the idea of certainly attaining the highest realms of greatness, suffered his initial defeat when he went to London in order to be accepted at the Royal Academy of Arts. Branwell did not even apply, spent most of his time at the Castle Tavern,

and returned home without any money. In 1835 only Emily of his sisters was at Haworth to greet him.

It may have been as well for Branwell that it happened to be Emily who was at home, for Emily could understand his predicament if anybody in the family could. She had just, herself, suffered a mortifying failure at Roe Head and fled home on an impulse of self-preservation, different in degree but not in nature, from his. It was not work that daunted Emily, but the removal from surroundings essential to her nature. It may well be that in that first association of brother and sister, there was formed that closeness of understanding and tolerance which united Emily to Branwell in his direst need at the end of his life.⁵⁴

For different reasons, Emily too was repelled by London; as Charlotte said, "It [visiting London] is one no power on earth would induce Ellis Bell to avail himself of."⁵⁵

Biographers of Emily, due to Miss Robinson, have attempted to portray Emily as the all-forgiving, devoted, understanding, and sympathetic sister of a drunken, dope-addict of a brother. Miss Robinson states that:

. . . there was one woman's heart strong enough in its compassion to bear the daily disgusts, weaknesses, sins of Branwell's life, and yet persist in aid and affection. She never wandered in her kindness. In that silent house it was the silent Emily who had ever a cheering word for Branwell; it was Emily who still remembered that he was her brother, without that remembrance forcing her heart to numbness. She still hoped to win him back by love.⁵⁶

This is all very heart stirring; however, Miss Robinson had no substantial evidence upon which to base her interpretation of the Branwell-Emily relationship. We have only two recorded comments of Emily's on Branwell's depraved condition. In 1845, after Branwell returned from Thorp

Green and his affair with Mrs. Lydia Robinson, Emily and Anne recorded that Branwell had recently "had much tribulation and ill health" and were hoping that "he would be better and do better hereafter."⁵⁷ At this point, however, Charlotte considered Branwell as unredeemable. Emily, in 1846, wrote to Charlotte that Branwell "is a hopeless being."⁵⁸ He had just gotten a sovereign from his father, pretending that he was going to pay a debt with it. Instead he used it for drink.

Certainly Branwell, a year from his death, was a "hopeless being." I feel that at this time Emily realized, as did Branwell himself, that his undisciplined childhood, coupled with an overflowing, emotional temperament had crippled him and made him unfit to live in the real world. One scholar feels that Emily "characterized him with a mildness which seems a miracle of understatement."⁵⁹ Emily, I think, simply realized the true state of affairs, while Charlotte in her many comments on Branwell's condition could only berate him for not finding employment, for embarrassing the family, for making their home unpleasant. Branwell, for example, once told a friend of his visit to a dying Sunday school girl to whom he read, at her request, a psalm and hymn. Not stopping at the Black Bull Tavern, but coming "straight home" in a depressed state of mind, Charlotte questioned him as to his mood. When he told her what he had been doing Charlotte

. . . looked at me with a look I shall never
forget--if I live to be a hundred years old
. . . . It wounded me as if someone had struck

me a blow to the mouth. It involved ever so many things in it. It was a dubious look. It ran over me, questioning and examining, as if I had been a wild beast. It said, 'Did my ears deceive me or did I hear aright?' And then came the painful, baffled expression, which was worse than all. It said, 'I wonder if that's true?'⁶⁰

As I stated earlier, Branwell and Emily did not collaborate in literary productions during their childhood. This is not to say that the older children, Branwell and Charlotte, did not influence the younger sisters, Emily and Anne. For example, one can find the use of similar or identical names in the Angrian and Gondal material. However, in 1835, when only Emily and Branwell were at Haworth, a "close association between these two" is believed to have developed.⁶¹ This idea is based on the fact that

Five short lyrics, one slightly longer poem, and parts of three long ones now assigned to Branwell have been printed as Emily's, and this not only because of confusion of manuscripts and similarity of handwriting, but because they are really like Emily. Not Emily at her best or second best, but such as a clever and sensitive imitator might readily produce, unconscious of imitation. All these poems belong to the years 1836, '37, and '38, when Emily and Branwell were both at home, not continuously but more or less, and Charlotte and Anne mostly absent.⁶²

Emily is also known to have copied Branwell's poem "Sir Henry Tunstall" for him, a poem thought to be his best.

