



Anne Brontë

Beyond the margins: the worker Brontë

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Anne Brontë (1820-1849)

- Anne was the youngest Brontë sibling.
- She lost her mother during her infancy.
- There is little evidence and letters left from her, therefore she is assumed to be quiet and demure.
- Anne is known as the artistic family member (painter, writer, musician).
- Created Gondol with her sister, Emily, their own imaginary world.
- She worked as a teacher and governess due to financial exigency.

The Worker

- Anne is the often-forgotten Brontë who trekked to London with her older sister, Charlotte, to reveal her secret identity due to the ire incited by Acton Bell seeking a different publisher for *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Harman 260; 274-275).
- Anne was the only Brontë to consistently be employed and was the “Least complaining... longest suffering” (Harman 122).
- Anne’s silent acceptance of her fate led her to pen *Tenant* a bestseller that outsold *Jane Eyre*.
- Her work was criticized for its controversial themes.

Themes

- A woman leaving her husband due to his abuse and alcoholism. At that time, a woman leaving had no legal right to her life, property or child.
- The role of point of view had within narrative, this work is in epistolary (letter format) offering multiple narrative perspectives.
- The power that having an income gave a single woman!
- The main character Helen Huntington closes the door on her husband, meaning she denies him sex based on his psychological abuse.
- The equal education of both boys and girls.

Recent Scholarship

- Catherine Paula Han and Marianne Thormählen recently argued, Anne de-centers her role in the writing process and argues for the story to stand itself.
- Previously Virginia Woolf and Margaret Lane did not consider Anne to be a genius novelist.
- Writers such as Gerin and Barker have seen and re-invigorated Anne's legacy.
- Even her own sister disregarded her work.

“On the Death of Anne” by Charlotte Brontë

There's little joy in life for me,

And little terror in the grave;

I've lived the parting hour to see

Of one I would have died to save.

Calmly to watch the failing breath,

Wishing each sigh might be the last;

Longing to see the shade of death

O'er those belovèd features cast.

The cloud, the stillness that must part

The darling of my life from me;

And then to thank God from my heart,

To thank Him well and fervently;

Although I knew that we had lost

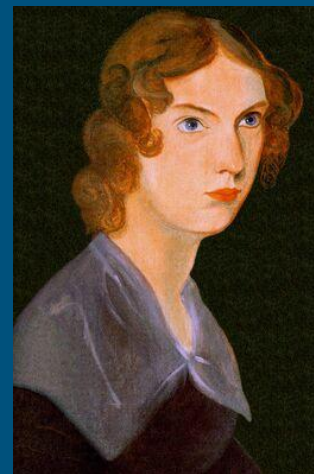
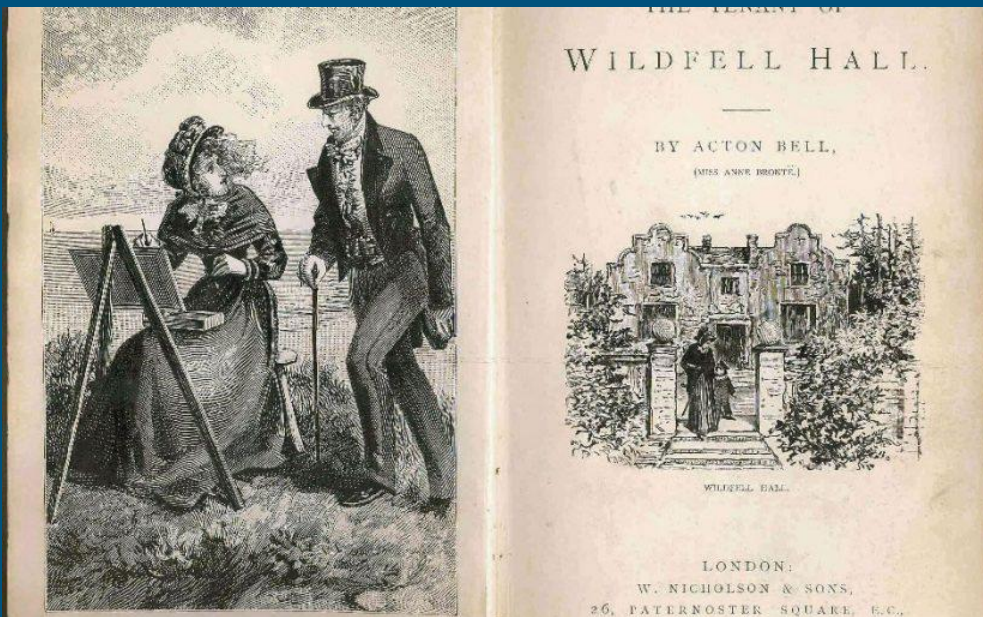
The hope and glory of our life;

And now, benighted, tempest-tossed,

Must bear alone the weary strife.

Noted, “Preface” Excerpts (Brontë)

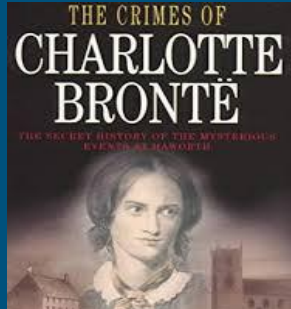
- “My object in writing the following pages was not simply to amuse the Reader, neither was it to gratify my own taste, nor yet to ingratiate myself with the Press and the Public: I wished to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral to those who are able to receive it.”
- “All novels are, or should be, written for both men and women to read, and I am at a loss to conceive how a man should permit himself to write anything that would be really disgraceful to a woman, or why a woman should be censured for writing anything that would be proper and becoming for a man.”



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Who has the Power? The Role of Charlotte

- Theories of literary crime to murder have been ascribed to Charlotte.
- Margaret Lane Winifred Gerin and Juliet Barker all claim that Charlotte destroyed Emily's earth shattering second novel.
- We know that Charlotte didn't re-publish *Tenant* even though it outsold her own work! She believed it was a violation of her family privacy and disagreed with Anne's radical themes about love, sex, passion and marriage.



Argument

- A “Preface” re-reading shows Brontë’s deeply held moral conscience and vindication of her authentic tale. Her silence on the role biography had within this novel was a rhetorical technique utilized in her refusal to capitulate to criticism. “Preface” is Anne voicing her inner truth about the tribulations she suffered both at work and home at the hands of her beloved, yet abusive alcoholic brother, Branwell.
- Anne showed the forbearance for her fate that only a Brontë could: through silent acceptance and trust in God and her abilities (qtd. Gerin 320).

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