

ANNE BRONTË AND *THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL*

A talk by Jacqueline Kent, given at the ABA 14th March 2020

Anne Brontë's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, appears to be having a moment. Describing as it does an abusive marriage and a woman's attempts to escape her husband, it slots into current preoccupations about domestic violence, as expressed by the #MeToo movement.

The stereotypes of romantic heroes in novels also appear to be under threat. In fact, to some extent, *Wildfell Hall* describes what it might actually be like to be married to Heathcliff and Rochester. The American satirical literary magazine, *McSweeney's*, has evidently had a similar thought. Recently they invented dating profiles for the best-known Brontë heroes:

Name: Heathcliff

Age: Literally no idea

Occupation: Mergers with my enemies' families and acquisitions (of their wealth and happiness).

About Heathcliff: Spent a long time cultivating the #RevengeBody and #RevengeWealth. But now I'm looking for a nice, gullible girl to settle down with, preferably one who just happens to be related to my enemy, who also just happens to be married to my childhood friend.

Name: Edward Fairfax Rochester

Age: 43

Occupation: Wealthy widower. Yes, the old ball and chain is dead. Not currently in my attic being restrained with an actual ball and chain.

About Edward: Looking for a younger woman who will mistake my brooding looks and condescending misanthropy for tragic torment, and ideally is into employer/employee roleplay.



Not ideal marriage prospects or life partners, you would think. And *Wildfell Hall*'s Arthur Huntington, the husband of the woman who calls herself Helen Graham, fits right in there. Certainly he fulfils some of the romantic hero criteria -- he's handsome, witty, has money and friends, and spends time wooing Helen. But a romantic hero he is not, and Anne Brontë never presents him as such. Because of this, *Wildfell Hall* is nothing short of subversive, according to the notions of the day.

Certainly it was considered so when it was published in June 1848 under the pseudonym of Acton Bell. It caused a sensation and sold quickly, to the horror of Anne's eldest sister Charlotte.

We'll come back to that, but first some information about Anne Brontë herself. She was born on 17 January 1820, the last of the six children of Patrick and Maria Branwell Brontë. Her siblings, in order of age, were Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Branwell and Emily Jane. When Anne was four months old her father was appointed to the curacy of Haworth, and the family moved to Haworth Parsonage. She was only a year old when her mother became very ill with what was probably cancer of the uterus, and she died on 15 September 1821. Patrick Brontë tried to look after his six children, with the help of his sister-in-law Elizabeth Branwell, but it was too difficult, and he sent his four eldest daughters to school. Maria and Elizabeth died in May 1825, leaving Charlotte and Emily stranded. Elizabeth Branwell agreed to stay and became Anne's surrogate mother; they were very close.

So Anne was more fortunate than her siblings in that she had continuous mothering. Being the youngest, too, she might have escaped some of the more florid Brontë characteristics. Charlotte's friend Ellen Nussey described her: 'Anne, dear gentle Anne, was quite different in appearance from the others, and she was her aunt's favourite. Her hair was a very pretty light brown, and fell on her neck in graceful curls. She had lovely violet-blue eyes, fine pencilled eyebrows and a clear almost transparent complexion. She still pursued her studies and especially her sewing, under the surveillance of her aunt.'

Anne followed her sisters Emily and Charlotte to Roe Head School: Charlotte, who had studied there, returned as a teacher in 1835 when Anne was fifteen. Emily hated the school, and left, and Anne took her place. This was her first time away from home, and she was determined to make a success of study. According to Brontë biographer Juliet Barker, Anne 'had a core of steel, a sense of duty and obligation'. She might have been sweet, dear Anne, but she missed nothing about her family -- including, especially, the dissolute behaviour of her only brother Branwell.

When she was about 17, she became ill, and had a religious crisis. A local minister observed that she regarded the Bible as God's blueprint for social duty. This comes out in some of the Gondal poetry she wrote with Emily, and also in *Tenant*.

Anne left home in April 1819 determined to earn her own living. She found a job at Blake Hall, and drew upon her experiences there to write her first novel *Agnes Grey*; it's a quiet and pointed critique of what being a governess is actually like, published the year before Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. At the end of the year she returned home, where according to some sources she fell in love with her father's curate William Weightman; if so, her attraction does not seem to have been reciprocated. She was then employed as junior governess with the Rev Edmund Robinson and his wife Lydia at Thorpe Green near York. She had four pupils, and spent most of the next five years there.

This accounts for her slight detachment from the feverish world of Haworth, though Branwell went there as a tutor for young Edmund Robinson, previously Anne's pupil. Anne and Branwell continued to teach at Thorp Green for two years.

What happened during that time was probably crucial to Anne's writing *Tenant*. Branwell had an obsessive affair with the wife, later widow, of his employer. When she attempted to call it off, he effectively stalked her, and she had to change her address. Anne, who saw all this, took note: it is generally believed that the character of the abusive husband Arthur Huntington was based on Branwell.

Then, in 1846, Charlotte published the Brontë sisters' poetry under the male pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. The publication was not a success. The three Brontës wrote their novels under the same names. Anne and Emily published *Agnes Grey* and *Wuthering Heights* in 1846; Charlotte followed Anne's lead in creating a poor, plain governess heroine in *Jane Eyre*, published the following year.

It was now, famously, that Charlotte and Anne went to London to confess to the true identities of the writers. This might have been done at Anne's instigation, since it's fairly clear that she had been strongly against the use of male pseudonyms. Later she wrote, 'I am satisfied that if a book is a good one, it is so whatever the sex of the author may be. All novels are or should be written for both men and women to read ... I am at a loss to conceive ... why a woman should be censured for writing anything that would be proper and becoming for a man.'

It's a refreshingly modern view, isn't it? And it must be said that Charlotte, the self-appointed literary executor of the Brontës, did not approve. Nor did she like the second novel by 'dear little Anne', published in 1848. A novel about the realities of marital abuse was anything but acceptable, she thought. And so Charlotte wrote shortly after *Wildfell Hall* was published, 'For my part, I consider the subject unfortunately chosen, it was one the author was not qualified to handle at once vigorously and truthfully'.

At first the novel sold well, though some considered it 'coarse'. This was a charge that Charlotte took to heart. In *The Brontë Myth* Lucasta Miller writes that Charlotte was torn between the desire to rebel and her wish to be accepted:

she felt that her creative powers were potentially threatening to her status as a respectable woman. It is clear that Anne was caught in her sister's crossfire.

The year 1848 was a grim one for the Brontë family. Branwell died at the end of September, and most of the rest of that year was taken up with Emily's illness. She died just before Christmas. And Anne herself died on 28 May 1849.

Enter Elizabeth Gaskell, biographer of Charlotte Brontë. Between them, she and Charlotte busily manufactured -- or in their terms, rehabilitated -- the reputations of the Brontës. Charlotte, alarmed at the charges of coarseness levelled not only at Anne, but at herself and Emily, did all she could to nullify them, with Elizabeth Gaskell as her willing accomplice and PR agent. Because of Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, published in 1857, the popular idea of Charlotte, Emily and Anne as wild spirits of the moors, driven to write their novels by some urgent romantic imperative, gained wide credence: it persists today, to



some extent. Gaskell, intent on excusing all three Brontës from charges of vulgarity, assured her readers that 'their afflictions were so great that they could not write otherwise than they did of life.' Contemporary critics picked up Gaskell's views. George Henry Lewes, lover of George Eliot, described *Jane Eyre* and *Wildfell Hall* as being written by a couple of girls who were 'writing their books from a sense of duty, hating the pictures they drew'.

