

In Search of the Mythical Images of Yorkshire: The Poetry of the Brontë Sisters in the Literary Tourism of Haworth

One of the sites of cultural pilgrimage most paradoxically popular in both England and the United Kingdom is Haworth, a small village located in the relatively isolated and inhospitable windy moors of Yorkshire, apart from the usual haunts of the so-called 'literary tourist'. The strange phenomenon of the huge popularity achieved by the Brontë family (father and brother also wrote) has been addressed in several studies that examine both the impact of their works and the 'mythologizing' process that occurred shortly after Charlotte's death in 1855. Matthew Arnold dedicated his elegy entitled "Haworth Churchyard" to them, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a famous literary biography of Charlotte, and most recently Lucasta Miller digressed about *The Brontë Myth*. In particular, the many places and regions mentioned in their novels, although mostly fictional, have been explored extensively by critics. However, few studies have investigated the specific impact that the *poetry* written by the three sisters had not only in this long process of 'mythification' but also in creating a powerful imagery associated with the real spaces that were inhabited and impregnated by them. Our purpose is thus to demonstrate that the images, memories, emotions and descriptions relating to these spaces that are present in their poems are instrumental not only in the construction of this mythical process but also, and especially, in their potential transformation into a high quality touristic product.

Keywords: Brontës, poetry, tourism, Yorkshire, myth

Right before the traveller on this road rises Haworth village; he can see it for two miles before he arrives, for it is situated on the side of a pretty steep hill, with a background of dun and purple moors; rising and sweeping away yet higher than the church, which is built at the very summit of the long narrow street. All round the horizon there is this same line of sinuous wave-like hills; [...] crowned with wild, bleak moors – grand, from the ideas of solitude and loneliness which they suggest, or oppressive from the feeling which they give of being pent-up by some monotonous and illimitable barrier, according to the mood of mind in which the spectator may be. (Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857, p. 55)

Writers on 'place and literature', like myself, have usually been more interested in the effect of place upon an individual author's *oeuvre* than in how an *oeuvre* might have shaped the subsequent history of a place. On the other hand, for the literary academic, tourism is often connoted pejoratively with mass popular culture, mass travel,

unthinking and unrefined consumption, amateurishness and inauthenticity. Literary tourism has, nevertheless, become gradually more interesting in the context of studies on literary geography, literary biography and literary reception, in which tourism can be seen as a form of literary adaptation or as a creative and transformative system of enhancing or extending reading activity. In their turn, tourist studies are starting now to be more sensitive to reading practices, literary production and to individual literary texts.

A touchstone study in this approximation has been John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze* (1990, 2002), which sees tourism as a form of suspension of the quotidian of work and home and as an activity associated with daydreaming and fantasy. In particular, tourism's emphasis on the processes of imagination and myth formation has become noteworthy for literary scholars, as myself, and in works such as Samantha Matthews' *Poetical Remains* (2004) and Nicola Watson's *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain* (2006), in which the latter argues that it is the internal dynamics of an author's works which produce literary place, and that a mapping of national literary heritage can be aggregated onto a national mythic geography.

According also to Nichola Watson (in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, 2009), the nineteenth century was "the period which first saw the practice of visiting places associated with Anglophone authors in order to savour book, place, and their interrelations achieve wide enough currency to attain commercial significance." (2). It witnessed, namely, "the enshrinement of the Brontë sisters' home at Haworth by the end of the century" (2). Indeed, if British travellers during this period "developed to an unprecedented extent a taste for visiting a range of places of purely literary interest, associated with death authors and their writings", readers also "were seized en masse by a new powerful desire to visit the graves, the birthplaces, and the careful preserved homes of dead poets and men and women of letters; to contemplate the sites that writers had previously visited and written in or about; and eventually to traverse whole imaginary literary territories" (3).

