DRAMATISING THE CONFLICTS OF NATION AND THE BODY: DISPLACEMENT IN CHARLOTTE AND EMILY BRONTË'S POETRY OF *HOME* AND *EXILE* DUALITIES

PAULA ALEXANDRA GUIMARÃES
Universidade do Minho
paulag@ilch.uminho.pt

> Man has walked by the light of conflagrations, and amid the sound of falling cities; and now there is darkness, and long watching till it be morning.
> (Carlyle, "Characteristics", 1831)

My dreams, the Gods of my religion, linger
In foreign lands, each sundered from his own,
And there has passed a cold destroying finger
O'er every image, and each sacred tone.
(Charlotte Brontë, "My Dreams", 1837)

> Exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home.
> (Edward Said, "The Mind of Winter", 1984)

In *Poetry as Survival*, Gregory Orr claims that the personal lyric not only translates or expresses human crisis but also has the role of transforming and regulating it, especially when the very integrity of the self is threatened:

> Human culture 'invented' or evolved the personal lyric as a means of helping individuals survive the existential crises represented by extremities of subjectivity and also by such outer circumstances as poverty, suffering, pain, illness, violence, or loss [...]. This survival begins when we 'translate' our crisis into language —where we give it symbolic expression as an unfolding drama of self and the forces that assail it. (Orr 2002: 4)

Thus, the best way to respond to the chaotic unpredictability of our political, social and emotional being is through what Orr designates as 'the project of poem-making' —"the personal lyric, the 'I' poem dramatizing inner and outer experience" (2002: 4).

One might argue that either philosophy or religion (or both) could also fulfil this role; but, for Orr, what distinguishes the personal lyric from these is that it "clings to embodied being", in a kind of "sensuous incarnation", as if "the personal lyric urges the self to *translate* its whole being into language" (2002: 29). If we believe, like Orr, that all thoughts and actions emanate from the body, then all we write is inseparable from it. Several poets, such as Walt Whitman, D. H. Lawrence and Dylan Thomas, have indeed stressed the importance of the bodily nature of self (or its material or physical support) in their poetry.

> In order to carry the weight of the existential crises that torment it from without and within, the self in the personal lyric needs to be more than a stick figure 'I' [...] to incarnate and dramatize a full range of human feelings, thoughts, memories, and sensations [...]. (Orr 2002: 37)

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I would add that the self relates not only to the microcosm of his/her body but also to the macrocosm or larger body of the nation. Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, had also pointed to a connection between the history of the nation and individual biography, in which both are seen as narratives of identity and personhood (1983: 203). The lyric 'I' is, furthermore, recurrently concerned with questions of the location or dislocation of the self, as well as with notions of placement and displacement. The self in the personal lyric is either 'home' or 'away', facing internal or external division or fracture, and in search of a prospective identity (personal and national) or a chosen location.

In the Brontëan lyric, in particular, the conflicts of nation (whether they are presented in a real or fictionalised manner) are simultaneously reflected in the conflicts of the body itself, and the word 'home' —a metaphor for both 'place' and 'being'— assumes different but related nuances (from the familiar hearth and the exalted homeland to the poet's mind, Nature or God's bosom). This latter meaning of the combined metaphor is present, namely, in Emily's 1841 poem "I see around me tombstones grey", in which the speaker declares: "We would not leave our native home / For *any* world beyond the Tomb" (ll. 41-42), and in her final composition ("Often rebuked, yet always back returning"), at the end of which she answers her own question concerning her own location and identity (my emphasis):

> [...]
> 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.
> (ll. 17-20)

The Brontës' early writings are, as Carl Plasa suggested, "a striking blend of fantasy and history" (2004: xii). In spite of the wild imaginative flights that these records contain, they should be judged as responses to a 'history' because "they are very aware of and responsive to a multifarious and changing early nineteenth-century world", as Heather Glen, in her turn, has remarked (2002: 2). But the Brontës' very awareness of a historical (and existential) conflict was threatening to overwhelm them completely, namely by severely testing their faith and challenging their imaginative powers. The Puritan concept of life as moral warfare and divine election, that the sisters had constantly been subject to, added inner struggle to the battle against one's national enemies (embodied by the threats of imperial France). Nevertheless, as Houghton had remarked in relation to individual Puritanism,