This is nonsense. All three Brontë sisters had been writers from their earliest years. They read and discussed literature incessantly, they subscribed to literary periodicals such as *The Edinburgh Review*. By the time they came to publish their novels, they were highly self-conscious literary artists. And so it's easy to be sceptical about Gaskell's assertion that Anne was 'cheered by Charlotte's success' when *Jane Eyre* was published. Really? When Charlotte copied the character of the governess Agnes Grey, published a year before? Gaskell added insult to injury by saying that 'neither [Anne's] spirits nor her bodily strength were such as to incline her to much active exertion' including being too feeble to spend any time at her desk. Well, Anne managed to write two longish novels, so she cannot have been as feeble as that.

Charlotte republished *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, together with some of Emily's and Anne's Gondal poems, in 1850, hoping that this memorial to her sisters would "wipe the dust" from their reputations and leave their dear names free from soil'. Still worried about charges of vulgarity and coarseness, she refused to reprint *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* until 1854, except in the United States, which was free of English copyright restrictions.

Despite Charlotte's efforts, *Wildfell Hall* has endured -- though of course it has had less popular success than *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights*. (Admittedly, it is not as well written as either, though it has more humour and lightness of touch than both.) Its reputation, however, was never eclipsed. Late in the nineteenth century Algernon Charles Swinburne wrote perceptively that *Wildfell Hall* is a novel that 'deserves perhaps a little more notice and recognition than it has ever received', adding that 'as a study of utterly flaccid and invertebrate immorality it bears signs of more faithful transcription from life than anything in *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights*.'

The last word should be given to Anne herself. As a shot across the bows to Emily and Charlotte, she wrote: 'When we have to do with vice and vicious characters, I maintain it is better to depict them as they really are than as they would wish to appear. To represent a bad thing in its least offensive light is doubtless the most agreeable course for a writer of fiction to pursue, but is it the most honest, or the safest? Is it better to reveal the snares and pitfalls of life to the young and thoughtless traveller, or to cover them with branches and flowers? If there were less of the delicate concealment of facts, the whispering of "Peace, peace" when there is no peace, there would be less of sin and misery to the young of both sexes who are left to wring their bitter knowledge from experience.'

EMILY BRONTË, SLAVERY AND ‘BLACK LIVES MATTER’

Michelle Cavanagh

Checking the Bronte Parsonage webpage some time back I was interested to read that the Parsonage had presented a panel discussion debating Origin and Slavery in *Wuthering Heights* which drew attention to the casting of a mixed-race Heathcliff - played by James Howson - in Andrea Arnold’s 2011 film adaptation of the novel and which put issues of race into the spotlight. So could Heathcliff, one of the greatest romantic characters in 19th century English literature, have been black?

Did Emily Brontë envisage her most famous protagonist Heathcliff as a black man? This is a question which has caused extensive debate in recent years. Could Emily Brontë have been hinting at a darker secret than previously imagined? After all in *Wuthering Heights*, when Mr Earnshaw brings Heathcliff from Liverpool - a city which sits on the north shore of the Mersey estuary and a few kms from the Irish Sea - it was at the centre of the slave trade during the period in which the novel was set. Between 1763 and 1776 Liverpool was Britain’s main slave trading port and by the end of the 18th century Liverpool merchants were responsible for 84% of the British transatlantic slave trade.

Emily Brontë describes Heathcliff as a “dark skinned gypsy in aspect” and “a little Lascar” which is the name for a sailor or member of the militia from the Indian subcontinent, SE Asia, the Arab world and territories to the East of the Cape of Good Hope who were employed on European ships from the 16th century until the middle of the 20th century. They were only paid 5% of their fellow white sailors’ wages and lived under conditions almost like slavery. If that was Heathcliff’s history, does that account for his destructive anger? Or was he bought by Mr Earnshaw from one of the slave trading merchants in Liverpool?



With the recent toppling of various statues following the Black Lives Matter protests - and here I'm mainly thinking of the statue of Edward Colston by John Cassidy which was formerly erected in Bristol in 1895 and thrown into the harbour in 2020 - I decided to find out a little bit more about the man.

Edward Colston was a Bristol born merchant who made the bulk of his fortune from the slave trade between 1680 and 1692. His company transported over 84,000 slaves from West Africa to the Americas, 12,000 of whom were children. He used his fortune to support almshouses, hospitals, schools, workhouses and churches throughout England and particularly in Bristol. When his statue was erected in the 19th century he was seen as a philanthropist and the fact that his fortune was made in the slave trade was largely ignored until the 1990s.

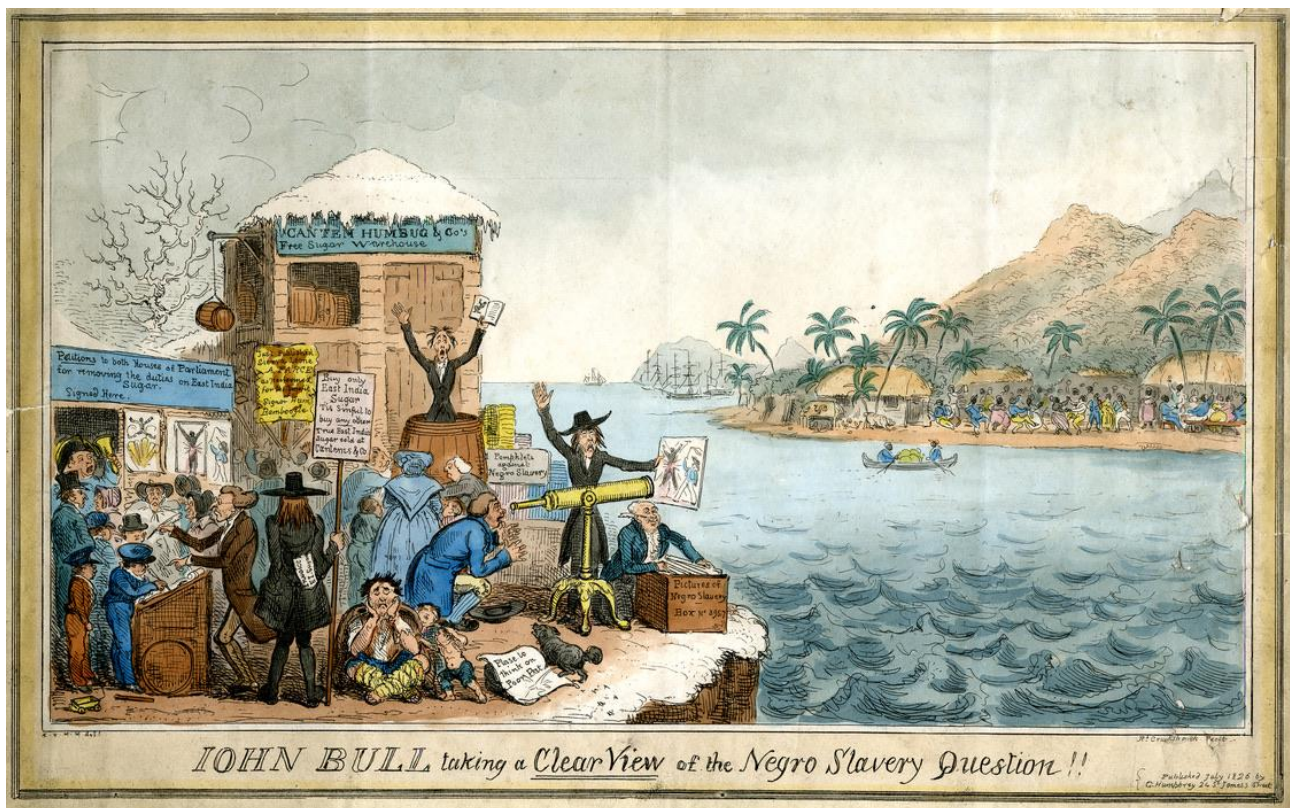
So how can the slave trade be linked to the Brontës and *Wuthering Heights* in particular? Further research drew me to the fact that Cowan Bridge, the Brontë sisters' school, was about ten miles from the Dentdale home of the notorious slave-trading Sill family. The Brontë sisters knew about the Sill family and *The Legacies of British Slave Ownership* database confirms that the family had a large number of Jamaican slaves who worked on the grounds of their estate. Not only that but Ann Sill, who died when Emily Brontë was seventeen years old had, following the earlier deaths of her parents and three brothers, inherited land in Yorkshire including twenty farms, the family's fine residence West House near their farm at High Rigg End and she became the owner of the Providence Estate in St James Jamaica. The estate had previously been owned by her deceased uncle who was also part owner of two ships - the *Pickering* and the *Dent* - which were engaged in the West Indies trade. The fact that the Sills owned a farmhouse but that their fortune came, not from farming but from the ownership of plantations on the Caribbean island of Jamaica, must have been known to the Brontë children when they lived in Haworth. As avid readers, by 1833 - when Britain abolished slavery - their ages ranged from fourteen to eighteen years of age so they must have read all about what was taking place and discussed such events with their abolitionist father Patrick Brontë. The Brontë children would likely also have known that their father