William Howitt initiated the practice of keying biography to travelogue with his *Homes and Haunts of the Most Celebrated British Poets* (1847).¹ His widely popular

¹ Author and pioneer British Spiritualist, Howitt published his first poem at age 13, having studied chemistry and natural philosophy. He married Mary Botham in 1821, and they co-wrote a number of works. Howitt travelled through England and Germany, extending his knowledge of foreign languages. He wrote several books during his early adulthood, including *Popular History of Priestcraft in All Ages and Nations* (1833) and *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets* (1847). He edited *Howitt's*

work reflects the desire to make and preserve writers' houses within nineteenth-century culture, resulting from a mixture of local and national pride, romantic interest in personality and genius, and contact with history where it was made. Watson mentions that new systems of memorialisation developed at that time, such as "reading on significant spots, purloining relics, purchasing souvenirs and leaving signatures" and, more significantly, that these practices "dictate(ing) the ways in which 19th-century literary culture is being consumed on the ground by moderns." (3). Thus, the production of nineteenth-century literary culture becomes both a nineteenth-century tourist phenomenon – how Victorians *lived out* their reading – and a twenty-first century experience – how we *live out* our experience of reading the Victorians.

According to Tetley and Bramwell, in their important study on the cultural construction of Haworth's literary landscape, "Through their work or lives, writers of various forms of literature can endow places with a distinct literary landscape" (2002: 156). They thus stress that literary landscapes are a particular form of cultural landscape, in which "the visible structure of a place expresses the emotional attachments held by both its residents and visitors, as well as the means by which it is imagined, produced ..." (157). Therefore, cultural landscapes are "images or myths of place that are produced, contested and enforced by ... residents and tourism promoters" (157). Having this prevalent idea in mind, we will now focus on the specific sites, house, village and landscape, forever associated with the famous Brontë sisters.

Haworth's reputation as a major tourist destination in Britain is mostly, and indisputably, based on its associations with the Brontë family. In 1820, the reverend Patrick Brontë had moved with his family into the parsonage of this village, which he inhabited for 41 years until 1861, the year of his death. The remarkable thing was that the family living there produced three or four talented writers, who began their careers by writing for each other.² Every Brontë scholar knows that their unusually intense lives in the Haworth Parsonage, as well as the bleak and windswept landscape of the surrounding moors, were important influences on their writing. After a visit to the village in 1904, Virginia Woolf wrote "Haworth expresses the Brontës; the Brontës express Haworth. [...] They fit like a snail to its shell" (quoted in Tetley, 157), thus not

Journal of Literature and Popular Progress (3 vols., 1847-49) and published a translation of J. Ennemoser, *The History of the Supernatural* (2 vols., 1854; reissued in 1970).

² Besides Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, their brother Branwell also wrote and published (poems) in the local newspapers. Furthermore, together with Charlotte, he was responsible for the creation of the imaginary realm of Angria, from which several of the juvenilia or early writings emerged. Some of these tiny collaborative manuscripts can be seen in the Brontë Parsonage Museum.

just emphasising that mutual interdependence but also a very special connectedness between author(s) and place. Charlotte Brontë had herself confirmed this in the writing of her preface to the 1850 edition of her sister's *Wuthering Heights*, in which she mentions Emily's deep knowledge of "the inhabitants, the customs, the natural characteristics of the outlying hills and hamlets in the West-Riding of Yorkshire" as "a native and nursling of the moors" (324-25).³ Other physical remnants of Brontë's Haworth, besides the parsonage itself, include stone-built properties on Main Street, the churchyard and tower of the original church, and the National Church Sunday School that Patrick Brontë had built. The end of the century witnessed, besides, the foundation of the Brontë Society (1893) and the opening of a Brontë museum (1895), transferred to the parsonage in 1925.⁴

Although literary pilgrimage to Haworth had increased substantially in 1857, after the groundbreaking publication of Mrs Gaskell's biography, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, "the year when tourism really arrived at Haworth" – Robert Barnard (2002) states – was 1850, when "various folks [came] boring to Haworth on the wise errand of seeing the scenery described in *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*" (Charlotte's letter to Ellen Nussey, quoted by Barnard, 143). Under pretence of making a courtesy call on the minister of the place (Patrick Brontë), the people on visit had the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the writer said to be 'Currer Bell', author of those best-selling novels.⁵ Charlotte's precocious experience of the phenomenon of tourism can be inferred from her general reaction to the impulse that incited even gentry and professional visitors to come there: scorn, distrust and a certain sense of the ridiculous.

