

EMILY BRONTË

LIFE (1818 - 1848)

Emily Brontë was born in Thornton, Yorkshire. Her father was an Anglican clergyman and she was the sister of Charlotte and Anne Brontë, who were also novelists. She led a retiring life at Haworth, sustained by a deep bond with the wild countryside around her father's curacy. Her passion for this landscape fills *Wuthering Heights*, which was published in 1847. She died of tuberculosis a year later.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Wuthering Heights was Emily Brontë's only novel. When it first appeared, the story of passionate and cruel love of Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, with its sequel of revenge and cruelty, repelled many Victorian readers and critics. The work was felt to be "original" but its originality was too extreme and too intense for most tastes. Charlotte Brontë herself confessed that she too found some aspects of *Wuthering Heights* excessive. Since its first publication the reputation of the novel has grown. Readers are no longer offended by the violence, passion, and lack of a clear moral message, but recognize that the work is a Romantic masterpiece, offering a powerful exploration of the difficult relation between feeling and reason.

PLOT. The central hero is **Heathcliff**. A parentless gipsy, he is picked up in the street of Liverpool one day by Mr. Earnshaw, the master of Wuthering Heights, a mansion on the Yorkshire moor. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff home and rears him together with his own children, **Catherine** and Hindley. Despite Hindley's scorn, Heathcliff eventually falls in love with Catherine, who loves him too, and whose nature is as passionate and fierce as his own. One day, however, overhearing that the girl is considering a possible marriage with him degrading for her, Heathcliff flees from the place. He returns three years later, rich, thirsting for revenge and still in love with Catherine. But Catherine is now married to the weak and timorous, although wealthy and refined, Edgar Linton, the master of the nearby Thrushcross Grange. Shortly afterwards she dies giving birth to a daughter, Cathy. Heathcliff, in the meantime, has married Edgar's sister, Isabella, whom he does not love and whom he mistreats; she bears him a sickly son, Linton. He has all the family in his power now, since Hindley too, now a drunkard and a gambler, has lost all his money. To complete his revenge, he forces a marriage between young Cathy and his own son Linton, but the latter soon dies. Heathcliff, failing in his wish for total destruction, also dies, finally reunited with his beloved Catherine. Cathy, who is in love with Hindley's son, Hareton, is now free to marry him.

FEATURES. *Wuthering Heights* stand quite apart from the fiction of its time because of its characteristic features. In fact there is a particular use of time, which can be defined as "modern" in the sense that it does not follow a chronological development, but he moves backwards and forwards through memories and flashbacks. Then the author makes use of an **indirect narrative technique** by introducing two story-tellers: Nelly, the elderly, emotionally involved family nurse, who recounts past events, and Lockwood, the city visitor and a stranger to the place, who starts and concludes the story. The book combines **romanticism** and **realism**: romanticism appears above all in love theme, the great role played by nature, and the main male character, the wild and demonic Heathcliff; realism appears in the social aspect of the novel. The book also presents the **analysis of a passion** such as had never appeared in Victorian literature before. As strong and

uncontrollable as an elemental force of nature, it starts when Heathcliff and Catherine are still children, grows with them and survives death. Creative and destructive at the same time, this love is neither sexual nor a spiritual or intellectual attraction: it is an impulse which binds them to each other as if each was a inborn part of the other.

Notebook