knew William Wilberforce - who from 1787 was prominent in the struggle to abolish the slave trade - from his Cambridge days.

It has also been interesting to me to note that many of the grand houses in Yorkshire, including the spectacular opulent Harewood House, twenty two miles from Haworth, came to such great wealth through the slave trade.

The struggle between those who opposed the slave trade and those who wanted slavery retained was hard fought on both sides. George Cruikshank's cartoon "John Bull taking a clear view of the Negro Slavery question" published in 1826 shows John Bull peering through a telescope at the coast of Africa while the man next to him offers 'Pictures of Negro Slavery' while there's a petition to buy only East India sugar.



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And, an interesting aside, the Liverpool street immortalised by the Beatles in their song 'Penny Lane' takes its name from the slave trader James Penny, who was vocal in his opposition to the abolition movement.

But as the British historian David Olusogah noted, the British government of the day paid a heavy price for abolition by compensating the slave owners for the loss of their 'property' paying them a total of what would be £17 billion in today's money.

That the Silks brought slaves to Dentdale to work as their servants is not just local folklore. It has been proved by the discovery of a *Liverpool Advertiser*

advertisement in 1758 placed by Edmund Sill - Ann Sill's father - in which a "handsome reward" was offered for the return of a slave who had escaped. He was said to be named Thomas Anson, "a Negro Man, about five feet six inches high, aged 20 years or upwards, and broad set. Whoever will bring the said Man back to Dent, or give any Information that he may be had again, shall receive a handsome Reward from Mr. Edmund Sill of Dent, or Mr. David Kenyon, Merchant in Liverpool."

The link between the Sills and *Wuthering Heights* has been known to Brontë scholars for some time, and in May 1987 an article entitled *Yorkshire Slavery in Wuthering Heights* by Christopher Heywood of Sheffield University, was published in *The Review of English Studies*.

Dentdale, it would appear, still retains many secrets. Some of the older residents recall their grandparents remembering the slaves "wandering into Dent" after the *Slave Emancipation Act* passed in August 1833. Locals believe freed slaves remained in the valley as members of the community, resulting in some of the valley's present-day residents having relatively recent African ancestry. These claims have been supported by references to Dentdale's dentists, who are said to have found signs of African genetic heritage in some of the local white population's teeth and mouth shape.

It has been proposed that the Sill family was the model for the Earnshaw family in *Wuthering Heights*. Emily Brontë was aware of local debates about abolition and she knew about the impact of sugar wealth on her neighbourhood through a host of personal associations.

So the idea of a dark-skinned Heathcliff was not a wild flight of Brontë's imagination. There is evidence that she based the character on real events that took place in what used to be one of the most isolated parts of northern England.

Dentdale historian Kim Lyon - who wrote a book called *The Dentdale Brontë Trail*, which she self-published in 1985 - was researching the rumours of the Sills' slaves in the 1970s when she came across a story which could very well have been what Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* was about. Lyon discovered a story of an adoption of a white orphan boy called Richard Sutton, described as a "foundling" when brought to Dentdale by Edmund Sill. Rather than bringing him up with the Sills' three sons and one daughter, he was kept with the slaves. There were many similarities between Sutton and Brontë's Heathcliff. Both were orphans taken in by well-off families, both were badly treated, and both lived fairly wild lives. And like Heathcliff, Sutton also managed to rise in the world and to dominate his master and, from being the foundling brought up with the slaves, he became the Sills' estate manager.

The parallels between fact and fiction are obvious. Sutton lived in the bleak High Rigg End, while Ann lived the life of a lady at West House just as Heathcliff lived in the remote moorland farmhouse of *Wuthering Heights* and

Catherine Earnshaw resided at Thrushcross Grange. But Ann Sill's will proved that she was fond of Sutton as she left him High Rigg End plus another property and one tenth of her income. Sutton then bought the family's main Dentdale home, West House (now called Whernside Manor and seen here) from the son of Ann's cousin.



When Charlotte Brontë wrote the preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* her sister Emily was already dead so was in no position to refute Charlotte's claim that Emily was overpowered by the products of her imagination stating that: "Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done." Well, it seems to me that was not the case. In her book, Lyon suggested that Brontë combined another scandal from Dentdale for the story of Cathy and Heathcliff's doomed romance. Emily appears to have mixed the relationship between Sutton and Ann Sill with local gossip that Ann fell in love with a black coachman who subsequently disappeared without trace, as, it is said that Ann's brothers decided that such a union would be inappropriate. A century later, in 1902, a human skeleton was said to be found beneath flagstones in the cellar of West House. The implication being that this was the remains of Ann's lover.

So, when Charlotte wrote that preface, possibly it was not only to protect Emily, but also to protect herself as she too used details in her novel *Jane Eyre* pertaining to two local families - the Sidgwicks and the Caruses - who were part of the plantation economy and who appeared as the 'Reed' and 'Brocklehurst' families. Confidential family sources available to the Coleridges, the Wordsworths, and others were gleaned by Branwell Bronte following his visit to Hartley Coleridge at Nab Cottage in May 1840. It can be assumed that Branwell's skill as a raconteur, his observation and historical sense helped his sisters in the writing of their novels together with their knowledge of the history of the parts of Yorkshire which were known to them from their childhood experiences of Cowan Bridge. As Christopher Heywood noted in *Yorkshire Slavery in Wuthering Heights*:

"The Symmetry between the principal names and relationships forming the 'Rochester' story in *Jane Eyre* and the main events in the rise and fall in the

Sill estate points to shared knowledge amongst the Brontës of the principal episode in the history of the plantation economy in the region. The use of confidential information as a basis for the story eventually necessitated the concealment which began with Charlotte's Preface to her sister's novel."

So, as they say; the plot thickens! Charlotte, it seems, was protecting herself as much as Emily. And while no doubt fact and fiction are intertwined, and there is much more of the story to be unearthed, I shall reread both *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* with new insight.

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THE BIRTH OF 'CHILDHOOD' IN *AGNES GREY*

**A talk given by Cindy Broadbent (aka Cindy Davies,
author) given to the ABA on 12th September, 2020.**

A shift in attitude towards children was among the many changes which took place in the Victorian era in the United Kingdom. By the mid-1800s, childhood was seen as was a stage of human development with its own special needs. This was manifested on a commercial level, in the production of toys and books which were written specifically to entertain, rather than enlighten, the child reader.