> [c]onscientious souls who tried to achieve a life of absolute purity and self-denial might experience an almost daily sense of failure, distressing in itself and frightening in its implications; [...] they were dismayed to find quite different ideals glaringly apparent in the world around them. (Houghton 1957: 62)

Just how terribly exposed the Victorians were to a constant succession of shattering developments, and their long-term effects, is visible in Carlyle's confession in "Characteristics" (1831) that "[...] doubt storms in [...] through every avenue; inquiries of the deepest, painfulest sort must be engaged with [...] whereto no answer will be returned" (Carlyle [1838] 1896-1901: 3), and particularly in F. D. Maurice's 1833 comment:

> We are crushed by the spirit of this world, by the horrible Babylonian oppression [...] of contradictory opinions, strifes, divisions, heresies, selfishness. We feel this spirit around us, above us, within us. It cramps our energies, kills our life, destroys our sympathy. (In Houghton 1957: 71)

But this apparently unexplained Victorian *malaise* had its source in very real fears and it would only be escaped by an energising drive towards expansionism. In fact, as one reads Charlotte and Emily Brontë's juvenile poetry (written mostly between 1829 and 1839), one becomes aware of a subtle but pervasive concern, or absorption, with their country's contemporary dilemmas or challenges (whether moral or political). On the one hand, deeply rooted national fears surface in disguise in the text of their poems, such as the fear of invasion (still felt in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars) and the fear of revolution —very much present

in the industrial conflicts of Luddism and the political demonstrations of the Chartists in their Yorkshire vicinity. The Brontës' fictionalised war poems should, consequently, be interpreted as a poetic reflection of their times.

> Victorian society, particularly in the period before 1850, was shot through, from top to bottom, with the dread of some wild outbreak of the masses that would overthrow the established order and confiscate private property. [...] [T]he growing bitterness of class feeling, often issuing in physical violence and repressive force, made the threat of revolution tangible and immediate to an extent unknown in England today. From 1815 to 1850 the tension [...] was almost constantly at the breaking point. After the war, economic depression and a reactionary Tory policy created the social atmosphere in which a whole generation of Victorians grew up. (Houghton 1957: 55-56)

On the other hand, the increasing nationalism of the nineteenth century brought with it the glorification of the English heroes (their voyages and their battles, their heroic lives and no less heroic deaths) and the revival of the heroic romance. This nationalistic pride and enthusiasm, related to England's victory over the French and her growing expansionism overseas, seem, thus, to emerge in the Brontëan compositions that hero-worship soldiers, explorers and missionaries (notably, the characters of Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington). As Martin Green has argued, the tradition of heroic travel and exploration literature "charged England's will with the energy to go into the world and explore, conquer, and rule", thus functioning as an 'energizing myth of empire' (1979: 3).

> When the Victorian period began, all the prerequisites for hero worship were present: the enthusiastic temper, the conception of the superior being, the revival of Homeric mythology and medieval ballad, the identification of great art with the grand style, the popularity of Scott and Byron, and the living presence of Napoleonic soldiers and sailors. [...] [I]t promised to answer some of the deepest needs and problems of the age. (Houghton 1957: 310)

When she was only thirteen, in July 1829, Charlotte Brontë wrote one of her first extant poems in collaboration with her brother Branwell, "High minded Frenchmen love not the Ghost" —an allusion to the impending victory of Nelson over Napoleon, through an image of the ghostly form of this national hero riding "the clouds of pain / With the eye of an eagle" (ll. 2-3).[1] This is to be taken as a warning to the 'Kingdom of France' of "the storm that is drawing nigh" —an omen of defeat present in "the troubled shimmering air" which foretells surrender to Nelson for the French, who "shall bow at his knees" (ll. 3, 14-15). Thus, the motives of war (the conflict between nations) and of nationalism (the praise of a national hero) are present from the very beginning of the Brontës' literary partnership. It is from recent British history that they draw their stories in the form of poems.

