

**From the Novel – Emily Brontë: *More Myself Than I***

1

Sitting in the dining room. The clock has just gone nine. The cat is snug in Father's chair. Keeper is on the rug. Gondal is in abeyance for a while.

*A pen moving firmly across a page.*

Charlotte is sitting to the left of me. Anne is on my right. Branwell is gone to the Black Bull. Cathy is down at the farm-house gate. Heathcliff is under a cloak. At this moment, I am more myself than I.

2

I find myself at the window! The night is cold and wet! It is my room at Wuthering Heights! There has been no light in this room since I was a girl! I used to light a candle! I used to sit in my bed! – draw the panels so no one could see me! I would take a pen and a bottle of ink and write my story in the margins of the dusty old books!

3

Someday I will be a master! I will stand on the deck and sneer! I will wield my master's lash! Then the galley-slaves will have to answer to me! I will have bided my time in silence! I will have studied the master's secrets – learned the art of inflicting pain! These slaves will know my anger! I will make the lashes sting! I shall write my story upon the flesh of their backs! Every scar will be my testament! I shall stand astride the deck – shouting for ever and ever more speed! When their eyes roll up to the heavens they will only see me!

4

Lately something has happened to me – like having glimpses of what is to be! A little boy was herding some sheep – I know I saw him and I am sure he saw me! But the moment was so brief I could hardly believe!

And this moment, here, at the window! I could see that gentleman inside! I could see right through the window – in a way that I am unable to see you now!

No, my hand is no longer bleeding! I'm sure the gentleman meant no harm! He didn't understand that I thought that he was you!

5

Choosing names to suit ourselves – Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Insisting that never, never – never – must Charlotte ever reveal our secret to any publisher or reviewer or reader – no, not even to her friends.

*An author with a suspicious nom de plume.*

I shall always be Emily Brontë. This novel shall always have been written by Ellis Bell.

6

Cathy wrote a novel; Heathcliff wrote one too. Cathy's was voluminous; Heathcliff barely wrote a word.

*Heathcliff and a woman yonder, under t' nab.*

They combined them in two volumes. They are meeting on the heath to write the third.

## From the planning notebook – *Planning Emily Brontë: More Myself Than I*

1

The Brontës did not create a world (Gondal, Angria, the novels) which excluded the real world – just the opposite. They created a fictional relationship-pattern & criteria which helped them to approach and face the real world. At times, it blew up in their faces. Literature appeals not because it offers an alternative to the real world, but because it offers a way of considering the real world.

2

The solution to the problem of no-surface-life for Emily Brontë is to move the novel into her interior mind. Even the walks on the moors can be indistinguishable between Emily Brontë & Catherine Earnshaw: – which is the surface? – which is the depths? The answer is: – the surface is the depths. – the depths are the surface.

3

We all are the creators and the created in our lives; as our life-experience unfolds, we all have a movie editing-suite in our minds in which we convert our experiences into images that we discard on the cutting-room floor or place in an image-pattern, each with an emphasis – large or small – and each in juxtaposition with the other images of our lives. That these characters negotiate with other characters, or their authors, is an artistic rendering (characters as forces) of what happens every minute of every day inside the mind of every person on earth. This is as down-to-earth – in writing novels about basic issues – as I can get.

4

I believe I have my title: *Emily Brontë More Myself than I*. Spoken by Cathy – “He is more myself than I am” – but applicable around the triangle:

- Cathy sees Heathcliff as more herself than she is.
- Heathcliff sees Cathy as more himself than he is.
- Emily Brontë sees Cathy and Heathcliff as more herself than she is.

It is the perfect title for the proposed novel. It will be about literary creation, of course, but it will also be – at a deeper level – about how all humans think in imagery. Our imagery is often more real and more powerful as an active agent in our lives than whatever reality that imagery is designed to expose or, perhaps, conceal. All three create imagery that becomes the driving force in their lives. Many literary characters struggle in the war between the prose and poetic versions of their lives and their societies. All three of these character live fully in the poetic versions of their lives, with only glimpses of the prose versions of those same lives.

