Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë, introduction by Daphne du Maurier.

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INTRODUCTION

"O for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity,
And never care how rain may steep
Or snow may cover me!"

When Emily Brontë wrote those lines in February 1845, she little knew that her personality was to arouse more curiosity in the minds of successive critics, readers, and enthusiasts than almost any other writer in the English language. No other woman writer has caused more speculation. She has been called the sphinx of literature, the enigma of letters, a Titan of superhuman strength; she has been hailed as a mystic comparable only with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, a being preoccupied with cosmic forces, a seeker of the Absolute, an elemental possessed by a demon lover. Certainly, this posthumous fame of Emily's would have astounded and appalled her, who desired nothing so much as to be left alone to lead a solitary uneventful life, and to lose herself, when the mood was upon her, in her own imaginary world. The scornful smile that appeared upon her face when an adverse American review was read aloud to her would have vanished if a present-day reporter had questioned her as to hobbies, tastes, and personal idiosyncrasies; any such impertinent intrusion upon privacy would have earned a blow between the eyes of greater force than her dog Keeper ever received.

The trouble is that Emily Brontë compels curiosity. In the words of her sister Charlotte's friend Ellen Nussey, writing years after her death: "So very little is known of Emily Brontë, every little detail awakens an interest. Her extreme reserve seemed impenetrable, yet she was intensely lovable... Few people have the gift of looking and smiling, as she could look and smile — one of her rare expressive looks was something to remember through life." Miss Nussey stayed often at the Parsonage, walked and talked with Emily, watched her baking bread in the kitchen, noted her affection for her animals, but she knew nothing of that secret inner life which enabled her to write her poems and her novel, and of which we should be equally ignorant today without the research of scholarship.

The only clues to Emily's personality, while she lived, are her poems, six French essays, her novel *Wuthering Heights*, a diary fragment recording a day in November 1834 when she was sixteen, three birthday notes of June 1837, July 1841, and July 1845 (the '37 note was discovered only a few years ago in a house at Keighley), two short conventional letters to Ellen Nussey, and bare references to her in Charlotte's letters. It was not until after the shock of Emily's death in December 1848 that Charlotte began to think and write about her sister with reverence and awe — from which moment legend started.

Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte's biographer, who visited the Parsonage while Charlotte was living, gave an unforgettable picture of the whole Brontë family; but she met neither Branwell, Emily, nor Anne, all three of whom were dead before she went to Haworth. She reported therefore at second-hand, and later biographers have built upon her eternally fascinating story, with its many omissions, exaggerations, and misstatements. The general reader, who enjoys the Brontë novels and may have read Mrs. Gaskell in youth, remembers vaguely that all four young Brontës, having lost their mother

and two elder sisters in childhood, were brought up in Haworth Parsonage by their father the rector, the Rev. Patrick Brontë, and their aunt Miss Branwell. They recollect that Charlotte and Anne grew up to be governesses, that Emily, the middle sister, strode about the moors with a fierce dog, and that Branwell, the brother, drank. The three sisters then wrote books that became famous, and everybody died rapidly of consumption. This vague impression can best be corrected by reading Charlotte Brontë's *Letters*, collected and published after her death, but even the *Letters* do not betray the secret that bound all four Brontës so closely together.

It was not until Miss Fannie Ratchford, the American scholar, transcribed between 1923 and 1940 the many scattered manuscripts written by Charlotte and Branwell Brontë in their childhood and early twenties — which nobody thought important and few people realised even to exist - and Mr. C. W. Hatfield edited Emily's poems from her original manuscripts in 1941, that an entirely new light was thrown upon the whole Brontë story. Even today it is only the Brontë enthusiast - or what may be termed "the initiated" - who know anything of the dream worlds of Angria and Gondal (Angria an imaginary country in Africa conceived by Charlotte and Branwell, Gondal an imaginary island in the north Pacific, conceived by Emily and Anne), which dream worlds, called by Charlotte "the infernal world" and "the world below," possessed all four Brontës from early childhood into their adult years, and comprised the source of inspiration for their poems and novels. Against its power Charlotte battled, only to succumb; Branwell, the brother, became engulfed in it and could not face reality; Anne did not quite believe in it, and so slipped from its menace; Emily alone revelled in its glory and lived with it forever.