This process would eventually become more sophisticated with time, in the sense that inner and outer conflict (body and nation) would be symbolically merged in many compositions. This is the case of one of Emily's poems (dated from 1837) dedicated to the Gondalian wars, in which the warrior's frenzy in the heat of the battle gives way to a nightmarish despair (my emphasis):

> [...]
> 'Twas over— all the Battle's madness
> The bursting fires the cannon's roar
> The yells, the groans the frenzied gladness
> The death the danger warmed no more
>
> In plundered churches piled with dead
> The weary charger neighed for food
> The wornout soldier laid his head
> Neath roofless chambers splashed with blood
>
> I could not sleep through that wild seigh
> My heart had fiercely burned and bounded
> *The outward tumult* seemed to asswage
> *The inward tempest* it surrounded
> [...].
> (ll. 9-20)[2]

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Thomas Pavel, in "Exile as Romance and as Tragedy", argues that "a loss of homeland sometimes affects the characters of [...] romance and tragedy; the former specializing in metaphorical exile, the latter occasionally focusing on exile proper" (1998: 28). As avid readers of both genres (in the form of Scott's novels and Shakespeare's tragedies), the Brontës, and Emily in particular, absorbed the neoplatonic vision of earthly life as 'exile' that informs these plots as a whole. But they also looked at the character of the political exile with interest, namely the exiled monarchs (male and female), whose predicaments of power they explored poetically: dramatic loss of life, demotion from power, captivity, incest and (un)faithful love. If, in its narrow sense, exile means a political banishment (most famously, Napoleon's), in its broad sense it designates every kind of estrangement or displacement, from the physical and geographical to the spiritual (often equated with death in the Brontëan lyric). It appears not only as a major historical phenomenon, but also as a theoretical reflection about individual and cultural identity, intimately bound up with problems of nationalism, racism, and war.

In the fictionalised colonies of the Brontës, one can also find a paradoxical but interesting mixture of fear and attraction for what is culturally and racially different. As Plasa has noticed, particularly in relation to Charlotte, in the colonial spaces that the Brontës invented, there is a combination of "fear and loathing of the racial other

with desire and fascination" (Plasa 2004: xii). The sagas of *Angria* and *Gondal*, whose poems often portray colonial drama fictionally, prove, in Dessewffy's words, that "the curiosity they felt toward the exoticism of the alien turned into an astonishment over their own personalities split into irreconcilable roles" (1998: 353). One of the roles into which Charlotte Brontë's personality more often split was the dark double figure of the coloniser/exiled Zamorna, for whose Gothicised orientalism she felt both attraction and repulsion. But as Charlotte switches the perspective from external to internal worlds, she often engages in a visionary trance, through which she escapes from the English school of drudgery and exile and ventures out to Africa, "a far and bright continent". In delineating this space of colonial vision, Brontë seems to underline the extent to which her occupation of that imaginative space is a strategy of survival. In "A single word— a magic spring" (1837), the trance descends on her all of a sudden and her foot treads the war-shaken shores of the Calabar, upon whose distant river banks her colonisers had long been building and settling their 'cities' (my emphasis):

> [...]
> I cannot tell and none can tell
> How flashed the mighty stream
> At once, as on the vision fell
> Its silent, written name.
>
> The Calabar! The Calabar!
> The sacred land it laves,
> I little thought, *so lone, so far*
> To hear its rolling waves.
>
> To see and hear them in their course
> As clear, as they who stand
> And watch the unbridled torrent force
> Its way through *Angria's land*.
>
> [...]
> The eye with *sleepless day-dreams* dim,
> The cheek with vigils pale,
> On the rolling water gaze
> As it sweeps beneath that sky
> Where the sun's descending rays
> In the path of twilight die.
> [...]
> (ll. 5-16, 21-26)

These often contradictory challenges and motives are not openly or continuously present in the poetry of the sisters, though. Rather, most poetic compositions or

fragments seem to reflect in a very diffused or indirect way important, even decisive, historical moments (whether real or fictionalised) that are frequently transformed into private conflicts, *i.e.*, intense personal dramas or 'dramatic monologues'. The Brontës appear, therefore, to absorb those general national concerns into their private imaginative spheres, where they recreate personal or fictive instances of intense conflict or struggle. In many of these more climactic moments, the lyric 'body' or 'subject' seems to move or travel beyond itself in an evasive attempt to overcome social and political coercions that both confine and displace. Literal exile derived from a personal conflict (even if spoken by a fictionalised heroine) occurs in many compositions, as is the case of Charlotte's "Mementos", an 1846 poem (my emphasis):