I'll discuss how during the nineteenth century, many Victorian authors were instrumental in driving social change by bringing their reader's attention to the plight of socially disadvantaged children. However this same era saw a rise in the middle-classes and a phenomenon which later commentators termed The Cult of Childhood.



In the eighteenth century, children were considered to be half-formed adults, and were dressed and treated accordingly. There was a long-held Puritan belief that humans are born in sin and that childhood was a perilous period for the soul.

The French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, writing in 1762, formulated the notion that childhood was a stage in human development. His treatise *Emile or On Education* concerned itself with developing the pupil's character and moral sense in order to practise self-mastery. The model child, Emile, is raised in the countryside and taught to experience the consequences of his acts rather than be physically punished. These ideas only gained momentum in the late nineteenth century.

In the Victorian era (1837-1901) a child's experience of life depended on its social class. Working class children were exploited as child labourers and then towards the end of the century, middle class children were lauded in what came to be known as the Cult of Childhood.

By 1850 the average life expectancy of males in England and Wales was 40 years and females 42. In infant mortality rates were high, as much as 30% in some areas. In Haworth average life expectancy was 26 years among working

class families. Thus nine-year old children were considered old enough to join the workforce. Boys were recruited to the British navy at aged fourteen, sometimes younger and girls often became mothers in their teens. ‘The poor’ didn’t live exclusively in cities, farm labourers and their families made up the rural poor. They wore smocks as their working clothes and at one point in *Agnes Grey*, Rosalie Horton makes fun of the clothes worn by her father’s tenants.

Reform was slow. The Ten Hours Act of 1833 (introduced to Parliament by the Earl of Shaftesbury) prohibited the employment of children younger than nine years of age and limited the hours that children between the ages of nine and thirteen could work. For these children there was little opportunity for education.

Toward the middle of the century, however, children were finally acknowledged as a group in society. The Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children opened in 1852. Charles Dickens was one of its early patrons and fund-raisers. Lord Shaftesbury’s further Parliamentary reforms included the passage of The Chimney Sweeper’s Act 1864, which made it illegal to use children as chimney sweeps. Lord Shaftesbury also led a campaign to reduce the working hours for adolescents.

WRITERS ON CHILDHOOD AND REFORM OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS FOR CHILDREN:

*‘When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry ‘weep!’ ‘weep!’ ‘weep!’ ‘weep!’
So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep.’*



William Blake from *Songs of Innocence* published in 1789. Employing young children as chimney sweeps was finally made illegal 65 years later in 1864.

Wordsworth’s sentiments ‘Heaven lies about us in our infancy!’ from *Ode Intimations of Immortality...* published in 1807, mourns the child losing his connection with nature. However, the poem hardly reflected reality for child labourers.

Charles Dickens never forgot the deprivations of his own childhood which made him sensitive to a child’s vulnerability. In *Oliver Twist*, *David*

Copperfield and *Great Expectations*, he depicts children who are at the mercy of cruel and scheming adults. Elizabeth Gaskell recorded the plight of Manchester factory workers, many of whom were children, in her novels *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1854).

Charlotte Brontë wrote scathingly about fictional Lowood school in *Jane Eyre*. This was based on her own experiences at the Clergy Daughter's School, Cowan Bridge where her older sisters contracted, and died from Tuberculosis.

Later in the century, 1863, Charles Kingsley's novel *The Water Babies* was published a year before the final passage of the Chimney Sweeper's Act of 1864, banning the use of children for this work.

The fifteenth century saying *Children should be seen and not heard* was enthusiastically adopted in Victorian England, though the original saying was 'Maydes (i.e. young women) should etc.

A LUCRATIVE MARKET OPENS UP FOR CHILDREN

Busy industrial Britain could hardly ignore this burgeoning market stimulated by a rising middle class. While working class children still played with cheap toys like hoops, cup and ball and marbles, middle class children were catered for by manufacturers. Rocking horses were as popular as toy cars in the twentieth century. Toys soldiers were much sought after given the militaristic nature of the British Empire. Later in the century wealthy children could enjoy mechanical toys.

Dolls, dolls houses and cradles occasionally took on a slightly macabre edge. A popular game was *Playing Funerals*. With high infant mortality rates, this was hardly surprising. Accessories for dolls included a doll's mourning dress and a tiny coffin.



CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Moral stories from early in the nineteenth century gave way to books which entertained children. 1839: Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House*. In 1846 Mary Howitt translated Anderson's *Fairy Tales* and in 1856 Frances Browne wrote *Granny's Wonderful Chair*. As writing for children grew in popularity, authors who had written for adults wrote at least one book for children: William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley and Lewis Carroll all contributed to the juvenile fantasy genre. Large Victorian families meant that children's literature was a growing market.

Genres which we still recognise today, began in the nineteenth century. One of the most beloved animal books is still *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell,

published in 1877. Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* books were published in 1902. Books set in boarding schools began with *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes published 1857. This genre continued into the twentieth century with Enid Blyton and JK Rowling.

THE CULT OF CHILDHOOD:

The acknowledgement of childhood as a stage in human development gained momentum in the latter part of the eighteenth century in Britain. The children's novel which springs to mind is of course *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865, in which a child is the main protagonist.

Artists painted perfect children; holding a kitten at mother's knee, or skating together on Christmas cards. Robert Schumann, the German composer, wrote a set of thirteen musical pieces for piano entitled *Kinderszenen—Scenes from Childhood* in 1838.

The Cult of Childhood came to an end, or maybe moved into the mainstream consciousness with JM Barrie's play *Peter Pan*. Barrie donated the copyright of *Peter Pan* to London's Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children. There's a statue of Peter Pan in one of the garden courtyards of the hospital.

ANNE BRONTË'S EXPERIENCE AS A GOVERNESS

'Anne, dear gentle Anne,' as Charlotte's friend, Ellen Nussey described her was nineteen-years-old when she took a position with the Ingham family of Mirfield in Yorkshire. They had made their money in 'trade.' Anne wrote of her experiences in letters to Charlotte who described the Ingham children as 'desperate little dunces.' The children were aged six, five, three and two. Anne was shocked to find the older children didn't know their alphabet, lacked discipline and were almost unteachable. In addition, their parents would not allow Anne to take a firm hand with her pupils. Coming as she did from a family where learning and creativity were encouraged, Anne must have found it incomprehensible that the children had little interest in learning anything.

After a year, she left and took a position with the Robinson family at Thorp Green near York. The children were older, three girls aged 15, 13 and 12 and a boy aged eight. They proved easier to teach than the Ingham children and Anne worked for the Robinsons for five years. Her students stayed in touch with Anne after she left and bought her a little dog, Flossy.

AGNES GREY

Anne's first novel was published 1847. It was based on Anne's own experience of working as a governess. Did Anne, I wonder, choose the name Agnes to reflect the 'lamb to the slaughter' which was often the fate of the nineteenth century governess? Could Agnes Grey even bring *Agnus Dei* to mind?

Agnes came from a loving family and had one sister. In order to assist with the family finances, she took a position with the Bloomfield family of *Wellwood* when she was nineteen years old. The children include Tom, aged seven, who is a cruel undisciplined child who tortures young creatures. Anne returns to the theme of the brutalisation of boys in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, when young Arthur is bloodied at the hunt by his father.

Agnes's other charges, Mary Ann, aged six and Fanny, aged four, are equally as difficult to manage, given that their parents will not allow her to discipline them. Agnes writes:

'Sometimes exasperated to the utmost pitch I would shake her (Mary Ann) violently by the shoulder, or pull her long hair...'