Friends of the deceased Branwell suggested, in the last century, that he was the true author of Wuthering Heights. Those who still uphold this theory bring forth the most ridiculous of arguments in support of their cause.

Miss Alice Law, for example, argues that Emily could not have written Wuthering Heights simply because she was a woman. Miss Law apparently has not recovered from a bad case of Victorian sensitivity; neither has she read Emily's Gondal poems in which the barest outlines of Wuthering Heights can be traced. Emily is thus relegated by Miss Law to a life of pink sateen pillows and needlework. I believe that there is enough external evidence to totally confound any argument put forth for Branwell's authorship of Wuthering Heights. Even a hasty glance at Branwell's attempted novel, "And the Weary are at Rest," will demonstrate how impossible the above assertion is.

We know that Branwell Brontë's father expected him to produce, in his mature years, the fruits of genius. Though not the eldest child, he was set above the girls. As Charlotte says, "My poor father naturally thought more of his only son than his daughters, and much and long as he had suffered on his account, he cried out for his loss like David for that of Absalom--My son! my son! and refused to be comforted."⁶³ By the age of twenty, however, the Rev. Patrick Brontë's only son had started on the path of disintegration which would end in death ten years later. Emily, who, I believe, had more in common with Branwell than Anne or Charlotte and, therefore, understood the reasons for his hopeless deterioration, watched his slow, but sure, collapse. Charlotte wrote in the biographical notice to the second edition of Wuthering Heights that Emily and Anne

"always wrote from the impulse of nature, the dictates of intuition, and from such stores of observation as their limited experiences had enabled them to amass." ⁶⁴ We have already seen how very limited Emily's experience was.

There are two main critical positions on whether Branwell's shadow can be found in Wuthering Heights. Some critics completely reject the thesis that Emily consciously or subconsciously drew upon Branwell in her characterizations of various male characters. These critics, like Miss Law, depart on their own arguments from Miss Robinson's sentimental version of the Branwell-Emily connection. Miss Law feels that Emily loved Branwell so much that to have "used" him is unthinkable. She states:

As for the suggestion made both by Sir Wemyss Reid and Miss Robinson, that Emily drew the study of Heathcliff from her unfortunate brother's experiences, that she was so cruelly detached from human sympathy as to 'use' his vices for her own artistic ends, and so 'drew its profit from her brother's shame,' the suggestion is an outrage on this loving guardian of her brother. If we interpret that fiery nature aright, we must believe that Emily would rather have bitten out her tongue or burnt off the offending hand than have uttered or penned a line that should defame him.⁶⁵

We have already shown that there is no positive proof that Emily was the "loving guardian of her brother."

Muriel Spark bases her rejection of the thesis on the fact that Branwell was too close to the Brontë⁶⁶ sisters and offered no mystery to be solved. However, she states that while Branwell was drowning his troubles at the Black Bull Tavern, "The sisters, awed, frightened, impressed,

contemptuous, and a little thrilled looked on and sighed when the creditors came to the door."⁶⁶ A few pages later Miss Spark states:

While they wrote the books, Branwell was rapidly deteriorating, and so it is sometimes claimed that Emily and Anne drew upon their brother for 'copy', reproducing him in their novels. This seems unlikely; they actually saw too much of Branwell to use him effectively in this way. There was no mystery in Branwell to be worked out in their novels.⁶⁷

This does not make sense. Surely if the Brontë^s sisters were "awed, frightened, impressed, contemptuous, and a little thrilled" over Branwell and his actions he would be on their minds. They could not dismiss him with a yawn. During Branwell's last three years his dissipation and disease increased ten fold; there was still much shock value left. Miss Spark writes a psychological study of Emily Brontë^s, and yet she discounts any subconscious use of Branwell by Emily. If the feelings the Brontë^s sisters had regarding Branwell were too volatile for them to handle on the surface, perhaps they were driven underground, where they remained until called. I think that Miss Spark's interpretation of this problem is influenced by the fact that she thinks Branwell a mediocre person, one who was "neither a dissipated villain nor broken-hearted hero."⁶⁸ Obviously a second-rater, the Brontës^s had no reason to call upon him in the construction of their masterpieces..