As Barnard states in his chapter on the arrival of tourism to Haworth, "for the rest of her short life visitors were to arrive in Haworth and knock at the Parsonage door" (143), attracted by the eventual mystery of Branwell's special chair, the bleakness of the moorlands – Emily's particular love, the chance of a round of the church or graveyard or a peek at Branwell's obscene letters. The appeal of the place, as Barnard emphasises,

³ This preface was written basically to apologise Emily's readers for the supposed rudeness and rusticity present in her sister's novel, whose connections with the wild moors of the north of England could for them have no interest.

⁴ As well as showing the Brontës' lives in some of their minute details, the museum presents suggestive hints of daily existence in the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly concerning women's lives. Another feature that marks the Brontë Parsonage Museum off from most other museums devoted to a literary or artistic figure is that it is owned and administered by a literary society.

⁵ The pseudonyms adopted by the sisters (Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell) had functioned both as a protection of their privacy and as an attempt to avoid the prejudice usually associated at this time with women that wrote and published. Charlotte only abandoned this 'cover' after her sisters' death.

was as “the setting of the Brontës’ *lives*” (144). This, in spite of the fact that Haworth itself features in *none* of the Brontë novels; it significantly surfaces in many of their more personal poems, though. On the other hand, most well-loved Brontë stories depend precisely on Haworth sources; such as Branwell’s dramatic reaction to Mrs Robinson’s rejection at the Black Bull or Emily’s enigmatic dying on the sofa of the parsonage parlour. The first Brontë tourist souvenirs – photographs of Reverend Patrick Brontë – were displayed for sale in a chemist’s shop window, the same year that Gaskell’s biography was published (Barker, 1995: 810).

Today, the tourist industry in Haworth is an undeniable fact and it is concentrated along Main Street, which bustles with both national and foreign visitors. Old buildings are now tourist shops, selling from Brontë soaps and jams to T-shirts and writing paper; tea-rooms sell ‘Heathcliff sandwiches’ and ‘Brontë biscuits’. In order to promote the region’s diverse attractions and businesses, Keighley Business Forum uses the popular ‘Brontë Country’ theme, thus capitalising on the several place myths that riddle the Brontë story. Every fictional location and incident in their novels is given a real counterpart in their personal lives and places. A ruined farmhouse on the moors near Stanbury, Top Withens, has been associated with the Earnshaw home in Emily Brontë’s novel, *Wuthering Heights*; this in spite of the fact that it contains a plaque noting that the building bore no resemblance to the house she described. Barnard documents that by the turn of the century, the museum was getting about three thousand visitors a year, and the Society’s membership was approaching three hundred (145). In 1899, it had begun to run an annual excursion, which soon became established as a strong tradition given the great topographical component of the Brontë myth. Thus, Cowan Bridge, Scarborough and Law Hill joined Haworth and the *Shirley* country as places of pilgrimage for Brontëans.⁶

In 1928, the Brontë Society and museum were finally relocated in the Haworth parsonage in a symbolic ceremony attended by hundreds of Brontëans, local dignitaries and literary figures. The mass enthusiasm that this caused put Haworth on a par with pilgrimage spots as Stratford-upon-Avon and Abbotsford (Barnard, 146).⁷ The desire to display Brontë memorabilia was then increased by the great legacy that the museum

⁶ Cowan Bridge was the school for daughters of the poor clergy that the Brontë girls attended, and where the two eldest (Maria and Elizabeth) became fatally ill. Scarborough was the seaside location where Anne Brontë chose to spend her last days and where she is buried. Law Hill was the school where Emily Brontë was employed as a teacher for a brief period.

⁷ These are, respectively, William Shakespeare’s birthplace and Walter Scott’s home, both hugely popular literary tourism sites.

obtained from H. H. Bonnell, who bequeathed his collection of manuscripts and first editions. As Barnard mentions, “The 1930s and 40s consolidated the museum’s position as a centre of literary tourism” (147); this was probably boosted by the release of a Hollywood film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, starring Lawrence Olivier in the role of Heathcliff. But it was only in the late 1950s that the crucial work of changing the Parsonage into something resembling the Brontës’ home was done, namely in the downstairs rooms. Patrick’s room was now again “a nineteenth-century clergyman’s study and the parlour/dining room was now the room where the Brontës not only ate but imagined, played and wrote – with furniture they knew, pictures and objects they had owned” (Barnard, 147). All these changes, Barnard suggests, made it ever more possible for the imaginative visitor to transport himself back to the years of the Brontës’ occupancy of the house.