The reader may ask, "Is it necessary for an admirer of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* or Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and poems to know about these non-adult dream worlds in which their creators lived?" I believe very strongly that it is necessary, because it makes their work and personalities easier to appreciate and to understand - or, alternatively, to dismiss and condemn - and it throws light on all imaginative writers, who may not have Brontë genius but whose way of writing appears to be non-realistic, highly coloured, and untrue to life. Imaginative writers have a primitive conception of character that strikes the modern observer as childish and absurd. Like the child and the savage, they are seldom fully conscious of the real world about them, and so see men and women, not as adult individuals concerned with the material business of getting on with life, but as types associated by the primitive mind with story-telling from the beginning of time. Hence we have heroes like Heathcliff, who are orphans, changelings, surrounded by enemies, and either triumphing over them or dying defeated; we have heroines who are wayward like Cathy, full of temper, passion, and wild, uncertain mood. These creations, making so much nonsense to the logical mind, are vivid and real to the imaginative writer, as they are to the child or to the savage. They are part of his or her unconscious inheritance, and are not outgrown or thrown aside unless some shock or experience wakes the writer to full consciousness, in which case he or she may either mature and write objectively, or alternatively lose all spontaneity and be unable to write at all.

The themes with which these imaginative writers are concerned seem hackneyed because they have always existed - love, hate, jealousy, envy, greed, revenge - and the tales they tell seem to follow a predestined course of reward and punishment, just as legends and folk tales have always done since they were first told in tribal society by the light of a flickering fire. The worth of the imaginative writer can only be judged by deciding whether his or her story holds the attention of the reader or listener, however untrue to life it may appear to be. If it does hold the attention, the writer may be said to have succeeded as an artist, though failed possibly as a portrayer of society and of the individual. Charlotte and Emily Brontë succeeded; their brother Branwell failed; Anne, the youngest, drew more directly from life, and therefore cannot be described as an imaginative author.

Charlotte Brontë's Rochester and Emily's Heathcliff are both types drawn from the unconscious, and their brother Branwell's Alexander Percy, Earl of Northangerland - not known to the general reader because few of Branwell's stories and poems have been printed - dwarf either Rochester or Heathcliff as what would be called today "ham portraiture," with his brooding Lucifer attitude and his grim satanic smile. Studied in conjunction with the poems of Emily and Anne, the unpublished writings of Charlotte and Branwell show how closely the four Brontës worked together, and how similar were the characters they created, starting from the first toy soldiers they played with as little children and christened by Branwell "The Young Men," and merging into the Zamorna, Northangerland, and Julius Brenzaida of their adolescent years, about whom they were still dreaming, playing, and writing in their mid-twenties.

No young people can have been happier or more free than those four at Haworth Parsonage, left largely to themselves, with their father isolated in the parlour with parochial matters, their aunt in her room upstairs reading Blackwood's Magazine. Whether out on the moors behind their home, or the dining-room table, or in their small study over the hall, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne "lived out" the imaginary lives of their characters in Angria and Gondal. Branwell wrote their histories, edited their newspapers, passed parliamentary measures, chronicled their wars; Charlotte told their individual lives, their love stories, their dramas; Emily and Anne composed epics of their birth, love, treachery, death; and all of this in microscopic handwriting that nobody but themselves could read.

As they played and wrote and drew, so they read: anything in print fed these hungry imaginations—Cowper, Milton, Byron, Scott, tales from Ossian and the Arabian Nights, tales from their aunt's magazines, books borrowed from the Keighley Mechanics' Institute - while echoes from their father's sermons, half-digested snippets from Isaiah and Revelations, a sudden visit from a drawing master, a glimpse of a giant head of Satan seen at an exhibition at Leeds, an article in a daily newspaper, the death of a parishioner, the sight of a drunken man staggering out of the Black Bull below the church, all served to toss into the witch-brew that was the joint creation of four vivid imaginations and by which they were nourished, sustained, intoxicated, through childhood into adolescence and beyond.

Though Charlotte and Anne both endured boarding school for short periods, the boy was never sent, and Emily at seventeen was so home-sick after two months of it that she had to come home. How much of this home-sickness was actual longing for the four walls of the Parsonage, where home tasks were no burden and discipline was light, and how much was yearning for the dream world of Gondal which could not be indulged amongst strange companions at school, it is impossible to say, but a diary fragment of Charlotte's, written when she was a pupil-teacher at the same school, is enlightening :

"All this day I have been in a dream, half miserable, half ecstatic, miserable because I could not follow it out uninterruptedly, ecstatic because it showed almost in the vivid light of reality the ongoings of the infernal world . . . The spirit of all Verdopolis [Charlotte's imaginary capital city], of all the mountainous North . . . came crowding into my mind. If I had time to indulge it I felt that the vague suggestions of that moment would have settled down into some narrative better at least than anything I have produced before. But just then a dolt came up with a lesson ..."