At the opposite end of the critical scale we find critics and biographers who suggest that Branwell is not only found in the Brontës^s' works, but actually motivated them

to write in order to obtain a catharsis. One of these biographers is the noble Mrs. Gaskell who, believes Sir Wemyss Reid,

. . . carried away by her honest womanly horror of hardened vice, gives us to understand that the tragic turning-point in the lives of the sisters was connected with the disgrace and ruin of their brother It is not so. There may be disappointment among those who have been nurtured on the traditions of Brontë^u romance when they find that the reality is different from what they supposed it to be; some shallow judges may even assume that Charlotte herself loses in moral stature when it is shown that it was not her horror at her brother's fall which drove her to find relief in literary speech. But the truth must be told 69

At one time the Brontë^u novels, especially Jane Eyre, were thought to be almost strictly autobiographical. This, coupled with Victorian prudery, must have developed the theory that Branwell's degeneration inspired the then shocking Brontë^u novels. It is difficult for us to believe that in 1877 when the above quotation was published there were "shallow judges" in existence who would think less of the Brontës if their theory was confounded.

As in all things there is a middle position, a golden mean. It is this moderate argument with which I concur. The reasoning behind this position, which I have attempted to develop in this paper, is stated succinctly by Edith Kinsley in Pattern for Genius:

. . . the world the sisters inhabited was peculiarly circumscribed, and the persons it contained, few. Certainly they used every scrap of authentic material at their disposal; even so, their experience was limited. What they knew well was Haworth and its small circle of legend, people, and moors; still better they knew the interior of Haworth parsonage and the family it contained. The only two men

with whom the sisters were at all intimate were their father and their brother, with the possible additions of William Weightman, Mr. Brontë's young curate, and Monsieur Hegér, Charlotte's and Emily's instructor in Brussels. Therefore, it cannot be doubted that self-portraits and the portraits of Branwell and Mr. Brontë were continually drawn in the novels and repeated again and again, under varying aspects and in different circumstances, but with a poignancy and accuracy which do not exist elsewhere.⁷⁰

I believe that Branwell Brontë's spirit roams the pages of Wuthering Heights; I do not believe that Wuthering Heights is his biography. Although some critics have found him in the characters of Linton Heathcliff, Edgar Linton, and even Catherine Earnshaw, I believe he is strongly present only in the characters of Lockwood, Hindley, and Heathcliff. Each of these characters in Wuthering Heights carries some of Branwell Brontë's attitudes, actions, beliefs, or poses. Branwell's friends themselves "were struck by the appearance in Wuthering Heights of several of Branwell's characteristic expressions, not perceiving how familiar these must have been to Emily."⁷¹ As Laura Hinkley states in The Brontës, Charlotte and Emily, "That Branwell himself, both before and after his collapse, unconsciously supplied a great deal of material for Wuthering Heights is self-evident."⁷²

Both Hindley and Heathcliff were, in Miss Hinkley's phrase, "fatally favored" children. Hindley was spoiled by his father until Heathcliff's appearance. Mr. Earnshaw then "took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said . . . and petting him up far above Cathy."⁷³ Hindley finds Heathcliff to be "a usurper of his parent's affections and

his privileges; and . . . grew bitter with brooding over these injuries." ⁷⁴ Heathcliff during his childhood was a

sullen boy who never . . . repaid his [Mr. Earnshaw's] indulgence by any sign of gratitude. He was not insolent to his benefactor, he was simply insensible; though knowing perfectly the hold he had on his heart and conscious he had only to speak and the house would be obliged to bend to his wishes.⁷⁵

Not only did Branwell's father favor him, his mother, while she lived and his Aunt Branwell did too. In Charlotte's only recollection of her mother, who died when Charlotte was five, Maria Branwell Brontë was "lying on a couch and fondly playing with her infant son." ⁷⁶ While the Brontë girls led very sheltered and protected lives, Branwell was allowed to frolic with the village boys and did not undergo strict disciplining. Perhaps with Branwell in mind Charlotte wrote the following to Miss Wooler, her former teacher:

You ask me if I do not think that men are strange beings. I do, indeed, I have often thought so; and I think, too, that the mode of bringing them up is strange: they are not sufficiently guarded from temptation. Girls are protected as if they were something very frail and silly indeed, while boys are turned loose on the world, as if they, of all beings in existence, were the wisest and least likely to be led astray.⁷⁷

Branwell's liberal education was particularly ruinous to an already unstable personality. In 1847 Branwell wrote that he had "been in truth too much petted through life." ⁷⁸ Looking on the "noble face and forehead of her dead brother" Charlotte "seemed to receive

an oppressive revelation of the feebleness of humanity. Of the inadequacy of even genius to lead to true greatness if unaided by religion and principle."⁷⁹ Branwell's father is unanimously blamed for his son's spineless condition. Like Hindley, Branwell would not have the moral stamina to act courageously when adversity struck and would end his life in a state of drunken wretchedness.