Robert Barnard traces other changes in the literary tourism of Haworth around the early 1970s, and attributes them to the film *Railway Children* (148), whose scenes were filmed inside and outside the Parsonage, even if the classic story of E. Nesbitt did not possess any connection to either Haworth or the Brontës. This and Christopher Fry’s television series *The Brontës of Haworth*, a sensitive and intelligent retelling of the family’s story, caused a spectacular explosion of tourism, and in 1974 admissions to the Parsonage exceeded 200,000. Other later adaptations seem to have had little appreciable effect on visits. But, as Barnard refers, the venue “was clearly becoming not a place for Brontë-lovers to come to, but a mass tourist centre *tout court*” because it “had a momentum now which was independent of the Brontë story and the Brontë novels” (148). Thus, Haworth, the village, was superseding all the rest, *per se* giving West Yorkshire a prominent position in British tourism, and gripping in particular visitors from Japan, France and the Low Countries.

Touristic efforts to ‘locate the author’ in tombs, birthplaces, homes, and haunts is connected with the development of touristic fascination with places of the celebrated dead. These links between *corpse* and *corpus*, place and text, Watson explains as being a “new model of tourism driven by a desire on the part of the tourist to *construct a more intimate and exclusive relationship with the writer* than is supposed to be available through mere reading” (34, my emphasis). As such, many visitors to Haworth have indeed also been drawn by the knowledge that the Brontë sisters are, in fact, buried in that remote site; their literary remains thus become, in the process of mythologising, unconsciously associated with their bodily remains.

Nevertheless, the role of reading and of biography, in particular, in this process is perhaps more obvious in many ways. Michael Benton (in “Literary Biomythography”) argues that the act of mythologising plays a bigger role in the sub-genre of literary biography because it “encompasses the necessary invention of self and identity by the writer and the virtual representation of the subject by the biographer” (2009: 47), and he outlines a five-phase development in the Brontë myth as the paradigm of what he designates as ‘biomythography’ (48-53). Firstly, the initial biographer (the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell) is commissioned, selects and establishes a factual history, giving the facts a particular spin; secondly, the facts become fictionalised both through the writings of the subject (Charlotte Brontë’s “Biographical Notice”, 1850) and those of the biographer (Gaskell’s *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857); thirdly, the fiction itself (the Brontës’ novels and juvenilia) becomes mythologised as its characters and landscapes become symbols; fourthly, the myth is transmuted into a variety of ‘factions’ in different media (theatre, cinema, television, ballet, etc.) and the stories embellished with invented elements; finally, modern biographers attempt to demythologise this process by returning to primary sources (as are the notable cases of Juliet Barker’s *The Brontës* of 1995 and Lucasta Miller’s *The Brontë Myth* of 2001).

According to Benton, the transition from fiction into myth is characterised by two particular features: “the romanticizing of Haworth, the Parsonage, and the surrounding moors as an isolated, lonely setting against which these three mythic figures could enact their solitary tragedy with the stoicism of Greek drama; and the tendency to use the characters in the seven novels to bolster the stereotypical images of the three sisters” (50). In Mrs Gaskell’s *Life* Haworth and the Parsonage are presented as a setting from a singularly gloomy fairy tale. The latter is ‘a dreary, dreary place literally *paved* with rain-blackened tombstones’ and occupied by an old man ‘brooding like a Ghoul over the graves’ who ‘hardly looked human’ (Gaskell, quoted by Benton, 51). Beyond the Vicarage and the village, Benton adds, lies the wider mythic landscape of *Wuthering Heights*, created by Emily and deliberately mythologised by Charlotte in her ‘Preface’, which concludes with a paragraph of poetic prose that invests Emily’s story with the qualities of Greek myth (51): “*Wuthering Heights* is seen as a stone book, coming into being through an irresistible creative power that hews a gigantic statue

from the granite rocks on the moors around Haworth” (51).⁸ So strong has the imagery of this landscape with figures become, Benton argues, that the combination of biographical documentation and literary power has produced myths that seem endlessly adaptable.⁹