> [...]
> She bore in silence —but when passion
> Surged in her soul with ceaseless foam,
> The storm at last brought desolation,
> And *drove her exiled from her home.*
>
> And silent still, she straight assembled
> The wrecks of strength her soul retained;
> For though *the wasted body* trembled,
> *The unconquered mind*, to quail, disdained.
>
> She crossed the sea —now lone she wanders
> By Seine's, or Rhine's, or Arno's flow:
> Fain would I know *if distance renders*
> *Relief or comfort to her woe.*
> [...]
> (ll. 189-200)

But metaphorical exile or displacement, derived also from personal suffering and in the form of mental or spiritual escape, seems to be even more recurrent in the poetry of the sisters. In fact, they have two long poems in which the description of this mental displacement (from a forcefully exiled and confined body) is very similar and detailed; they are Charlotte's "Retrospection" (1835) and Emily's "A little while, a little while" (1838), coincidentally written when they were both away from Haworth, 'exiled' in their respective teaching posts, at Roe Head and Law Hill. We can, thus, compare the elder sister's lines with the ones left to us by the younger, and note that the *home* and *exile* dualities or dilemmas that they both experienced are presented through the same vital and recurrent contrast between dark gloom and bright light (my emphasis):

[...]
Where was I ere one hour had passed:
Still listening to that dreary blast,
Still in that *mirthless lifeless room*,
Cramped, chilled, and deadened by its gloom?

No! thanks to that *bright darling dream*,
Its power had shot one kindling gleam,
Its voice had sent one wakening cry,
And bade me lay my sorrows by,
And called me earnestly to come,
And borne me to *my moorland home*.
I heard no more the senseless sound
Of task and chat that hummed around,
I saw no more that grisly night
Closing the day's sepulchral light.

The vision's spell had deepened o'er me:
Its lands, its scenes were spread before me,
In one short hour a hundred homes
Had roofed me with their lordly domes,
And I had sat by fires whose light
Flashed wide o'er halls of regal height,
[...]
(Charlotte Brontë, ll. 69-88)

[...]
Where wilt thou go my harassed heart?
Full many a land invites thee now;
And places near, and far apart
Have rest for thee, my weary brow—
[...]

The house is old, the trees are bare
And moonless bends the misty dome
But what on earth is half so dear—
So longed for as *the hearth of home*?
[...]

Shall I go there? Or shall I seek
Another clime, another sky—
Where tongues familiar music speak
In accents dear to memory?

Yes, as I mused, *the naked room*,
The flickering firelight died away

> And *from the midst of cheerless gloom*
> *I passed to bright, unclouded day—*
> [...]
>
> A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
> So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air
> And, deepening still the dreamlike charm,
> Wild moor sheep feeding every where—
> [...]
>
> Even as I stood with raptured eye
> Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear
> My hour of rest had fleeted by
> And given me back to weary care—
> (Emily Brontë, ll. 1-16, 21-28, 33-36, 45-48)

In both cases, 'home' proves to be just a momentary stop where the women poets' travelling mind detains itself, the mere but vitally necessary passage-way for the much remoter and fantastic destination to which they are bound —the imaginary of *Angria* and *Gondal*, their childhood *locus*. In both cases, their *reverie* is abruptly interrupted by a Porlockian incident or the drear reality of daily task.

The theme of exile (or the exilic character proper), besides being a haunting subject in the poetry of the Brontës, thus seems also to constitute a fit image for the women poet's personal predicament. Paradoxically, whether they choose to stay at home or are compelled to leave, they remain 'exiles'. The concept of the woman's 'place' itself becomes then problematic, as Janet Wolff suggested in *Geography and Gender*,

> [..] for the woman writer who is either geographically displaced [...] or culturally marginalized [...] it may be her very identity as woman which enables a radical re-vision of home and exile. (1984: 7)

On the other hand, for Caren Kaplan, "each metaphor of displacement includes referentially a concept of placement, dwelling, location, or position" (1996: 144) and "the claiming of a world space for women raises temporal questions as well as spatial considerations, questions of history as well as place" (1996: 162). But 'exile' also functions for Edward Said as a "specific zone for the exploration of the relationship between nation, identity, and location" (1984: 117).