Heathcliff and Branwell were both favored with unselfish love and devotion. Heathcliff, because of his elevated position in the Earnshaw household, naturally expected everything to go his way. If his pony became crippled he would demand Hindley's and get it. Branwell was raised with the idea that success as an artist would be handed to him. His family had

given him to understand that God had bestowed upon him a preferential issue of talents. With such backing it should be easy for him to storm a triumphant way through life. He came to take it for granted that both God and his family were tremendously interested in his welfare.⁸⁰

According to Cooper-Willis, Branwell suffered from a "psychic injury" because he was one from whom "too much was expected and upon whom too much advanced admiration was lavished."⁸¹ However, Branwell and Heathcliff were denied their childhood expectations; expectations they learned to look for with confidence, but never really deserved. If Heathcliff had always been treated as a menial servant, he would never have expected to live on as the master of Wuthering Heights, or at least as a member of the ruling class. If Branwell had not been raised

with the idea that he would naturally become an acclaimed and an appreciated artist he might have worked and attained his goal.

Unfortunately for Branwell, the modern judgment of his talents is not flattering. Fannie Ratchford states that Branwell's "early precocity held not a spark of genius and that his development ceased after his fifteenth or sixteenth year."⁸² In Angus Mackay's The Brontës⁴, Fact and Fiction we read that "it is impossible to credit him [Branwell] with unusual mental talents. With his letters before us we cannot but perceive that he was intellectually commonplace."⁸³ Phyllis Bentley feels that the early Angrian writings "reveal the inferiority of the unhappy Branwell."⁸⁴ Miss Bentley also points out the fact that Charlotte "in her Angrian writings often pokes fun at the bad verse, tedious prose and affected mannerisms of 'young Soult,' and the specimens reveal that her criticisms are only too well-founded."⁸⁵ Regardless of how much Charlotte made fun of Branwell she still thought of him as a "genius," e.g., her death-bed description of him and her flattering description of him given to Mrs. Gaskell. Branwell, then, was expected to do great things and yet he had neither the tools, nor the training, nor the talent: he was damned from the beginning.

Branwell, like Lockwood, considered himself to be quite a lady-killer. During his first visit to Wuthering Heights, Catherine Heathcliff is totally oblivious of Lockwood.

However he is thinking:

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.⁸⁶

At the very beginning of his narration, Lockwood must tell us of his experience at the sea-coast and the "fascinating creature" he met and conquered there. That is, when the lovely girl returned his attentions he ran away in terror.

Both of these episodes sound remarkably like Branwell.

The five foot, three inch Romeo wrote the following while serving as a tutor in the family of Mr. Postlethwaite of Broughton House:

As to the young ones! I have one sitting by me just now--fair-faced, blue-eyed, dark-haired, sweet eighteen--she little thinks the devil is so near her!⁸⁷

He, like Lockwood, thought women to be very susceptible to his charms.

When Branwell was twenty he fell in love with Mary Taylor. However, when his feelings were obviously being reciprocated, he backed off. Charlotte in a letter to Ellen Nussey mentions this:

Did I not once tell you of an instance of a Relative of mine who cared for a young lady till he began to suspect that she cared more for him and then instantly conceived a sort of contempt for her? You know to what I allude--never as you value your ears mention the circumstance--⁸⁸

His behavior is startlingly like Lockwood's in a similar predicament.

The idea of Branwell being a very effective Don

Juan becomes amusing when one realizes what he looked like. At the age of twenty-three he was described, by his friend Grundy, as being

Insignificantly small, one of his life's trails . . . his mass of red hair brushed high off his forehead to help his height--his great, bumpy, intellectual forehead, nearly half the size of his whole facial contour--small, ferrety eyes, deep sunk and still further hidden by near-removed spectacles!⁸⁹

Mrs. Gaskell, describing Branwell from a woman's point of view says:

. . . I have seen Branwell's profile; it was what would generally esteemed very handsome; the forehead is massive, the eye well set, and the expression of it fine and intellectual; the nose too is good; but there are coarse lines about the mouth, while the slightly retreating chin conveys and idea of weakness of will. His hair and complexion were sandy. He had enough Irish blood in him to make his manners frank and genial, with a kind of natural gallantry about them.⁹⁰

