

## Emily Brontë (1818- 1848)

Emily Brontë was born in Yorkshire, in 1818. She was the fifth daughter of a country parson. After two years the family moved into the parsonage of Haworth. Her mother died after a year leaving six children and an aunt to look after them. In 1824 Emily briefly attended a school for clergymen's daughters with her sisters, but was mostly educated at home. She was very close to Anne and with her she created fantastic stories in imaginary worlds, inventing a kingdom called Gondal where she set many of her narrative and lyric poems. In 1842 Emily spent eight months with her sister Charlotte in Brussels to get a proficiency in French and become a teacher. Back home, she died at the age of thirty in 1848. Her brother Patrick Branwell had already died few months before of alcoholism and tuberculosis.

### Works

- *Poems, by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, were published by Charlotte in 1846. It is a collection of poems written by Charlotte, Emily and Anne under pseudonym
- **Wuthering Heights (1847)**

**Wuthering Heights** - The story starts when **Mr Lookwood**, the temporary tenant of **Thrushcross Grange**, asks the housekeeper **Nelly Dean** to tell him the story of the owners of **Wuthering Heights**. It all began about twenty years before, when **Mr. Earnshaw**, the owner of Wuthering Heights, brought back from Liverpool an orphan, **Heathcliff**. Mr Earnshaw had a daughter, **Catherine** and a son, **Hindley**. After his father's death, Hindley treated the foundling brutally while a deep understanding grew between Cathy and Heathcliff. One day, Cathy met **Edgar Linton** of Thrushcross Grange; he fell in love with her and they got married even if she still loved Heathcliff. Heathcliff disappeared and came back only after three years, mysteriously rich. He started his revenge, first on Hindley, then on Edgar's sister and on Cathy, who died after giving birth to a daughter, Catherine. Heathcliff stopped his revenge when he heard the voice of his Cathy calling him from the moors where they had been happy together and died in the storm.

*Wuthering Heights* can be considered an allegory about the conception of the universe built from different forces, storm and calm. It is the psychological study of a man whose soul is divided between love and hate, a work of edification and growth that teaches the vanity of human wishes and the impossibility of reducing human life to a strict moral code.

*Mr Lookwood now is curious and wants to know more about the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights, so he asks Nelly Dean, the housekeeper, to tell him their story. Here she tells why Catherine, after meeting Mr Edgar Linton, Thrushcross Grange's owner, decides to accept his proposal.*

[1]'Nelly, do you never dream **queer** dreams?' she said, suddenly, after some minutes' reflection.

'Yes, now and then,' I answered.

'And so do I. I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas: they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind. And this is one: I'm going to tell it - but take care not to smile at any part of it.'

[5]'Oh! don't, Miss Catherine!' I cried. 'We're **dismal** enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions to perplex us. Come, come, be merry and like yourself! Look at little Hareton! He's dreaming nothing dreary. How sweetly he smiles in his sleep!'

Yes; and how sweetly his father **curses** in his solitude! You remember him, I **daresay**, when he was just such another as that **chubby** thing: nearly as young and innocent. However, Nelly, I shall oblige [10]you to listen: it's not long; and I've no power to be merry to-night.'

'I won't hear it, I won't hear it!' I repeated, hastily.

I was superstitious about dreams then, and am still; and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect, that made me **dread** something from which I might shape a prophecy, and foresee

a fearful catastrophe. She was **vexed**, but she did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject, she [15] recommenced in a short time.

'If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable.'

'Because you are not **fit** to go there,' I answered. 'All sinners would be miserable in heaven.'

'But it is not for that. I dreamt once that I was there.'

'I tell you I won't **hearken** to your dreams, Miss Catherine! I'll go to bed,' I interrupted again.

[20] She laughed, and held me down; for I made a motion to leave my chair.

'This is nothing,' cried she: 'I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with **weeping** to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the **heath** on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton [25] than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a **moonbeam** from lightning, or frost from fire.'

[30] **Ere** this speech ended I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having noticed a **slight** movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the **bench**, and **steal out** noiselessly. He had listened till he heard Catherine say it would degrade her to marry him, and then he stayed to hear no further. My companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the **settle** from remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and **bade her hush!**

[35] 'Why?' she asked, **gazing** nervously round.

'Joseph is here,' I answered, catching opportunely the roll of his cartwheels up the road; 'and Heathcliff will come in with him. I'm not sure whether he were not at the door this moment.'

'Oh, he couldn't overhear me at the door!' said she. 'Give me Hareton, while you get the supper, and when it is ready ask me **to sup** with you. I want **to cheat** my uncomfortable conscience, and be [40] convinced that Heathcliff has no notion of these things. He has not, has he? He does not know what being in love is!'

'I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you,' I returned; 'and if you are his choice, he'll be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born! As soon as you become Mrs. Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have you considered how you'll bear the separation, and how he'll bear to [45] be quite deserted in the world? Because, Miss Catherine -'

'He quite deserted! we separated!' she exclaimed, with an accent of indignation. 'Who is to separate us, pray? They'll meet the fate of **Milo!** Not as long as I live, Ellen: for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing before I could consent **to forsake** Heathcliff. [...] My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning: my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the [65] universe would turn to a **mighty** stranger: I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. So don't talk of our separation again: it is [70] impracticable; and ...'

She paused, and hid her face in the folds of my gown; but I **jerked** it forcibly away. I was out of patience with her folly!

(*Wuthering Heights*; Chapter 9)

#### Footnotes

queer: strange  
dismal: miserable  
curses: swears  
daresay: assume  
chubby: plump  
dread: fear

vexed: troubled  
fit: good enough  
harken: listen to  
weeping: crying  
heath; waste land  
moonbeam: moonlight

ere: before  
slight: small  
bench: seat  
steal out: go out furtively  
settle: seat  
bade her hush (bid, bade, bidden): made  
her sign to be silent  
gazing: looking  
to sup: to have supper

to cheat: to trick, to deceive  
Milo: Milo from Crotona was an athlete  
very famous for his strength. Once old, he  
tried to pull down a tree, but his hand was  
trapped and he was killed by wild animals.  
forsake: abandon  
mighty: powerful  
jerke: pushed