And later:

"About a week since I got a letter from Branwell containing a most exquisitely characteristic epistle from Northangerland to his daughter. I lived on its contents for days."

It is impossible to separate one Brontë from another. They were all so near in age,[1] and grew up together in such close harmony - in their personal and in their writing lives - that the influence each had upon the other was overwhelming. The student who reads *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, and then turns back to Emily's Gondal poems and to Charlotte and Branwell's Angrian stories, can have no doubt whatsoever that both novels sprang from the same source, and that the later characters and events are developments of persons and themes long dreamt about since childhood and sketched in adolescence. Aged eighteen in 1834, Charlotte thus described Branwell's creation, the Earl of Northangerland:

"...there is such a total absence of human feeling and sympathy; such a cold frozen pride... And then in his eye... a gleam, scarcely human, dark and fiend-like, it steals away from under the lash, quivers sometimes with the mysterious tremour of a northern light... and then is all at once quenched."

Aged nineteen in 1836, Branwell wrote of Charlotte's Duke of Zamorna:

"Yet never may that desperate soul
Betray the thoughts which o'er it roll,
Teeth clenched, cheeks blenched, and eyes that dart
A boar-like fierceness from his heart,
As all the world was nought beside
The saving of his iron pride;
For everyone on earth might die,
And not a tear should stain that eye,
Or force a single sob or sigh
From him who cannot yield."

Aged twenty, Emily wrote in 1839 about a Gondal hero:

"No—lightning all unearthly shone
Deep in that dark eye's circling zone,
Such withering lightning as we deem
None but a spectre's look may beam;
And glad were they when he turned away
And wrapped him in his mantle grey,
Laid down his head upon his arm
And veiled from view their basilisk charm."

Branwell, at nineteen, wrote a parting scene between the Earl of Northangerland and his daughter Mary Percy, who says:

‘ “Oh, you've come at last, when I thought all had left me. I thought I should never see you again, but I see and feel you now! Speak, for I am miserable and I cannot bear to die! Oh, if you knew what I have suffered; if you could feel what I feel, you would have come to me sooner, you would not have left me so. Let me see your face; I must not see it long. Let me hear you, and that will bring back for a moment things and times that I never, never shall know again.' "

Emily, date unproven, wrote a parting scene between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights* (see pages 167—168), Catherine saying:

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[1] Charlotte born 21st April 1816, died 31st March 1855; Branwell born 26th June 1817, died 24th September 1848; Emily born 30th July 1818, died 19th December 1848; Anne born 17th January 1820, died 28th May 1849.

‘ “I’m not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff. I only wish us never to be parted: and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me! Come here and kneel down again! You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse anger, that will be worse to remember than my harsh words! Won't you come here again? Do! ' "

It is not surprising that Branwell's friends, remembering snatches of Angrian stories in after years, believed him to have been the author of *Wuthering Heights*. Nor can it be wondered at that readers of Emily's poems, without the Gondal key, imagined that such lines as

"I am the only being whose doom
No tongue would ask, no eye would mourn;
I never caused a thought of gloom,
A smile of joy, since I was born,"

referred to the poetess herself, and pictured her lonely and misunderstood, an odd-man-out in the family circle. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. Her birthday notes show her to have been the most cheerful, optimistic, and contented of the four Brontës, who, at the ripe age of twenty-seven, enjoyed pretending to be eight separate characters from her own Gondal poems during a four-day excursion with her sister Anne.

"We were," she wrote in 1845, "Ronald Macalgin, Henry Angora, Juliet Augusteena, Rosalba Esmaldon, Ella and Julian Egremont, Catherine Navarre and Cordelia Fitzaphnold, escaping from the palaces of instruction to join the Royalists who are hard driven at present by the victorious Republicans. The Gondals still flourish as bright as ever. I am at present writing a work on the first wars."

In all three birthday notes that have survived destruction Emily mentions Gondal characters as if they were living people. In the 1837 note, written on 26th June, her brother's birthday, she mentions an imaginary coronation due to take place on 12th July, and adds, "Julius Vittorius ascended the throne this month, Northangerland in Monkey's Isle, Zamorna in Evesham," proving that Charlotte and Branwell's Angrian characters were as real to her as her own.