"From the earliest days there was this myth that the Brontës inhabited a house surrounded by wild moors, living in total isolation," says Andrew McCarthy, director of the Brontë Parsonage Museum (*Brontë Blog*, Saturday, January 2012). "This was never true", he corrects, "because the Worth Valley was an industrial area even then, mainly textiles. The Brontës lived on the dividing line between industry and untamed moorland to the west" (*Blog*). But landscape has always been integral to Brontë writing, most notably in the poems of Emily and in her sole novel, *Wuthering Heights*. The moors where the Brontë children played were a dreamscape, and felt as wild places free of Victorian convention. In her 'Prefatory Note' to Emily's poetry, Charlotte describes them: "The scenery of these hills is not grand – it is not romantic; it is scarcely striking. Long low moors, dark with heath, shut in little valleys, where a stream waters, here and there, a fringe of stunted copse" (Editor's Preface, 1850, 328-29).

Mills and scattered cottages chase romance from these valleys; *it is only higher up, deep in amongst the ridges of the moors, that Imagination can find rest for the sole of her foot*: and even if she finds it there, she must be a solitude-loving raven – no gentle dove. If she demand beauty to inspire her, she must bring it inborn: these moors are too stern to yield any product so delicate. (329, my emphasis)

"The Brontës as writers are synonymous with landscape," says Mr McCarthy; "They had a deep attachment to this place; they were continually drawn back to this source of inspiration. They would not be happy to see it spoiled" (*Brontë Blog*). The vicar himself finds solace in walks on the moors. The ground is hard with frost, the undergrowth brittle white, as he explains their beauty. A single leaning tree and a signpost (in English and Japanese) break the horizon. He recalls: "It was May, an awful day. The rain was

⁸ "'Wuthering Heights' was hewn in a wild workshop, [...] The statuary found a granite block on a solitary moor: [...] With time and labour, the crag took human shape; and there it stands colossal [...] moorland moss clothes it; and heath, with its blooming bells ..." (Preface by Currer Bell, 328).

⁹ Hence, to the respectable, the Brontës are decent, well-behaved, properly brought-up, conventional young women; to the religious, they are icons of piety; to romantics, tragic heroines in a wild landscape; to realists, spinsters of modest means and limited opportunities, reliant upon their own resources; to feminists, symbols of Everywoman struggling for freedom against the restrictions of a patriarchal society (Benton, 51).

lashing in from the moors, the wind was strong, and I came up here to pray. It was *barren, forlorn, elemental*. Wonderful." (*Blog*, my emphasis). Nearby, a henge of books erupts from the ground, stone books, moss-covered sculptures, a tribute to the inspirational power of this lonely expanse. "My sister Emily loved the moors," wrote Charlotte, "Flowers brighter than the rose bloomed in the blackest of the heath for her; out of a sullen hollow in a livid hillside her mind could make an Eden. She found in the bleak solitude many and dear delights; and not the least and best-loved was – liberty" (Preface, 329).

But all of the sisters, without exception, had a deep connection with the moors surrounding Haworth, including Charlotte herself and Anne. And this becomes evident in the poetry that they respectively wrote about their most familiar sites, where they were confronted with the need to reassess the Romantic concepts on Man and Nature and to 're-present' their natural world as also a feminine realm or domain. Besides reconsidering the place of feminine consciousness in the ecological web, they also responded to their bioregional sensibilities, namely by expressing a strong sense of *place/space*. Their lines abound with vivid, deliberately placed depictions of the environment: weather, landscape and the seasons, communicating an excess of vital stimulation. But besides exalting community with a living, breathing Nature, the Brontës inaugurate a type of topographic poem that became forever associated with Yorkshire's West Riding country. As is the case of Emily's powerful description of a violent storm above the Haworth moors:

High waving heather 'neath stormy blasts bending
Midnight and moonlight and bright shining stars
Darkness and glory rejoicingly blending
Earth rising to heaven and heaven descending
Man's spirit away from its drear dungeon sending
Bursting the fetters and breaking the bars
[...]
(1836)¹⁰

Emily Brontë was indeed the one who became mythologised both as an individual ('the Mystic of the Moors') and as one of the Brontë sisters, cast as Absolute Individual, as Tormented Genius, and as Free Spirit Communing with Nature. In fact, nature with its perennial process of life and death reflects the poet's major internal

¹⁰ All the poems by the Brontës that are quoted in this article are taken from Juliet Barker's *Selected Poems. The Brontës* (Everyman, 1993).

conflicts and has a universal appeal because it is elemental and timeless. The more concrete details in her poetry are evocative of the Yorkshire scene, “*essences of the spirit of place*” (Stanford 31, my emphasis), in particular of the West Riding moors. And it is when Emily recalls the landscape of Home that her lyricism most soars:

[...]