Having seen a reproduction of the profile mentioned by Mrs. Gaskell, I agree with Grundy's description. It is obvious that in this case, as in many others, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Regardless of which description one accepts as valid, Branwell was the man with whom Mrs. Lydia Robinson fell madly, passionately in love--according to Branwell. Though drinking and dope addiction helped to destroy him, it was his own image of being a great lover that finished him. He refused to accept the reality of his rejection: to the end he could say "she loved me even better than I did her."⁹¹ According to May Sinclair "One of the most familiar symptoms of morphia mania is a tendency to erotic hallucinations of

the precise kind that Branwell suffered from." ⁹²

Lockwood and Branwell are both cynical, worldly, and skeptical. Again referring to Catherine Heathcliff, Lockwood thinks:

Living among clowns and misanthropists, she probably cannot appreciate a better class of people when she meets them ⁹³. . . the stirring atmosphere of the town!

Writing to Joseph Leyland, Branwell says:

I long to see you again at Haworth and forget for half a day the amiable society in which I am placed, where I never hear a word more musical than an ass's bray . . . ⁹⁴

To visiting strangers Branwell would remark, "Sir, I live among barbarians." ⁹⁵ Writing to Leyland about a work of his executed for the Haworth church, Branwell stated that his friend's "work at Haworth has given to all who have seen it the most unqualified satisfaction even where they understood nothing of its real merit." ⁹⁶ Even though he stated his belief in the inferiority of the Haworth villagers, he got along very well with them and from the age of seventeen enjoyed their company at the Black Bull Tavern.

After his reactions during his nightmare at Wuthering Heights, which is thought to be pure Branwell, Lockwood, an unbeliever, can stand back and say of Heathcliff:

. . . my compassion made me overlook its folly, and I drew off, half angry to have listened at all, and vexed at having related my ridiculous nightmare, since it produced that agony; though why was beyond my comprehension. ⁹⁷

We have mentioned Branwell's own cynicism. A descendent of

Leyland's thought Branwell and Leyland had much in common; that is, they were both "self-opinionated, sarcastic and unreliable, scornful of religion and of anyone who disagreed with him."⁹⁸

Both Lockwood and Heathcliff inherited Branwell's habit of prefacing or ending his remarks with "sir." This habit Branwell, in turn, got from his father. In the first chapter of Wuthering Heights, four out of twelve comments by Heathcliff or Lockwood contain the word sir. Bradby states that "as Emily's ideas of how men talked must have been derived largely from her brother's conversation, it is not surprising to find Mr. Lockwood talking at times like Branwell."⁹⁹

When Hindley comes to power he is allowed to unleash all his brutality on Heathcliff. Enjoying even the minor torments he can offer Heathcliff, Hindley instructs his wife, Frances, to "pull his hair as you go by: I heard him snap his fingers."¹⁰⁰ This was also a favorite trick of Branwell's when he lost patience with the boys in his Sunday school class. He would pick them up by a lock of hair and administer a smart rap.

Hindley's later drunkenness is, of course, drawn from Branwell's own addiction. Branwell began drinking at seventeen and experimented with opium at twenty-three. Grundy reports that Branwell "dosed openly with laudanum" and "boasted that it took six glasses of whiskey to make the company of others endurable to him."¹⁰¹ The last twelve

years of Branwell's life record a growing, an ever increasing inability to live without some type of stimulant. At the age of twenty-eight Branwell wrote, "I shall never be able to realize the too sanguine hopes of my friends, . . .
I am a thoroughly old man--mentally and bodily--"¹⁰²

If Catherine Earnshaw was but eighteen when she died, Hindley could not have been over thirty when Isabella Linton Heathcliff described him as

. . . a tall, gaunt man, without neckerchief and otherwise extremely slovenly; his features were lost in masses of shaggy hair that hung on his shoulders; and his eyes, too, were like a ghostly Catherine's with all their beauty annihilated.¹⁰³

Due to his addiction to opium, Branwell lost his appetite and his clothes literally hung on him. A few days before his death, Branwell had dinner with his friend, Grundy. Grundy very vividly describes Branwell's appearance as he cautiously opened the door and entered a private dining room in a small Haworth inn:

Presently the door opened cautiously and a head appeared. It was a mass of unkempt uncut hair, wildly floating round a great gaunt forehead; the cheeks yellow and hollow, the mouth fallen, the thin lips not trembling but shaking, the sunken eyes, once small now glaring with the light of madness . . .¹⁰⁴

As Branwell left

. . . he quietly drew from his sleeve a carving knife, placed it on the table and holding me by both hands, said that having given up all thoughts of ever seeing me again, he imagined when my message came that it was a call from Satan. Dressing himself, he took the knife, which he had long secreted, and came to the inn, with a full determination¹⁰⁵ to rush into the room and stab the occupant.