Fanny's main weapon against her governess is spitting and bellowing like a bull. Neither Mr nor Mrs Bloomfield will allow their children to be disciplined. Eventually Agnes's employment is terminated less than a year from when she started work.

Her next job is with the Murray family. She hoped the family would treat her *with due consideration as a respectable, well-educated lady...* She was mistaken. Her charges, two teenage girls, Rosalie and Matilda rushed through their lessons. Rosalie focussed on getting a husband and Matilda on riding her horse. Their younger brothers were eventually sent off to school although they were almost illiterate at the ages of ten and eleven. Agnes ponders that the masters at their schools will blame the governess for this.

Rosalie is manipulative and has a vindictive streak. Realising that Agnes is attracted to the curate, Edward Weston, she goes out of her way to prevent them meeting. Eventually Rosalie marries a wealthy titled man. At the age of nineteen she's the mother of a baby girl, to her husband's disgust—he wanted a son.

When she invites Agnes to stay, she says of her baby daughter:

'What pleasure can I have to see a girl grow up to eclipse me? ...still it is only a child and I can't centre all my hopes in a child: that is only one degree better than devoting oneself to a dog.'

At the end of the novel, Agnes expresses Anne Brontë's own Christian belief when she tells Rosalie:

'The best way to enjoy yourself is to do what is right and hate nobody. The end of Religion is not to teach us how to die, but how to live.'

However, Anne writes a happy ending to *Agnes Grey*. She and her widowed mother open a school. Agnes and Mr Weston, the curate, meet again.

They marry and have three children. The author's final line in *Agnes Grey* is the pragmatic:

'And now I think I have said sufficient.'

The first person narrative of *Agnes Grey* gives an insight into the daily life of a governess which appears to be autobiographical. Unlike Adele, Jane's pupil in *Jane Eyre*, Agnes's charges spring off the page with alarming reality.

The Cult of Childhood was driven by male writers and painters whom, we must assume, had very little experience in dealing with the day-to-day chores of child rearing. I leave you to ponder on the words of Lewis Carroll, author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and suggest you read *Agnes Grey* with these in mind:

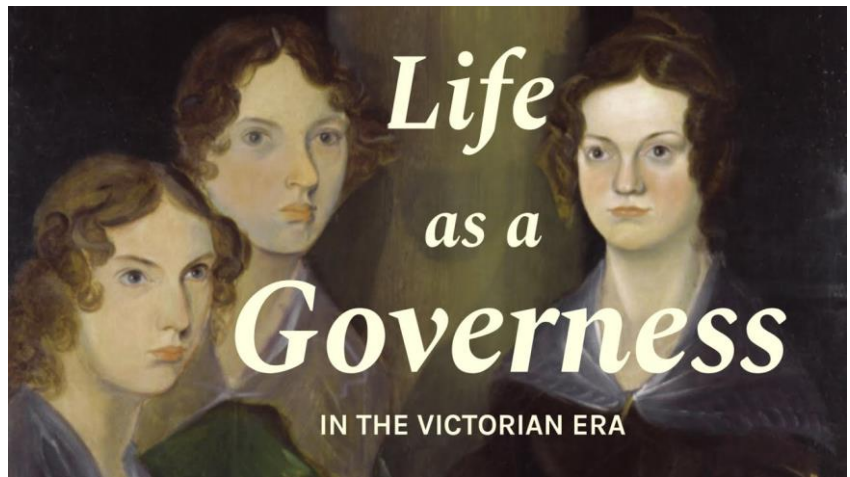
*'I'd give all the wealth that years have piled,
The slow results of life's decay
To be once more a little child
On one bright summer day.'*

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THE GOVERNESS IN THE TIME AND THE NOVELS OF THE BRONTËS

From a talk given by Susannah Fullerton, OAM, FRSN,
given to the ABA on 4th July 2020

The Brontë sisters knew from experience that being a governess in Victorian England was no fun. They were also painfully aware of how few career options there were for women of their class in society. Men could go out and find a range of jobs, or could travel within the British Empire in search of work as soldiers, engineers, doctors, missionaries and teachers, but for women it was much harder. Charlotte's friend Mary Taylor managed to get to NZ, but she had a brother waiting there to help her.



Brother Branwell was no help at all to his sisters – in fact, it was Anne who found him a job, and not the other way around.

Many women in Victorian England could not hope to marry. More baby boys died at birth, men were killed in wars, went overseas or simply could not afford to marry and support a family. An 1851 census showed an excess of 365,000 women to men. The first half of the century saw crop failures, bank collapses and deep economic distress for many. So many gently reared young ladies were forced out into the workplace.



By 1850, 21,000 women were working as governesses. They were expected to teach children rather than care for their physical needs, so they needed a decent knowledge of the three Rs, needed to supervise prayers and religious education, and they could earn more if they also offered dancing, deportment, and music. Mr Brocklehurst is training future governesses at Lowood School, and therefore wants to render the pupils there “hardy, patient and self-denying”.

As Agnes Grey discovers, finding a job as a governess was not always easy. Usually it was word of mouth (in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Lady Catherine de Bourgh recommends a Miss Pope as governess). There were advertisements – placed by a would-be governess, as is the case with Jane Eyre, or placed by an employer seeking a suitable teacher for her children. An applicant needed to be well-dressed, middle-class, of spotless reputation, and she needed references (when Jane flees after the broken-off wedding, she has no references and so makes herself almost unemployable). With so many women seeking work, it was an employers' market.

The pay was very poor. A governess had to spend about half her annual income on clothes, so as to be respectably turned out. Jane Eyre dresses in what was virtually the governess 'uniform' in "a black merino cloak, a black beaver bonnet; neither of them half fine enough for a lady's maid". And she has a better dress for church or 'best'. Functional colours such as black and grey showed dirt and mended patches less. Jane is paid £30 per year by Mr Rochester, Agnes Grey is paid £25 in her first position, but it was not unheard of for governesses to be paid only their food and board. They also had to pay for laundry, trips home, postage and incidental expenses. There were no fixed working hours, no rules which told employers how to treat those in their employ, and they could be summarily dismissed at any time and expected to find some other shelter and work.

Governesses often had lonely lives. A woman in such a position was not a member of the family that employed her, and yet she felt socially above the servants of the house, so was often in an uncomfortable limbo between upstairs and downstairs. Even when Agnes Grey returns to visit her married pupil, as a guest and not as a governess, she still eats her dinners alone in the room rather than eating with the married couple. Charlotte Brontë tried to avoid the drawing room of her employers in the evenings because she was so shy, but many governesses were often not even invited into such a room. Author Susan Ridout warned in *Letters to a Young Governess on the Principles of Education and Other Subjects Connected with her Duties*, "Consider therefore, before you enter a family, how far you are able to support the solitude into which you must be thrown, in such a situation. It is not now a separation merely from friends and relations to which you are called: it is a seclusion from society altogether, at least from any which sympathises with



you.” It is not surprising to learn that Victorian lunatic asylums had a particularly high number of ex-governesses amongst their inmates.

Governesses were horribly subject to the personalities and whims of their employers. They had to discipline small children, often without parental back-up (as Agnes finds, especially in her first job). If children were naughty, this was seen as the fault of the governess and not as the fault of the infants or their parents. Governesses were often employed on isolated country properties, with no other social life with other governesses in the district and very little time off. Agnes Grey goes to church (which is where she meets Mr Weston, and she visits the poor in the neighbourhood, but that’s the extent of this teenager’s social life.

They were also subject sometimes to sexual advances from their employers, or sons of the family, and there was little hope of any sort of justice when that occurred. A wife or mother blamed the governess for luring the unfortunate male into her clutches, and dismissal was the inevitable result.