*There is a spot, 'mid barren hills,
Where winter howls, and driving rain;
But, if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.*

*The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear—
So longed for—as the hearth of home?*

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn-trees gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all!

[...] (‘A little while’, 1838, my emphasis)

Emily “glories in manifestations of the strength of natural forces, seeing them not as agents of chaos or destruction, but as expressions of the dynamic energy essential to the functioning of nature” (Duthie, 1986: 209). As a Northerner, she finds mountain winds, rushing torrents and whirling snow even dearer to her than summer sunshine and green valleys. Emily resisted the experience of the contemporary womanhood which others around her were obliged to undergo. The poet rambled around the moors with her huge mastiff dog when she wished, and stayed up at night to write poetry.

[...]

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading:
It vexes me to choose another guide:
Where the grey flocks in ferny glens are feeding;
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell:
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

(‘Often rebuked’, 1846, my emphasis)

The concrete details evocative of the Yorkshire scene, Brontë's native landscape, are not just intrinsically important but function as a pretext for a deeper exploration of problems that tortured her. As Derek Stanford has shown, they are not just "the symbols of regionality – essences of the spirit of place" (1960: 47) but the starting-points of her thought.

Anne Brontë's devotion to her native landscape remains one of her recurrent themes: It was during the years she spent near York, in the midst of lush, open country, that she first realised the full extent of her commitment to the moors and hills of her childhood. In a poem called "Home" she deliberately contrasts her present mild and sheltered abode with the bleakness of the moors round Haworth, to affirm her devotion to the latter:

[...]
But give me back my barren hills
Where colder breezes rise:

Where scarce the scattered, stunted trees
Can yield an answering swell,
But where a wilderness of heath
Returns the sound as well.
[...]
*Restore to me that little spot,
With gray walls compassed round,
Where knotted grass neglected lies,
And weeds usurp the ground.*
[...]
(1846, my emphasis)

Anne was obviously aware that nature played an important part in the harmony of the whole, and it also represented a major role in the saga of Gondal that she shared with Emily.¹¹ Anne shared instinctively Emily's delight in the wilder aspects of nature and, when she hears the north wind blowing, it seems to speak to her in a familiar language of that blissful time. In Anne's Gondal poetry, as in Emily's, nature is not very different from the one they encountered in their native region (windswept, barren and cold); it is

¹¹ Gondal was the imaginary realm created by Emily in her early youth, which she shared with Anne, after her break-up with Charlotte and Branwell's realm of Angria. The distinctive features of this imaginary land are the following: it was wild and mountainous, it was ruled by a queen (A.G.A.), it experienced fratricidal wars between royalists and republicans, and it dramatised lovers in opposing factions. The creation consisted of short narratives, plays and poems that the sisters enacted in their real lives until late in their careers. In contrast with Angria, no written records of these have survived (except for some fictional poems).

not infrequently glimpsed through prison bars or remembered in the vaults of a dungeon:

That Wind is from the North, I know it well;
No other breeze could have so wild a swell.
Now deep and loud it thunders round my cell,
[...]
I know its language; thus it speaks to me –
‘I have passed over thy own mountains dear,
Thy northern mountains –
[...]
When thou, a young enthusiast,
As wild and free as they,
O’er rocks and glens and snowy heights
Didst often love to stray.
[...]
 (“The North Wind”, 1838)

In the more mundane sphere of their everyday life, both Anne and Emily, when called on to exchange the freedom of their native hills for the schoolroom routine at Roe Head, must have viewed their new environment very much as a prison.