Strangely enough, the desperate Hindley pulls "from his waistcoat a curiously constructed pistol, having a double-edged spring knife attached to the barrel."¹⁰⁶ With this weapon he intends to kill Heathcliff and send him to eternal damnation. As Isabella says he, like Branwell, was "clearly on the verge of madness."¹⁰⁷

When Emily pictured Heathcliff as a thwarted lover, she drew on the only rejected and suffering lover she knew--Branwell. That Emily used some of Branwell's ravings in her composition of Heathcliff's speeches is, in my mind, a strong possibility. However, Romer Wilson feels that this would be chronologically impossible. This difficulty is removed when one realizes that Romer Wilson is confused about the year in which Branwell returned to Haworth from Thorp Green. We can, however, be completely certain about two dates. One of these is Branwell's dismissal from Thorp Green in the middle of 1845. Shortly after arriving at Haworth for a visit he received notice that his services were no longer needed by the Robinsons and the hysterics of three years duration began. The second date is the publication of Wuthering Heights in December, 1847.

I do not believe that Wuthering Heights was completed before the middle of 1845. Anne and Branwell had already returned from Thorp Green when Anne and Emily went on their first long journey together. During this trip the twenty-five and twenty-seven year old spinsters pretended to be

. . . Ronald Macalgin, Henry Angora, Juliet Angusteena, Rosabella Esmaldan, Ella and Julian Egremont, Catharine Navarre, and Cordelia Fitaphnold, escaping from the palaces of instruction to join the Royalists, who are hard pressed at present by the victorious Republicans. The Gondals still flourish bright as ever.¹⁰⁸

Obviously the Gondal material was very much on their minds.

In her birthday note of 1845, Anne states that:

Emily is engaged in writing the Emperor Julius's life. She has read some of it, and I want very much to hear the rest. She is writing some poetry, too. I wonder what it is about?¹⁰⁹

It is apparent that Anne was quite well aware of Emily's literary activities. Is it not reasonable to suppose that if Emily had completed a novel prior to the middle of 1845 she would have mentioned it to Anne? By the first half of 1846 Charlotte had read the completed Wuthering Heights manuscript¹¹⁰ and by April she spoke of it to her publishers.¹¹¹ The tedious and disheartening attempts to see it published followed.

In 1843 Branwell was engaged to tutor the son of the Rev. and Mrs. Robinson of Thorp Green. It is not true that Mrs. Robinson was the neglected wife of an elderly invalid. She was the same age as her husband or, seventeen years older than Branwell. Her husband did not become seriously ill until 1845. According to Branwell, Mrs. Robinson showed him "a degree of kindness which . . . ripened into declaration of more than ordinary feeling . . . all combined to an attachment on my part and led to reciprocation which I had little looked for."¹¹² Branwell hoped that at the death of Rev. Robinson he would "be

the husband of a lady whom I loved best in the world."¹¹³
In short, Branwell's expectations were not fulfilled.
Mr. Robinson died and Mrs. Robinson, in turn, began waiting
for the demise of the wife of Sir Edward Dolman Scott.
On Wednesday, November 8, 1848, Mrs. Robinson married
Sir Edward. This occurred six weeks after Branwell's
funeral.

Between Branwell's dismissal as the Robinson's
tutor in 1845 (Branwell said Mr. Robinson discovered what
was going on between his wife and Branwell) and his death
in 1848, the Brontë family witnessed a series of episodes
involving the rejected lover. As Charlotte reported,
Branwell was thinking "of nothing but stunning or drowning
his distress of mind" and during this time "no one in the
house could have rest."¹¹⁴ For eighteen years Heathcliff
is obsessed with the idea of possessing his Cathy once
more and destroying those who separated her from him.