The Brontës were not the only people to feel concern over the plight of the governess. In 1829 the Governesses Mutual Assurance Society was formed to alleviate hardship of the governess in her old age. Funds for this charity were donated by the general public. It closed in 1838, but in the 1840s there were attempts to resurrect it. In 1845 a Governesses Benevolent Institution established a home for unemployed governesses in London, and in 1849 an Asylum for Aged Governesses was created. Queens College, London, was established in 1848 with the aim of better teaching teachers and governesses, and thereby giving them higher status, while novels brought to public consciousness the plight of these women. Julia Buckley’s *Emily the Governess* (1836), Dinah Craik’s *Bread Upon the Waters: A Governess’s Life* (1852), and Anna Maria Hall’s *Stories of the Governess* (1852) are some examples. A governess was a good choice of heroine for a novelist, as Charlotte Brontë discovered – such a heroine is forced to make her own way, has to mix in good circles, can find romance by the end of the story, and can often provide the material for a rags-to-riches tale. When Charlotte published *Jane Eyre* and Anne published *Agnes Grey*, they were tapping into other governess literature (even Thackeray had Becky Sharp work as a governess in his *Vanity Fair*, though anyone less like the meek-and-mild sort expected of a governess than Becky, it would be hard to find!).

The sisters had their own experiences to draw upon, as teachers and as governesses. Anne worked for the Ingham family when she was only 18, Charlotte was governess for the Sidgwicks (and it seems that some of Mrs Sidgwick went into the character of Aunt Reed, which tells us all we need to know of her personality!), then for the White family with two “wild and unbroken” children, while Anne went on to the Robinsons at Thorp Green. Emily taught in a school and the experience nearly killed her. Charlotte once told her friend Ellen Nussey that being a governess had shown her “the dark

side” of human nature – she felt it was a hideous life. In an 1848 letter she commented that a governess “lived a life of inexpressible misery; tyrannised over, finding her efforts to please and teach utterly vain, chagrined, distressed, worried – so badgered, so trodden-on, that she ceased almost to know herself.” Strong words indeed! Even teaching in Brussels wasn’t much better – there she thought her pupils “rotten to the core”. It’s hardly surprising that she could write so feelingly in *Jane Eyre* of Lady Ingram’s rudeness to Jane, as she dismisses “the whole tribe” of governesses, while her daughters reminisce with delight about the ingenious ways they found to torment the young women their mother employed to teach them. Mary and Diana Rivers, intelligent and cultured young women, have to find jobs as governesses, though “each held a situation in families by whose wealthy and haughty members they were regarded only as humble dependents, and who neither knew nor sought one of their innate excellences, and appreciated only their acquired accomplishments as they appreciate the skill of their cook or the taste of their waiting-women”.

Posterity can be grateful that the three sisters found the work of governessing so totally uncongenial. Had they found generous and delightful employers, had they earned good money and felt secure in their posts, they might not have written and made the effort to publish their novels. What a good thing for the world of English literature that they hated the work and could hardly wait to leave their posts as the instructors of small children who, unlike themselves, did not wish to learn.

TEMPERANCE AND THE BRONTËS

A talk given by Carolynn Everett to the ABA on 14th November 2020

Introduction

One morning when I was about 16 I was on the train on my way to work, and I suddenly fainted. When I came to, I was lying on a sofa in an office at a railway station, and a kindly gentleman was offering me some brandy – “Here, dear - drink this – it will help you ...”

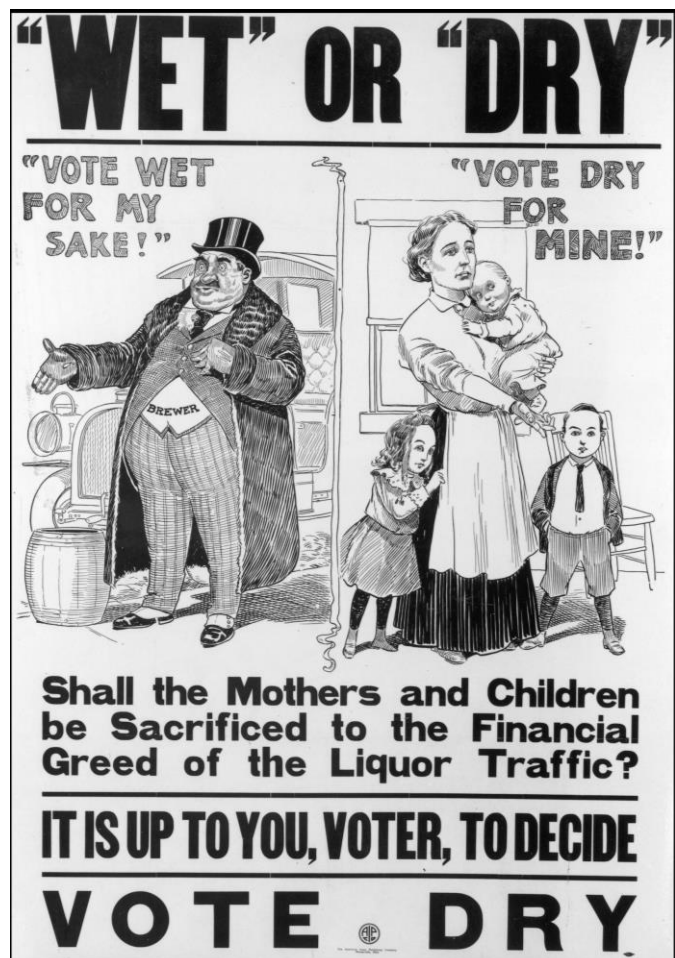
I thanked him, but asked if I could please have water instead. You see, I was born into a Salvation Army family – and members of The Salvation Army do not drink alcohol. Of course, as my mother gently pointed out later, brandy may well have been a good idea in this situation, but being very young this had not occurred to me! Why do members of The Salvation Army not drink alcohol? We will come to this a little later... (I should mention that these days I am not actively involved with TSA, but I am still closely connected in many ways.)

This morning we are going to look at three somewhat interconnected subjects –

1. The Temperance movement
2. Anne Brontë’s 2nd book *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*
3. The Salvation Army, and its beginnings in London’s East End

The Temperance movement

The invention of the steam engine was one of the triggers for the Industrial Revolution in the C18th: the rural poor streamed into Europe and America’s major cities looking for work, and massive slums developed – “*full of filth and*



desperation". Alcohol was a means of escape from the squalor of life in the slums, but sober workers were needed to operate heavy machinery. Gradually society's attitude towards alcohol began to change - while drinking alcohol in moderation was quite acceptable, drunkenness was definitely not!

In 1735 gin consumption in London was estimated to be half a pint per person, per day, supplied by over 7000 gin shops. By 1750 it was estimated that one in four homes in London were making their own gin, with methylated spirits and turpentine being common ingredients.

By the middle of the C18th, alcohol – and especially gin – had become an integral part of life in the UK, so much so that historians of that time talk about a 'gin craze'. Gin was known as 'Mother's Ruin'; but of course it was not only women who became addicted. Publicans would advertise "Drunk for a penny – dead drunk for tuppence!"

And there were reasons other than escapism for the over-consumption of alcohol, especially in the cities: apparently country people rarely drank alcohol, and often it was a low-alcohol home-brew. But in the cities –

- Water supplies were often polluted.
- Milk supplies were unreliable, and it without refrigeration milk quickly became sour.
- Tea and coffee were very expensive, and
- Alcohol was very cheap.

Charles Wesley, the founder of Methodism, stated in 1743 that buying, selling and drinking alcohol, unless absolutely necessary, were '*evils to be avoided*'. However, some forms of alcohol were deemed to be less evil than others, and some were regarded as being essential for one's health.