> The exile knows that [...] homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons. [...] Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience. (1984: 170)

So, at a time when the words 'home' and 'nation' were being exalted in Britain, but in which their respective meanings were also shifting dramatically, the Brontës described themselves as trapped inbetween worlds: the public and the private, the national and the foreign, the familiar and the strange, the real and the imaginary, the body and the soul. The recurrent use of dual metaphors in the sisters' poems seems to confirm precisely the dualistic nature of their thought, which materialises in a combination of sometimes radical opposites: invasion/evasion, home/exile, placement/displacement, confinement/release, heaven/hell, life/death.

One of the compositions which best express displacement, and the duality/ambiguity of these themes, is Emily's 1839 poem "Lines by Claudia", in which the woman speaker's own country may be Gondal or, alternatively, England. This depends on whether Claudia is an imaginary Gondalian heroine or an Englishwoman banished during the Interregnum for being a supporter of Charles I (my emphasis):

> [...]
> I did not dream remembrance still
> Clasped round my heart its fetters chill
> But I am sure the soul is free
> To leave its clay a little while
> Or how *in exile misery*
> Could I have seen my country smile
>
> In English fields my limbs were laid
> With English turf beneath my head
> My spirit wandered o'er that shore
> Where nought but it may wander more
>
> Yet if *the soul can thus return*
> I need not and will not mourn
> And *vainly did ye drive me far*
> With leagues of ocean stretched between
> My mortal flesh you might debar
> But not the eternal fire within
> [...].
> (ll. 15-24)

The separation between body and spirit/mind, very probably caused by a real or symbolic death (exile), makes it possible for the speaker to somehow 'return' to her homeland and witness its victory or devastation, allowing as well two different readings of the poem: either that Claudia's body lay exiled in England while her spirit wandered in her own country or that both body and spirit returned from exile to visit her own country, England.

The Brontës' 'body' or lyric subject, whether personal or fictionalised (in the realms of *Angria* and *Gondal*), experiences many different instances of 'displacement': departure, uprooting, evasion, transportation, confinement and even burial or entombing, all of which —real or symbolic— cannot be fully understood outside the specific historical context and place they found themselves in. A small poem, "The Orphan Child", inserted in the novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), seems to summarise adequately the existential question that contextualises location, through the plaintive voice of the weary speaker: "Why did they send me so far and lonely, / Up where the moors spread and grey rocks are piled?" (ll. 5-6). A generation and family of poets who had emerged directly out of decades of political and military strife, at home and abroad, could not but be profoundly affected by an almost permanent state of warfare and, consequently, symbolically represent their lives as a continuous struggle (a strenuous path for the weary traveller) and their own selves as divided or fractured. It is, thus, not surprising that Emily Brontë refers to her time as "This time of overwhelming fear" and that, in "Enough of Thought..." (1845), she acknowledges her own inner strife or division through the desperate words of a philosopher:

> [...]
> Three Gods, within this little frame,
> Are warring night and day—
>
> Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
> They all are held in me
> And must be mine till I forget
> My present entity—
> [...].
> (ll. 17-20)

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In such an unstable, divided world as the Brontës' world certainly was, the search for, and discovery of, a congenial *locus* or place where to rewrite history and their story was indispensable, vital; it was the only way left for these women poets to assert their own identities given the limitations and constrictions of their society, as Anne Brontë's famous appeal at her imposed exile in Thorp Green duly testifies: "[...] To our beloved land I'll flee, / *Our land of thought and soul*, [...] Beyond the world's control" ("Call me away...", ll. 5-8, in Chitham 1979). In just a few lines, the poet reveals that this intellectual and affective site is an experience which is closely shared and protected from outside influence by the sisters.

In *Exile and Creativity*, Susan Suleiman asks if this distance caused by exile could be "a falling away from some original wholeness and source of creativity" or on the contrary "a spur to creativity" (1998: 1). I would answer, with the three Brontës in mind, that sometimes the home that one leaves and 'a home away from home', which one creates, have more in common than one would like to admit.

For Michael Seidel, in *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*, the writer 'comes home' in the writing itself, "by weaving 'here' and 'there' together in the space of the imagination, the writer uses fiction to resolve the worst terrors of dislocation and anomie" (1986: ix). Kaplan also refers to this expanded sense of 'exile' as authorship and of the artist as displaced person (1996: 39), namely in the works of Harry Levin, for whom 'exile' or detachment becomes a 'vocational imperative' or "the necessary precondition of all original thought" (1966: 38). For Levin, the exile is homesick at home or away, and exilic displacement becomes the sign of the creative, contemplative life (1966: 38).