Circumstances favoured Emily's preoccupation with her dream world. She stayed at home, while her sisters went away as governesses, and her brother, unable to make a living at painting, drifted from one job to another. Branwell, engulfed in "the infernal world," had not enough artistic talent to turn it to account. Scribbling, under the pseudonym Northangerland, poems that editors did not read, beginning novels that he did not finish, Branwell, with the ambition of a Napoleon, found himself at twenty-four nothing but a railway clerk at a branch-line station. It is not surprising that he drank. Emily left no record of her own experiences for six months in 1837 as a school-teacher at Law Hill near Halifax, though biographers, peering into Gondal poems, like to read into them hints of some fatal love affair. With the date-headed manuscripts before him, Mr. Hatfield proved that the Gondal, Julius Brenzaida, sighed for Augusta Geraldine Almeda, but that Emily Brontë sighed for nothing and for nobody. She merely wanted to be alone.

The imaginative mind has no greater freedom than when the physical body is engaged on manual work without supervision, and Emily, baking bread or making beds, found household tasks no tie at all. Charlotte and Anne, striving to teach reluctant pupils, had no freedom. Nor had Branwell, miscalculating accounts at a wayside station. Emily had leisure to lose herself in the dream world. "I have a good many books on hand," she says in her 1841 birthday note, "but I am sorry to say that as

usual I make small progress with any. However, I have just made a new regularity paper! And I mean, verb. sap., to do great things."

I know that I go against all tradition, but I believe that it was during the year 1841, and again in 1843—periods when her sisters and brother were from home—that Emily began and finished the first volume of *Wuthering Heights*, at any rate in draft form.

Emily did not write at white heat like Charlotte. She began a poem, left it, picked it up again, then finally finished or rewrote it months, sometimes a year, later. I believe she did the same with *Wuthering Heights.* This would account for the fashion in which the story is told, the swing from one narrator to another, the changes in style, and especially in dialogue, that are noticeable in the novel. The cocksure Mr. Lockwood, the first narrator, so much resembles Branwell writing an Angrian tale, and the more brutal episodes are so like certain descriptions of Charlotte's in the same Angrian series, that I feel convinced Emily - who, with Anne, wrote Gondal chronicles that have never been traced - began *Wuthering Heights* in the same unmistakable family style. Nor can there be much doubt that the bare bones of the plot had been known for years to all four Brontës: Tabby, the dearly loved Parsonage servant, and John Brown, the sexton, devoted to Branwell, had long since been tossed into the Angrian-Gondal witch-brew to simmer, so that moorland squire became Angrian earl, Yorkshire farmer Gondal rebel, then, bubbling and boiling in the depths of Emily's imagination, were all brought forth again to serve in a Yorkshire setting — cast up indeed at Top Withens above Sladen Beck, where they belonged, and down over Ponden Kirk to Ponden Hall.

Truth, highly spiced with Gondal, made a masterpiece. Parson Grimshaw, a predecessor of Mr. Brontë's at Haworth, collected waifs and strays just as Mr. Earnshaw did in *Wuthering Heights*, and Grimshaw's son, like Earnshaw's son Hindley, drank himself to death. Parson Grimshaw married a Mrs Sutcliffe of Scaithcliffe Hall; the drunken son's widow became a Mrs. Lockwood. These names are too significant to pass over; they must have rung very deeply in Emily's mind. Ponden Hall, three miles from Haworth, was the home of the Heaton family, lords of the manor of Stanbury since Queen Elizabeth's day. A Michael Heaton of Ponden Hall died in 1643 without leaving a will, and his widow married a farm labourer employed by her husband, who tried to get the whole estate into his hands. The rightful heir had to buy back his own possessions when he came of age. These Heatons were still the most important family in the district when the young Brontës were growing up, and one of them, John Heaton, was a fellow freemason with Branwell, heading the membership of the lodge in 1836, with Branwell as secretary and John Brown, the sexton, as Master. Above the door at Ponden Hall is the inscription: "The Old House now standing was built by Robert Heaton for his son Michael Anno Domini 1634. The Old Porch and Peat House was built by his grandson Robert Heaton 1680. The present building was rebuilt by his descendant R.H. in 1801." Above the door of *Wuthering Heights* was the name of Hareton Earnshaw and the date 1500 (see page 3); young Hareton Earnshaw was a neglected heir, and Heathcliff a one-time labourer who had taken the boy's property to himself. This is the stuff that makes the framework for an imaginative writer, and Emily could turn a Grimshaw into an Earnshaw, a Heaton into a Linton, and give to them Gondal qualities that none but she could invent.