Benjamin Rush was a brilliant American physician, who, incidentally, was one of the signatories of the American Declaration of Independence. He seems to have been one of the first people to understand that addiction to alcohol is a disease. His theory was published in 1790, and he recommended abstinence as the only cure. He recognised that alcoholism was sometimes connected to disease, death, suicide, and crime, and he tried – initially with very little success - to persuade the churches to promote the concept of temperance.

But within 20 years alcoholism came to be recognised in the US as a major social problem, and more ministers began to preach abstinence. Small temperance societies began to appear, although most faded away quite quickly. Then, in 1836, the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance, (which had been founded in Boston in 1826), merged with the American Temperance Society, to become the American Temperance Union, promoting total abstinence. At the peak of the temperance movement there were thousands of temperance groups all over the States, with over a million members.

At around the same time, prohibition was introduced in several American states, and restrictions on sales of various forms of alcohol came into force in others: some of these were repealed quite quickly, but the consumption of alcohol in the US decreased by 50% between 1830 and 1840.

In England, temperance groups also began to appear in the early C19th, and by the 1830s the movement had spread to British colonies such as Australia and NZ. These early societies concentrated on advising against hard spirits, rather than abstinence from all alcohol, and had a focus on moral reform, rather than prohibition.

In 1834 young Branwell Brontë was one of the original members of the Haworth Temperance Society, and he later became its Secretary, while his father was the President. Patrick Bronte campaigned for many years to procure a clean water supply for Haworth, and this was finally achieved in 1856.

The year 1847 saw the foundation of The Band of Hope, in Leeds in the UK. This group aimed to protect working class children from parents who drank to excess, by teaching the children the importance and principles of sobriety.



The United Kingdom Alliance was founded in Manchester in 1853 – this group lobbied for the government to ban alcohol, and they considered themselves a legitimate political party. “*The object of the Alliance shall be to call forth and direct an enlightened public opinion to procure the total and immediate suppression of the traffic in all intoxicating liquors and beverages.*” They were just one of many Temperance movements throughout the UK.

In the 1850s there was a further resurgence of the abstinence movement in America, and some now saw drunkenness as a sin. Reformed individuals worked with local evangelical churches to support those who wanted to stop drinking, and the YMCA/YWCA grew out of this era.

This was also a period of religious revival, and new churches such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons (1830)) adopted total abstinence, while the Seventh Day Adventists (1863) advocated temperance. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1873, was, at that time, one of the largest women's movements in the world, and it still exists today. At around this time there was a movement to build temperance fountains across the US, to provide people with a ready source of safe drinking water in public places, and apparently some of these still exist.

It has been estimated that by 1900 one in ten Americans had 'signed the pledge' and the name 'teetotaler' comes from the capital letter 'T' – standing for 'Total Abstinence' – which was recorded against the names of those who signed up.

In 1868, 20 years after Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Louisa May Alcott published her classic novel *Little Women*, and this book gives us further insight into the mores of this era. Let me tell you about Meg's wedding ...

Meg, the eldest daughter of the March family, is to be married, in a quiet ceremony at the family's home, followed by a luncheon in the garden. Mr Lawrence, a kindly friend who knows the family's straightened circumstances, arranges for some wine to be delivered to the house as a contribution to the celebrations.

Mr Lawrence's grandson, Laurie, is like a brother to the March girls, and he is puzzled when the wine does not appear at the luncheon. Fearing that some mistake has occurred, he goes to check with the happy bride ...

"... am I merely labouring under a delusion that I saw some lying about loose this morning?"

"No, your grandfather kindly offered us his best ... but father put a little away for Beth, (the family invalid), and dispatched the rest to the Soldier's Home. You know that he thinks that wine should be used only in illness, and mother says that neither she nor her daughters will ever offer it to any young man under her roof."

Laurie is somewhat taken aback, but then he says "I like that! For I've seen enough harm done to wish other women would think as you do."

Then and there, Meg asks Laurie to promise that he will never drink alcohol: "Come, Laurie, she says, " ... promise, and give me one more reason to call this the happiest day of my life."

So the toast was drunk, the pledge made, and loyally kept, in spite of many temptations: for, with instinctive wisdom the bride had seized a happy moment to do their friend a service for which he thanked them all his life.

It's one of life's little ironies that late in the 19th century a gentleman named William Cash (of Cash's labels) who was the chairman of the UK's National Temperance League, died of cholera, after ordering a glass of water at a Railway Board meeting, while his fellow directors ordered beer.

It's not surprising that there was some conflict between teetotallers and those who followed the more moderate road of temperance, and as far as I could find neither idea ever caught on in most of Europe, where alcohol is a normal part of life.

However, by 1910 half of the world's countries had introduced some form of alcohol control in their laws or policies. Prohibition began to spread once again – first in Russia, then in Canada, Norway, Finland and Iceland, and it reappeared in America. Other countries, including Australia and NZ, rejected prohibition, but decided to restrict trading hours for hotels. Some countries introduced extra taxes on sales of beer, or tightened regulations regarding the alcoholic content of drinks.

Did you know that when Australia's first Parliament House was officially opened in Canberra in 1927, alcohol was not served in the building, because the sale of alcohol was prohibited in the Federal Capital Territory at that time? Of course, you could always nip across to Queanbeyan to have a drink, or to stock up! Canberra's residents voted to end prohibition in 1928.

Unsurprisingly, many people totally disagreed with both temperance and abstinence - and some fun of these ideas, and here is a song which pokes fun at the Temperance movement and/or The Salvation Army. (Various versions of this song use either name in the chorus.)

Away with rum

1. We're coming, we're coming, our brave little band,
On the right side of temperance we've taken our stand,
We don't use tobacco, because we do think
That people who use it are likely to drink.

*Away with rum, by gum, by gum,
with rum, by gum, with rum by gum!
Away with rum, by gum, by gum –
the song of the Temperance Union.*

2. We never eat cookies, because they have yeast,
And one little bite turns a man to a beast.
Oh can you imagine a sadder disgrace
Than a man in the gutter, with crumbs on his face?

3. We never eat fruit cake, because it has rum,

And one little slice turns a man to a bum.
Oh can you imagine a sorrier sight
Than a man eating fruit cake until he gets tight?

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

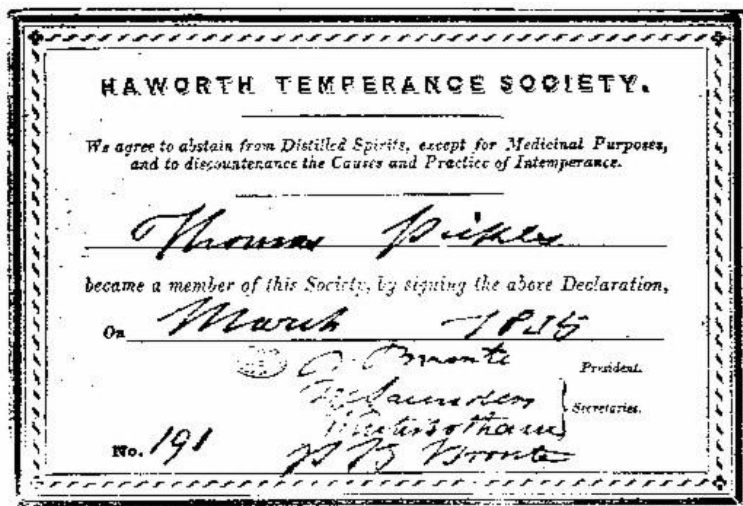
There is a certain romance about the popular image of the Brontë family. The stern father, Patrick, shattered by the loss of his wife and his two eldest daughters, and retreating into his grief with little regard for the happiness of his four remaining children.