5

So what holds all of these people together – Emily Brontë, Branwell, Charlotte, Anne, Cathy, Heathcliff? – Thwarted lives. I called this the Theory of Displacement in my last-written novel (*Glenn Gould: Light and Dark*) and the search for a home in my dad’s novel (*Cyril Passfield: Out West*). For all of these people – Emily Brontë, Branwell, Charlotte, Anne, Cathy, Heathcliff, Bethune, Terry Fox, Cyril Passfield, Glenn Gould – it is the search – thwarted or otherwise – for a situation, a set of circumstances, in which one can be, or develop into, one’s best self.

## From the journal – *The Making of Emily Brontë: More Myself Than I*

1

Of course, every image in the novel, *Emily Brontë: More Myself Than I*, is an image in the mind of the writer, John Passfield, who is responding creatively to a reading of the novel, *Wuthering Heights*. Every image in the novel, *Emily Brontë: More Myself Than I*, is also an image in the mind of the writer, Emily Brontë, who is engaged in thinking about and writing the novel, *Wuthering Heights*.

2

So, to me, Heathcliff is a literary character, a word-construct, who lives out his extreme thought-emotion as few of us do: everything in his life is subordinated to his love for Cathy, from enduring abusive treatment from Hindley when he could have walked away, to tearing into Cathy when she wants to share his love with that of Edgar, to digging up her grave, to abusing her loved ones for another almost-twenty years after her death. The Gothic imagery of that literary tradition allowed Emily Brontë to image the thought-feeling and actions of Heathcliff in extreme terms, just as the cosmic imagery of the Jacobean tragedies allowed Shakespeare to image the thought-feelings and actions of Macbeth and King Lear in extreme terms.

3

The Brontë sisters are in a temporary situation and disaster is approaching. Their father is ailing and aging and their brother will not be the one to support them in future. So Anne is venturing out into the world. Is it possible to say that:

- all four Brontë siblings felt their home situation to be unstable;
- all four Brontë siblings ventured out into the world in order to find stability;
- all four Brontë siblings returned home, having failed to find stability outside the Brontë parsonage;
- but that the Brontë parsonage was not a stable situation, despite its day to day provision of warmth, food and companionship.

Making this more complicated is the Brontë feeling that non-Brontës were somehow not acceptable as life-long companions. The ideal relationship that what I call the Brontë Four experienced as children could not be duplicated outside that circle. Both Charlotte and Branwell sought the ideal relationship in other people but found insuperable barriers; there is no evidence of which I am aware that Emily and Anne ever saw an ideal relationship as possible for them outside the Brontë family.

4

It was the harmony of Cathy and Heathcliff – as one example of the world's great love stories in literature – which enchanted me at first reading, when I was eighteen years old; it was the harmony-disharmony of Cathy and Heathcliff – as an example of two people who seek to have an ideal relationship – which intrigued me on reading the novel closely this year, at seventy-three years old. This novel, *Emily Brontë: More Myself than I*, is not a re-writing of the novel, *Wuthering Heights*; but it might well be considered as a revising (a re-response) of my original response to *Wuthering Heights*.

5

Of course, the two characters [Cathy and Heathcliff] are presented, in the novel [*Wuthering Heights*], as one soul which oscillates between unity and disunity. I saw the Brontë sisters, as I was reading the biographies, as having two worlds in which they were living – the real world of the parsonage and the

ideal world of their writings – and of being realistic about the difficulties of attempting to unite the two. The Angria and Gondal worlds were not a fantasy of escape from the real world of the parsonage, but a set of standards, in imagery, which the Brontë siblings applied to the real world without compromise. The inability to harmonize the two worlds destroyed Branwell Brontë, and there is much speculation as to the amount of sympathy or disdain that each sister felt for him. It is interesting to consider that they all were subjected to the same forces in life and in their thoughts, and embodied those forces in the imagery of their works.