I believe Emily to have been essentially simple and very direct—not the strange sombre creature suggested by critics and biographers. For this reason she was at her best when writing about children. Cathy and Heathcliff young are more convincing than Cathy and Heathcliff adult. The two of them peering through the windows of Thrushcross Grange, the boy Heathcliff shut up in the garret, the child Cathy climbing through the skylight to console him—these are the people who move us, not the man Heathcliff howling like a wolf and dashing his head against a tree-trunk, nor the woman Catherine, for all her poetry and her brainstorms. These are Gondal creations, straight from a Gondal

epic; but the ghost child tapping at the window, "Let me in, let me in," the ghost child crying, "I've been a waif for twenty years," has all the pathos and reality of Brontë childhood lost and vanished - it is the four phantom spirits peering in upon their adult selves, captured by Emily in one brief haunting phrase. If the latter half of *Wuthering Heights* has not the wild primitive beauty of the first, it is because the writer—and the reader—have exhausted themselves: the story has been told, emotion is spent. Emily's great gift as a narrator is therefore shown by her ability to tell the same tale twice - with variations - without wearying the reader. Emotion has gone, and drama, but in their place has come much subtlety and perception - narration is easier, dialogue is more natural, Heathcliff no longer rants, and the picture of the second child Cathy and her two cousins, poor selfish Linton and uncouth, tender-hearted Hareton, suggest a maturing Emily no longer entirely in the grip of Gondal. I believe that this second part was written long after the first, when Emily had had time to assimilate all that she had learnt and studied during her nine months' visit to Brussels with Charlotte in 1842. The second Cathy is so vivid, so like a spoilt and charming growing girl, I am surprised no biographer has noticed her resemblance Charlotte and Emily's young friend Martha Taylor (Patty), who, piquant, lively, and original, as the "little Miss Boistrous" Charlotte's letters, rode about on a pony, teased and fascinated her companions, stayed in a pension near Brussels at the same time as Charlotte and Emily, and died there, suddenly and tragically, just before the Brontë sisters returned home. This event, which must have been a great shock, generally escapes comment. More is always made of the death of Willie Weightman, the Rev. Brontë's curate, which happened that same autumn, but search may be made in vain for a picture of him in *Wuthering Heights*. It is supposed that Anne was in love with him, because her heroine in *Agnes Grey* married a clergyman, but this does not necessarily mean that Anne was thinking of Willie Weightman.

It is interesting that Charlotte and Branwell, once separated and torn from their Angrian games, both turned emotionally to a man and woman older than themselves, from whom, being married, they could not hope for any satisfactory relationship. Charlotte wrote passionate letters to her Brussels professor, which were never answered, and Branwell, tutor in the same household where Anne was governess, fell hopelessly in love with his employer's wife; when this was discovered after two and a half years, in July 1845, he was dismissed, moped at home in despair, became a confirmed alcoholic at twenty-eight, and died three years later. That Emily suffered none of these torments appears in her birthday note of 1845, written when Branwell was aching for Mrs. Robinson, Charlotte yearning for Monsieur Héger, and Anne, if not lamenting for a dead curate, was at least stung with pity for the sadness of brother and sister :

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

Here is evidence of a completely self-contained personality, untouched by the emotional life of those around her, who found within herself a source of inspiration that became eventually a second self, taking the place of God, spirit, lover, friend, whom indeed she addresses, in a poem of October 1844, as

"ever-present phantom thing - My slave, my comrade, and my King. "

The agony of projecting a dream character upon a living individual and falling in love as a result—suffered by Charlotte, Branwell, and so many imaginative authors—was apparently never endured by Emily; perhaps this was what made her so unique a writer. Those poems seen as mystic by her more profound critics, and the last utterances of the elder Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* (Chapters Xl,

XII, XV), are, I think, deep-felt expressions of a wish to enter more completely into the Gondal dream-world than she had entered already, to be bound by neither time, nor place, nor any living thing, to surrender herself completely to the drug of her own imagination in exactly the same manner described by Charlotte, when a pupil-teacher, in her diary fragment—though, because Charlotte hastily scribbled her impressions of the moment, while Emily wrote as an inspired poet, their moods, though identical, escape comparison.

It is not known what Emily thought of her own work. She fought against her poems being published, and afterwards referred to them contemptuously as "rhymes." Rhymes they may have been, but what music went to the making of these typical Gondal verses, seldom read!

"Come, the wind may never again
Blow as now it blows for us;
And the stars may never again shine as now they shine;
Long before October returns,
Seas of blood will have parted us;
And you must crush the love in your heart, and I the love in mine."

