

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

UCARE Research Products

UCARE: Undergraduate Creative Activities &  
Research Experiences

---

4-2016

## Defining Taboo: A Study of the Life and Work of the Brontë Sisters

Brittany Bell

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, [brittany.bell@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:brittany.bell@huskers.unl.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ucarersearch>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

Bell, Brittany, "Defining Taboo: A Study of the Life and Work of the Brontë Sisters" (2016). *UCARE Research Products*. 43.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ucarersearch/43>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the UCARE: Undergraduate Creative Activities & Research Experiences at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in UCARE Research Products by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



# Defining Taboo: A study of the life and work of the Brontë sisters

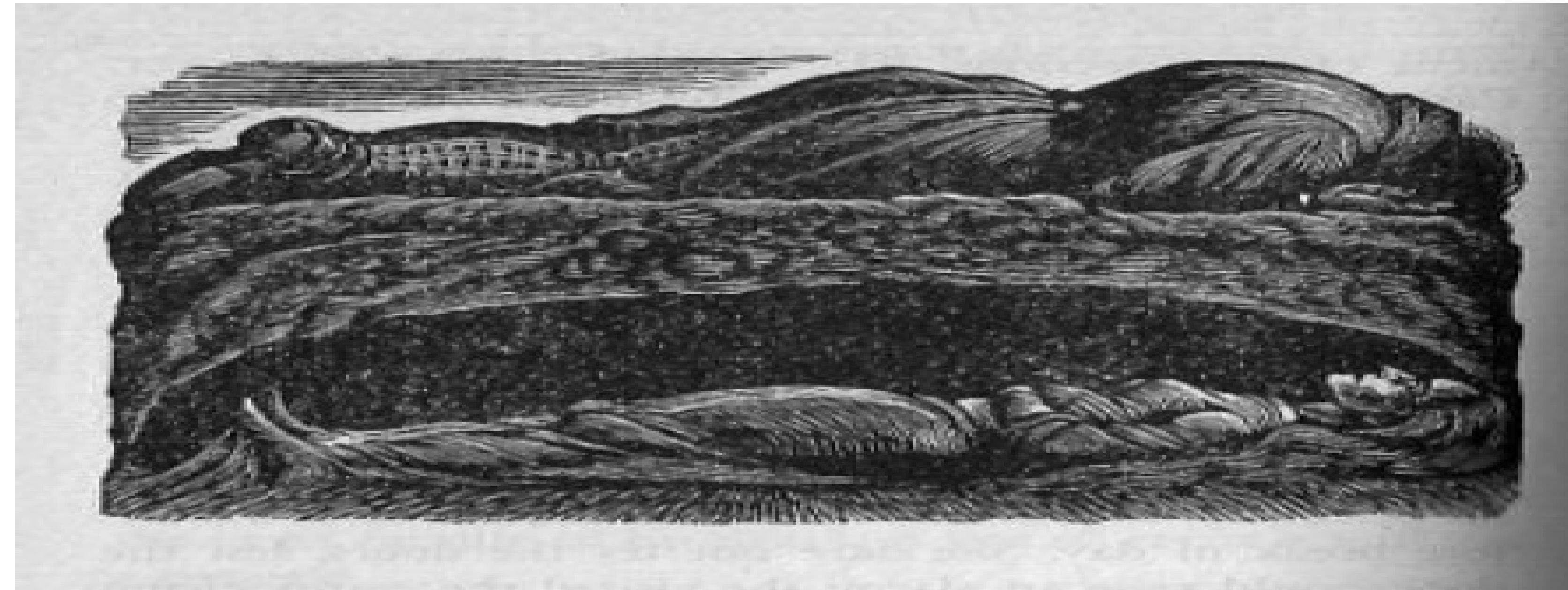
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Brittany Bell

Silence=Death: Gay Rights, *Wuthering Heights*, and the Outspoken Emily Brontë

Conference paper focused on::

- Non-Normative Gender and Relationship Roles
- Gender Ambiguity and Role Reversal
- Sexual Addiction
  - Destruction of the Body
  - Destruction of the Mind
  - Destruction of the Spirit

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*



God is not a Feminist

Journal Article focused on:

- Battle against patriarchal convention
- Feminism, Gender Inequality, and Class Inequality
- Involvement of the Christian Church in all of the above

Select Quotes from *Jane Eyre*

- “women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex” (Brontë JE 12:104).
- “not forget that if [she rejects] it, it is not [him she denies], but God...He opens to you a noble career; as [his] wife only can [she] enter upon it. Refuse to be [his] wife, and [she limits herself] for ever to a track of selfish ease and barren obscurity” (Brontë JE 34:381).
- We hear one last warning from St. John, citing this scripture from the gospels, “Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (Brontë JE 38:422).

Select Quotes from *Wuthering Heights*

Gender Roles and Ambiguity

- Edgar is “a lamb of [Cathy’s]” (Brontë 11:83)

Destruction of the Body

- Heathcliff starves himself for days and goes on nightly walks that no one can explain. He says simply that he is “within sight of [his] heaven” (Brontë 33:238).

Destruction of the Mind

- He even comes up with the idea to remove the side of her coffin so that he may be buried next to her in death and “[dissolve] with her, being more happy still” (Brontë 29:209).

Destruction of the Spirit

- “Mrs. Linton [sits] in a loose, white dress...[with] Gimmerton chapel bells still ringing” in the background (Brontë 15:113-114).

Photos

The picture above is from an online source and depicts Heathcliff’s mourning over the death of Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*. This idea of the final consummation in death is what prompted me to research taboo subjects in this literature such as sexual addiction, non-normative relationships, and gender equality.

The picture below is also from an online source and depicts a distraught Heathcliff, being haunted by Catherine to the point of starving himself and having complete disregard for his own well-being.



A picture from a version of *Jane Eyre* illustrated by Santiago Caruso. This picture depicts the thesis of my article, God is not a Feminist, because of its focus on the phrase, “Punish her body, save her soul”. This phrase is the epitome of the submission to patriarchal society forced on Victorian women by the Christian Church.