We have seen, in this context, that the minds of the Brontës may feel dislocated both when they are 'away' and at 'home'; moments when the homely realm, though comforting and inspiring, cannot compete with the richer exuberance of the imaginary ones. Charlotte was the first, in 1836, to recognise and pay a tribute to this creative power, which was significantly embodied in the poet-soldier figure of Zamorna, her protagonist and, like his creator, a displaced artist:

> [...]
> I owe him something. He has held
> A lofty burning lamp to me,
> [...]
> And he has given a steady spring
> To what I had of poetry.
> [...]
> He's moved the principle of life
> Through all I've written or sung or said
> [...].
> ("But once again, but once again", ll. 136-143, 150-151)

In a poem of 1844 that she dedicated "To Imagination", Emily Brontë also paid her tribute to this "benignant power" (l. 34) personified as a friend, whose "phantom bliss" she welcomes at every "evening's quiet hour" (ll. 31-34), particularly when the poet is "weary with the long day's care / [...] And lost and ready to despair" (ll. 1-3). In the poem, the duality of *home* and *exile* is represented in relation to the poet's 'body' by the strongly contrasting spheres of the "world within" and the "world without". Voluntary displacement occurs from "Nature's sad reality" (l. 20), where "Danger and guilt and darkness lie" (l. 14) and where the subject feels totally dislocated, to a profoundly intimate and creative realm:

> [...] a bright untroubled sky
> Warm with ten thousand mingled rays
> Of suns that know no winter days—
> [...].
> (ll.16-18)

Such a bright spot is located "within our bosom's bound" (l. 15), where the speaker claims that only Imagination and she herself rule, "Have undisputed sovereignty" (ll. 11-12). Therefore, 'home' is not just that familiar physical location from which the self's body is severed but the place where the mind is, the original source of wholeness and creativity.

Christine Brooke-Rose's illuminating article on the nature of literary exile ("Exsul") becomes doubly pertinent in this context because the linguistic image she uses to describe the Poet (an 'exsul' or banished man/woman) is strangely similar to Emily's own, including the similarity of the "island of exile" with the imaginary island of Gondal:

> Ultimately, is not every poet or 'poetic novelist' an exile of sorts, looking in from outside onto *a bright, desirable image in the mind's eye, of the little world created* [...]? An imagined world, an 'inner circle', within the island of exile, is that not also an island, the reader or writer exile, exsul? (1998: 22)

If the poet 'comes home' in the very act of writing, as Seidel has suggested, it is exilic displacement which paradoxically acts as a 'spur to creativity', as Suleiman in her turn points out. In "Plead for Me" (1844), Emily finally asks her "God of Visions" (presumably, Imagination) to explain us readers "why she has chosen" him, thus interpreting her 'vocational imperative' (in Levin's terms) both as a sort of strange exilic fate and as a heretical form of self-worship (my emphasis):

> [...]
> No radiant angel, speak and say
> Why *I did cast the world away*:
>
> Why I have persevered to shun
> The common paths that others run
> *And on a strange road journeyed on*;
> [...]
>
> [...]
> And *gave my spirit to adore*
> Thee, ever present, phantom thing,
> My Slave, my Comrade and my King!
> [...]
>
> And I am wrong to worship where
> Faith cannot doubt, nor Hope despair,
> Since *my own soul can grant my prayer*?
> [...]
> (ll. 9-13, 23-24, 36-38)

To finalise, one cannot help connecting Gregory Orr's idea of the personal lyric 'as survival', as a transformation of human crisis and as a safeguard of the integrity of the self in a chaotic world by 'dramatising inner and outer experience', with the notion of 'exile as authorship' and of the author as a displaced artist, and specially with the need felt by the poet for a certain detachment or distancing from outer reality, in order to re-organise his/her disintegrated self through the strategies of contemplation and creation. But aren't these, ultimately, a writer's strategies for 'coming home', to his/her own place and being?

Notes

1. All the poems by Charlotte Brontë quoted in this article can be found in Tom Winnifrith's 1984 edition, *The Poems of Charlotte Brontë. A New Annotated and Enlarged Edition of Shakespeare Head Brontë* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell).

2. All the poems by Emily Brontë quoted in this article can be found in Derek Roper and Edward Chitham's 1995 edition, *The Poems of Emily Brontë* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

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