This was not included amongst the poems published by the three sisters (under the pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell) in May 1846, of which volume two copies only were sold.

Nor is it known whether Emily was disappointed at the comparative failure of *Wuthering Heights*. Her novel was entirely eclipsed by the success of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. Five reviews were found in her desk after she died, all speaking of the author's promise and power, but finding the story painful. Nothing else of hers in prose was discovered, nor any draft of a second novel. Charlotte tells in her Preface (see page xxxix) how *Wuthering Heights* came to be written and published. The tradition that the whole work was actually composed at one period is based on her words, "We each set to work upon a prose tale," and on her letter to Messrs. Aylott & Jones of 6th April, 1846, saying that three works of fiction were being prepared for the press. "Set to work" and preparing for the press" do not necessarily mean composition; they may mean re-drafting, lengthening, cutting, altering, which Miss Ratchford tells us was exactly what Charlotte did to *The Professor*, a transformation of an earlier Angrian tale. Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* was the completion of "Leaves in the Life of an Individual", two parts of which had been written by July 1845. It seems equally possible that Emily, abandoning the "Life of King Julius" which she was working upon that same year, took up the half-completed tale of *Wuthering Heights* and finished it, realising, like her sisters, that Angrian and Gondal stories would suit neither publisher nor public.

Branwell was also working upon a novel in the autumn of 1845. He wrote to his friend Leyland, the sculptor, in September:" I have, since I saw you, devoted my hours of time snatched from downright illness, to the composition of a three volume novel—one volume of which is completed." Whether this novel was an incoherent fragment called "And the Weary Are At Rest" has not been proved, but it is evident that the sisters did not include Branwell in their writing plans, told him nothing of their project to publish poems and novels, and by this deliberate exclusion of the once beloved brother from the charmed circle hastened his inevitable decline. No doubt he was a nuisance, seldom sober and continually raving about Mrs. Robinson, but a share in the writing plan might have saved him. The Poems appeared in May 1846; *Jane Eyre*, substituted for *The Professor*, in October 1847; *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* in December 1847; Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* in June 1848. Branwell died suddenly on 24th September 1848, and Charlotte told her publisher: "My unhappy brother never knew what his sisters had done in literature—he was not aware they had ever published a line. We could not tell him of our efforts for fear of causing him too deep a pang of

remorse for his own time misspent, and talents misapplied." I think that it was her own remorse which made her collapse at his deathbed, the first she had ever attended, and caused her to admit in a later letter that her nights were so terrible at that time that "the impressions experienced on waking were such as we do not put into language"

Emily died exactly three months later—on 19th December 1848 - and the facts that she never left the house after Branwell's funeral, became daily more thin and pale, would not answer questions put to her, and refused all offers of help or medical treatment for what was obviously congestion of the lung, suggest that severe nervous shock had thrown her completely off balance. I do not think that anybody at the Parsonage recognised this, and her "stoic" death became legend ever after. The imaginative writer who wakes suddenly to reality can die indeed. The killing off of a Gondal hero, the slaying of a Cathy or a Heathcliff, can release many demons lurking in the unconscious, and act as a purgative; but for Emily to watch her own brother struggle for breath in a twenty-minute agony and then fall dead into their father's arms, was a jolt out of the "infernal world" she had never before experienced.

With startling clarity it revealed to her what human beings may suffer, and what loneliness her brother had endured for three years. From the shock of this revelation she never recovered. It is often believed that the magnificent poem "No Coward Soul is Mine" were the last lines she ever wrote. But "No Coward Soul is Mine" was written on 2nd January 1846, and Emily died on 19th December 1848. That spring she had been revising a long poem begun two years before, which bears the final date 13th May 1848. It is pure Gondal, without mysticism, and shows the writer, with Wuthering Heights published and forgotten, still fascinated and held fast by her beloved, bloody world. Here are the last stanzas:

"It was the autumn of the year
When grain grows yellow in the ear;
Day after day, from noon to noon,
The August sun blazed bright as June.

But we with unregarding eyes
Saw panting earth and glowing skies;
No hand the reaper's sickle held,
Nor bound the ripe sheaves in the field.

Our corn was garnered months before,
Threshed out and kneaded-up with gore;
Ground when the ears were milky sweet
With furious toil of hoofs and feet;
I, doubly cursed on foreign sod,
Fought neither for my home nor God."

Emily was then not quite thirty years old.

DAPHNE DU MAURIER