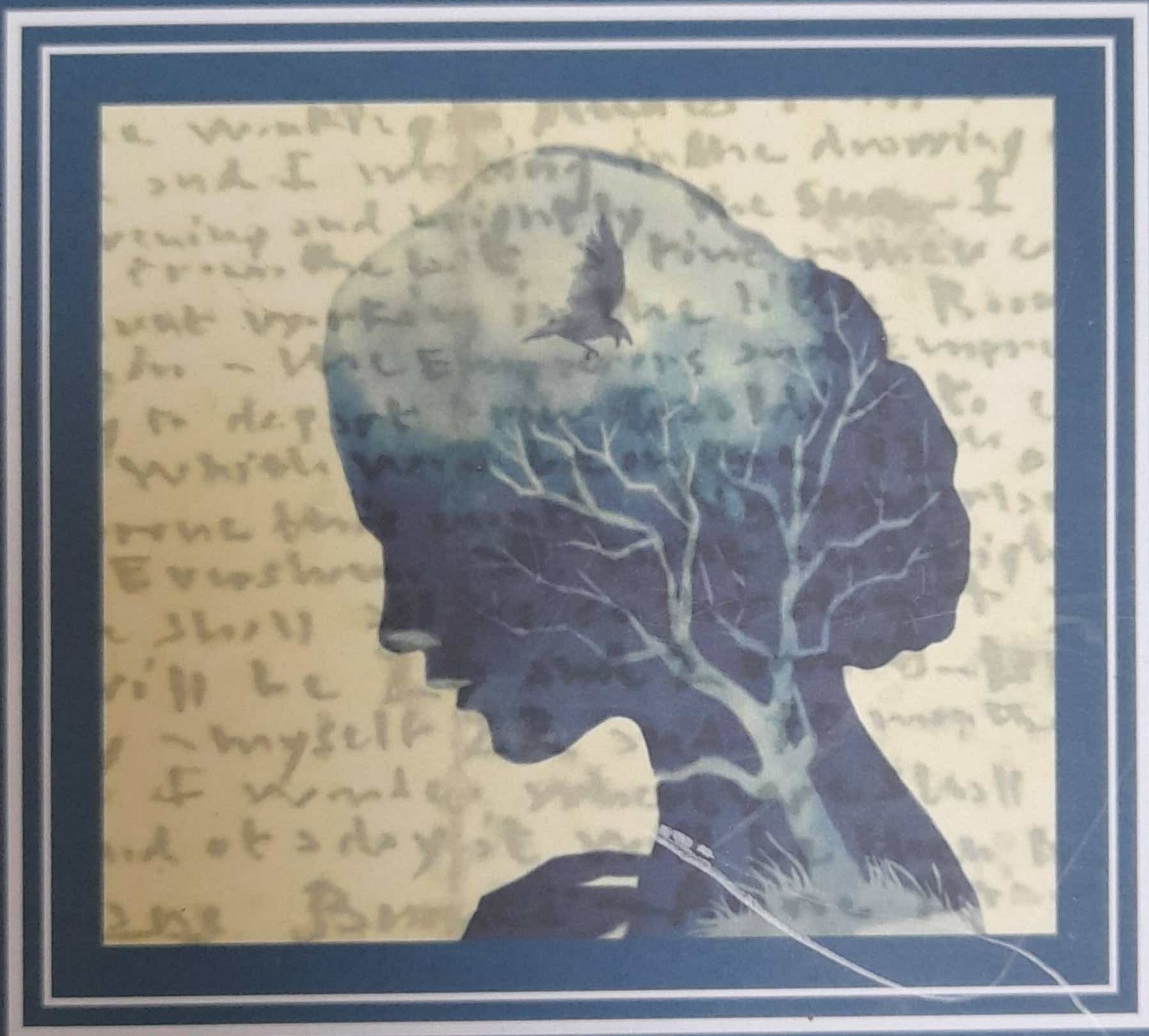


# AN ENIGMA CALLED EMILY

Reassessing Emily Brontë after 200 years



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## *A Lovelier Life from Death: Emily Brontë at 200*

Debnita Chakravarti

Emily Brontë has enjoyed an afterlife long beyond her meagre mortal years. In the two centuries that witnessed its garnering of a growing readership and copious scholarship, her sole novel has inspired adaptations ranging across genres from romantic fiction (*Wuthering Hearts*) to high school drama (*Wuthering High*), reworking itself into mystery (*Catherine*) and eroticism (*Wuthering Nights*), and even including in its journey the odd vampire werewolf or zombie (*Wuthering Bites*, *The House of Dead Maids*). Subsequent authors have transplanted the stormy passion of Brontë's Yorkshire moors to other locations like the Caribbean (*Windward Heights*) and Civil War America (*Stone Field*). They have even tried to fill in gaps Brontë deliberately glossed over, like the three years the male protagonist spent away and returned a 'gentleman' (*Heathcliffe's Journey Back to Wuthering Heights*) and attempted to look forward from where Brontë's narrative stopped (*Return to Wuthering Heights*).

Amidst this fertile history of fictional adaptations came, in 2015, Jane Eagland's *The World Within: A Novel of Emily Brontë*. My essay looks at Emily Brontë from the perspective of Eagland's book on the occasion of her 200<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. The Brontës were a writing family who wrote about families (Lamonica 1). Even though the three sisters chose the male Christian pseudonyms Currer, Ellis and Acton, to mask their gender, their common adopted surname Bell asserted a shared family identity. But within this generic cover each sister established her own unique literary identity. This individuality, paradoxically, cannot be understood without understanding the Brontë family setup and the early years of the sisters. And that is what *The World Within* sets out to do.