Charlotte Brontë (like Emily herself) acknowledges another natural, but fundamental, source for both her ‘song’ and her creative powers – homeland. She explicitly associates her poetic powers with a specific topography – her “native hill”:

[...]
From the lone moor descends that strain,
From glen and heathery hill,
And as I hear that voice again
I scarce can wish it still.
[...]
‘Tis the rush of sound that fills the sky
Above my native hill.

‘Tis the wakener of a hundred dreams
With joy, with glory fraught.
‘Tis the loosener of a thousand streams
Of poetry, of thought.
[...]
 (“But once again, but once again”, 1836)

As for her sister, ‘homeland’ is not just an exhilarating physical place/space but a privileged *locus* of affectionate bonds, where the ‘world within’ and the ‘world without’

– natural reality and creative imagination – are freely allowed to fuse or merge and become finally harmonised in the subject.

[...]
Just us and those we've famed in dreams,
Our own divine creations,
These are my soul's unmingled themes;
I scorn the alien nations.
[...]
("But once again")

Charlotte's "alien nations" represent both the real and the metaphorical locations associated with coercion, strife and gloom or sorrow, being rejected here for the "land of love and light" of their childhood; they thus stand for both their forced exile as teachers and governesses and their existential condition as adult beings.

[...]
Now, as I watch that distant hill,
So faint, so blue, so far removed,
Sweet dreams of home my heart may fill,
That home where I am known and loved:
It lies beyond; yon azure brow
Parts me from all Earth holds for me;
And, morn and eve, *my yearnings flow*
Thitherward tending, changelessly.
My happiest hours, aye ! all the time,
I love to keep in memory,
Lapsed among moors, ere life's first prime
Decayed to dark anxiety.

(The Teacher's Monologue, 1837, my emphasis)

For Tracy Miller, in "Site-Specific: Placing Memory in Victorian Literature and Culture" (2012), art that arises from and makes use of a specific setting, exploits what Gaston Bachelard suggests is an almost primal relationship between space, memory, and desire: we long for the places of our past, no matter how distant or impossible a return to such place may be (*Poetics of Space*, 1958). "Haworth Churchyard" (1855) is, for her, a particularly salient example of the ways in which Matthew Arnold's elegies identify both loss and mourning with specific places and 'suture' grief and memory to the landscape.

[...]
 Turn we next to the dead.
 How shall we honour the young,
 The ardent, the gifted? How mourn?
 Console we cannot, her ear
 Is deaf. *Far northward from here,*
In a churchyard high 'mid the moors
Of Yorkshire, a little earth
 Stops it for ever to praise.
 Where, behind Keighley, the road
 Up to the heart of *the moors*
Between heath-clad showery hills
 Runs, and colliers' carts
 Poach the deep ways coming down,
 And a rough, grimed race have their homes--
There on its slope is built
The moorland town. But the church
 Stands on the crest of the hill,
 Lonely and bleak;--at its side
The parsonage-house and the graves.
 [...]
 (my emphasis)

In the poem, Miller says, this tendency is made literal through an image of Brontë remaining – through her remains – part of the landscape of Haworth itself. "Haworth Churchyard" produces a version of Brontë's grave that seemed somehow more suitable than her actual resting place, even to Arnold's most discerning critics.

Welcome the sister, the friend;
 Hear with delight of thy fame!
Round thee they lie--the grass
Blows from their graves to thy own!
 (my emphasis)

Following the publication of the elegy, Gaskell tentatively corrects Arnold for his mistaken burial site: "I hardly know whether to tell you – but they lie all buried under heavy stones just close before the altar in Haworth Church. – one longs for her & Emily to have had their burial-places *where the breeze from their own moors might have stirred the grass growing over them.*' (*Letters*, 1:316, my emphasis). According to Arnold, nature intended the Brontës to be buried outside; fortune interfered, and the heavy stones and stifling air of Haworth Church are not only uncongenial but also wrong. The elegy, like so many subsequent treatments of the Brontës, "buries" them in the landscape of their lives and works.

Concluding, Arnold's image of the Yorkshire earth *enveloping* the Brontës anticipates the way in which they have been remembered and remade by literary biographers, critics, and commentators in the years following their deaths and even to this day: they are *inseparable* from Haworth, a *part of the place* itself. Therefore, literary tourism also becomes something *intrinsic* to the location, a part of Haworth and of the Brontës themselves.

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