A few days before his death, Heathcliff tells
Nelly Dean that:

. . . what is not connected with her to me?
and what does not recall her? I cannot look
down to this floor but her features are
shaped in the flags! In every cloud, in every
tree--filling the air at night, and caught
by glimpses in every object by day--I am
surrounded with her image.¹¹⁵

Branwell writing to Leyland records how he too was plagued
with the remembrance of his beloved:

My appetite is lost; my nights are dreadful,
and having nothing to do makes me dwell on
past scenes--on her own self, her voice,
her person, her thoughts, till I could be
glad if God would take me. In the next world
I could not be worse than I am in this.¹¹⁶

Sir Wemyss Reid points out a startling resemblance between the sentiments expressed by Heathcliff and Branwell concerning their loved ones' husbands. Branwell wrote: "My own life without her will be hell. What can the so-called love of her wretched, sickly husband be to her compared with mine."¹¹⁷ In Wuthering Heights Heathcliff says:

Two words would comprehend my future-- death and hell: existence after losing her would be hell. Yet I was a fool to fancy for a moment that she valued Edgar Linton's attachment more than mine. If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love as much in eighty years as I could in a day.¹¹⁸

At least two other incidents show the remarkable connection between Heathcliff's love for Cathy and Branwell's love for Lydia Robinson. Though Branwell did not see Lydia or communicate with her during the last three years of his life, he did receive reports concerning her condition from her physician, a Dr. Crosby. Relating the contents of Crosby's last letter to Leyland, Branwell writes:

He knows me well, and pities my case most sincerely for he declares that though used to the rough ups and downs of this weary world, he shed tears from his heart when he saw the state of that lady and knew what I should feel. When he mentioned my name--she stared at him and fainted. When she recovered she in turn dwelt on her inextinguishable love for me--her horror at having been the first to delude me into wretchedness, and her agony at having been the cause of the death of her husband, who, in his last hours, bitterly repented of his treatment of her. Her sensitive mind was totally wrecked. She wandered into talking of entering a nunnery; and the Doctor fairly debars me from hope in the future.

One might compare Mrs. Robinson's supposed mental illness to Cathy Linton's own pre-death mental illness. Gerin, in her biography of Branwell, shows, however, that when Mrs. Robinson was supposedly a "hopeless ruin" she was very carefully taking care of the family's finances. The fancy mourning dresses she had made were not similar to the simple garb of a nun, but covered with "black and white crepe trimmings."¹²⁰

Sleepless nights and days of fasting are also shared by Heathcliff and Branwell. Days before his death, Heathcliff spent his days and nights roaming the moors; he cannot eat. Branwell's own appetite was decreased due to his addiction to opium. He recounts to his friend Grundy how he dreaded

. . . the wreck of his mind and body, which, God knows, during a short life have been severely tried. Eleven continuous nights of sleepless horror reduced me to almost blindness¹²¹

In 1846 Branwell wrote Leyland concerning his condition:

You, though not much older than myself, have known life. I now know it with a vengeance--for four nights I have not slept--for three days I have not tasted food--and when I think of the state of her I love best on earth, I could wish that my head was as cold and stupid as the medallion which lies in your studio.¹²²

Although Wuthering Heights was published almost a year before Branwell's death, the deaths of Branwell and Heathcliff are similar. A few days before their deaths, both Branwell and Heathcliff were peaceful; strangely at peace. Returning from a walk on the moors shortly before his death, Nelly Dean could describe Heathcliff

as "almost bright and cheerful. No, almost nothing--very
much excited, and wild and glad!"¹²³ Charlotte, writing
to Ellen Nussey, reports that Branwell's mind "had under-
gone the peculiar change which frequently precedes death.
Two days previously the calm of better feelings filled it.
A return of natural affection marked his last moments."¹²⁴
Charlotte further said that the "propitious change" which
marked

the last few days of poor Branwell's life--
his demeanour, his language, his sentiment--
all singularly altered and softened . . .
could not be owing to the fear of death,
for till within half an hour of his decease
he seemed unconscious of danger . . .¹²⁵

The life of Branwell Brontë ends on a note of
pathos. Regardless of the actual caliber of Branwell's
talent, he believed, at one time, in his own artistic
genius. During the last three years of his misery on
earth he became acutely aware of the impossibility of his
childhood's dreams. The chrysalis in which he had spent most
of his life, safely shrouded in fantasies, was torn
from him and a frantic insanity resulted. Devoid of his
illusions, Branwell was flung into the real world, a
world for which he, like Emily, was ill equipped. Only
a complete transformation would have enabled him to carry
on with life successfully. Money, important friends and
connections, and psychiatric aid were all lacking: Branwell
was doomed to dissolution. Like Hindley, Branwell did not
have to be destroyed because the seeds of his destruction
were contained within him. The parsonage, once Branwell's

happy home, became a prison. There was no place else to go and nothing left to do, except wait for death.

Each day at Haworth Emily witnessed Branwell's inevitable decline. Both Branwell and Heathcliff were torn apart by excruciating mental torment. There were no psychiatrists to help Branwell overcome his disease and Emily could only record his lovesick ravings, his impossible yearnings in Wuthering Heights. For the first time in English literature the mentally abnormal was not a subhuman creature, a Frankenstein monster, but a suffering, anguished soul whose cries had meaning.

I realize that there is very little concerning Emily Brontë⁴ which one can firmly prove. I have only attempted to illustrate an interesting and important possibility. Other sources for Emily's delineation of Heathcliff and other male characters in Wuthering Heights have been advanced and have been eventually discredited. The theory of Branwell's presence in Emily's masterpiece has survived. This is because the little we know of Emily's personality and life substantiates it. Until we learn more of Emily or until a wholly new interpretation of her life is proposed, Branwell's shadow must loom as important as ever in a turbulent masterwork.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Clement K. Shorter, ed. The Brontës--Life and Letters (London, 1908), I, 241.
- 2 Shorter, II, 5.
- 3 Geodfrey F. Bradby, The Brontës and Other Essays (Oxford, 1932), pp. 38-39.
- 4 Bradby, p. 46.
- 5 Bradby, p. 45.
- 6 Edith E. Kinsley, Pattern for Genius (New York, 1939), p. 23.
- 7 May Sinclair, The Three Brontës (London, 1912), pp. 32-33.
- 8 Sinclair, pp. 32-33.
- 9 Bradby, p. 41.
- 10 Bradby, p. 40.
- 11 Charles Walter Simpson, Emily Brontë (New York, 1929), p. 173.
- 12 Simpson, p. 173.
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THE PRESENCE OF PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTË IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

by

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I have attempted in this paper to show to what extent Branwell Brontë¹¹ is present in his sister Emily's sole novel, Wuthering Heights. I believe it is advisable, at least by way of introduction, to establish what Branwell and Emily's relationship was like. The difficulty in establishing this relationship results from the fact that Emily did not, unlike Charlotte and Branwell, make devoted friends and keep up a wide correspondence. The little we know about Emily Brontë¹¹ is drawn from the impressions of others, not revelations she made personally. Therefore, any study of Emily Brontë¹¹ necessitates delving into the writings of her relations and their friends. Such evidence is not always trustworthy.

The very dē²rth of original material on Emily has driven many to construct the Branwell-Emily relationship on elaborate legends, some of which were encouraged by A. Mary F. Robinson's biography of Emily. Other critics and biographers have tried to analyze Emily's poems subjectively, which is an unreliable method because of the difficulty in correlating Emily's private life during a certain period of time with the emotions expressed in a poem written during the same time period. It is also almost impossible to discern which poems are strictly personal and which poems are involved with Gondal themes.

It is not thought that the egocentric Branwell had an early affinity with the shy Emily. However, from 1835 to 1838 Emily and Branwell were thrown together at Haworth (Charlotte and Anne were mainly absent at this time).

A closer personal relationship is believed to have developed and there is some evidence of literary consultations between brother and sister. However, there is no direct evidence of the tender relationship of which Miss Robinson writes. Similar attitudes on religion and a common experience of being failures in the eyes of the world might have brought them together, but, again, there is no substantial evidence of this.

There are three main critical positions on the question of whether or not Branwell Brontë's shadow is found in Wuthering Heights. At one extreme, are the critics who dismiss the importance of Branwell in Emily's construction of male characters either because she was above "using" her beloved brother or because Branwell was of such an inferior nature that he simply was not interesting. Critics in the late nineteenth century believed, on the other hand, that the Brontë sisters had written their then shocking novels in order to obtain a catharsis. The middle position holds that Emily, living a secluded life, would have had to draw on the men that she knew intimately: her father and her brother. There are several similarities between the behavior and speech of Heathcliff, Hindley, and Lockwood and that of Branwell which suggest that Emily did rely on her knowledge of Branwell to construct the men in her novel.

Other sources for Emily's delineation of Heathcliff and other male characters in Wuthering Heights have been advanced and have been eventually discredited. The theory

of Branwell's presence in Emily's masterpiece has survived. This is because the little we know of Emily's personality and life substantiates it. Until we learn more of Emily or until a wholly new interpretation of her life is proposed, Branwell's shadow must loom as important as ever in a turbulent masterwork.