The three dutiful daughters, writing novels as an escape from their dreary lives in the bleak parsonage, scrimping and saving.

The only son – on whom so many hopes and dreams depended – who comes to a tragic end, being addicted to both alcohol and opium.

Now I realise that these impressions are not necessarily correct, but I imagine that Branwell's life would have been a great disappointment to his family, as they witnessed at first hand the sadness of his struggle with his addictions.

So what went wrong for Branwell? It seems that when, in 1840, he obtained his first job, as a tutor with the Postlethwaite family, he celebrated this milestone by a riotous drinking session. Well, I guess he's probably not the first young man to do that! A later position with the Robinson family led to his unrequited love for Mrs Robinson: when this relationship ended, Branwell "*declined into chronic alcoholism, opiates, and debt*", according to one biographer.



So Anne Brontë had first-hand experience of the difficulties of living with someone whose drinking is out of control – and perhaps Branwell's sad life was part of the inspiration behind her second book.

This novel, published in 1848, explores a theme which

was very popular in Victorian literature, and art – the virtuous woman who marries a scoundrel. Helen Laurence is young, beautiful, innocent, virtuous, wealthy, and an orphan, and she marries Arthur Huntingdon against the advice (and the wishes) of her guardians. She soon realises that she has made a terrible mistake.

After only eight weeks of marriage Helen writes *“Arthur is not what I thought him at first, and if I had known him in the beginning as thoroughly as I do now, I would probably never have loved him ...”*

Over time the marriage grows steadily worse, but Helen takes her marriage vows very seriously, and she hopes to be a good influence on her husband. She becomes increasingly concerned that he is drinking far too much, but he does not take kindly to her gentle suggestions that he should moderate his habits. She appeals to his better nature –

“Don’t you know that you are a part of myself? And do you think you can injure and degrade yourself, and I not feel it?”

Before very long they have a child, little Arthur, and she realises that she is trapped – both by Arthur and by the laws of the day by which her child and her inheritance both belong to her husband. His extra-marital affairs and his consumption of alcohol become major sources of friction between them, reaching a climax when she discovers that he has been forcing their young son to drink wine, for the amusement of his friends.

She feels that he has become totally dependent on alcohol for any enjoyment of life – *“it has become his medicine and support, his comforter and recreation, and his friend”*. She is still determined to rescue him, but he is equally determined not to be rescued, and gradually he spends less and less time at home, and she is glad of it.

Eventually she realises that she must leave him, but this seems impossible. She begs Arthur – *“Will you let me take our child and what remains of my fortune, and go?”* but he refuses.

She finally manages to escape, and she settles into Wildfell Hall, a property owned by her brother in a small village. He lives nearby, but they keep their relationship a secret, in case her husband should come looking for her, and as a further precaution she changes her surname to her mother’s maiden name, and allows people to think that she is a widow.

Helen and little Arthur, who is now about five, pay their first visit to a friendly (but rather nosy) neighbour; wine and cake are offered, and Helen politely refuses the wine.

Oddly, the hostess then insists that little Arthur must have some wine, and he becomes visibly distressed:

“Arthur, especially, shrank from the ruby nectar as if in terror and disgust, and was ready to cry when urged to take it”. Helen then explains that *“He detests the very sight of wine ... and the smell of it almost makes him sick”*.

She further explains that she has done what she could to make him hate wine – *“ ... by that means I hope to save him from one degrading vice at least”*. Her hostess and the other guests think that this is extremely strange, and in the discussion which follows Helen offers her opinion that *“Moderation can be impossible for some.”*

Later, Helen's hostess relates this incident to the local vicar, and he is appalled:

"Wrong!" repeated the vicar, with more than common solemnity – "Criminal, I should say – criminal! Not only is it making a fool of the boy, but it is despising the gifts of Providence, and teaching him to trample them under his feet".

Of course, Helen is not about to explain to the villagers that her husband's drinking had caused the breakdown of their marriage, but she is determined to protect her boy from following in his father's footsteps.

Some time later Helen hears that Arthur has fallen ill, and so she goes back to his home to nurse him. Is he grateful? – not a bit! – but she continues to take care of him, seeing this as her duty. He starts to improve, but then disregards his doctor's orders, begins to drink again, and so suffers a relapse.

Eventually, Arthur dies. A slow lingering death, as was so beloved of Victorian novelists, with the dying man mortally afraid of what is to come, and Helen trying to help him to make his peace with God.

But of course virtue has its own reward, and with the deaths of both her husband and her uncle Helen becomes a wealthy woman, and she marries Gilbert Markham, who has faithfully waited for her to be free. Presumably they all lived happily ever after!



Again and again in this sad novel we are reminded of Arthur's folly, which costs him his marriage, his child, and – eventually – his life. Was Branwell's sad demise the inspiration for this story? Perhaps ...

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army came into being in the slums of the London's East End in the mid-C19th, and today The Army operates in over 130 countries throughout the world.

The Salvation Army is actually a church – but it is perhaps better known for its welfare and rehabilitation services, and its work in times of natural disasters.



Army halls don't look particularly 'churchy' – they tend to be rather utilitarian – but, like most other churches, Army centres hold services each Sunday. The Army's social work and its emergency services are an extension of the Biblical principle that Christians have a duty to help those who need help. (And would you believe? – it seems that there once was a Salvation Army corps in Haworth.)

So let me introduce you to William and Catherine Booth – who had no intention of founding a new church, but who somehow did just that!

William Booth was born in Nottingham, on April 10th 1829, to a family who lived in genteel poverty (not unlike the Brontës), and as a 7 year old he 'signed the pledge' promising that he would not drink alcohol.

The Booth family fell into great financial difficulties when William's father died. William, aged 13, was forced to leave school and take up an apprenticeship with a local pawn-broker. This was his first brush with real poverty, and he was greatly disturbed by seeing some of his customers regularly pawning even their clothes in order to last until pay day – and discovering that often this money was spent on alcohol rather than food.



By the time he was 17 he was firmly convinced that God had called him to be an evangelist, and for two years in his spare time he preached in the streets of Nottingham – “*Are you going away from here to the public houses to spend money on drink, when your wife needs it for food and your children's shoes?*” he would say to passers-by.

On April 10th, 1852, (Good Friday) William Booth met Catherine Mumford for the first time – by May 15th they were engaged, and they were married on June 17th. Theirs was a truly remarkable love story – two undoubtedly quirky people, who suited each other perfectly!

Catherine was a total abstainer, while William had now decided that some alcohol was necessary for his health. He began to work as an itinerant preacher, and during one evangelical trip he wrote to tell Catherine that “*I had to have brandy twice – I was really ill!*” She was horrified! In later life she once listed the five ingredients for happy marriage: Number 1 was total abstinence.

But she supported him through many years of struggle as he tried to find his place within the established churches – even though this meant moving house many times as William was moved from parish to parish. Over a period of 12 years (1856 – 1868) Catherine gave birth to eight children. Remarkably for that era, they all survived into adulthood, and (apart from one daughter killed in a train smash) they all lived long lives.

In the summer of 1865 William accepted yet another temporary job – oversighting the East London Mission, which worked amongst the slums of London’s East End, and which held its services in a tent on a disused Quaker burial ground called Mile End Waste. William was deeply affected by the terrible poverty of his new congregation, and felt that finally he had found his destiny.

The neighbourhood flocked to his somewhat unconventional services, and one recent biographer says that ‘*Men and women joined to experience the gaiety of God*’. Booth’s services were certainly different to those of other churches. For a start, most of his congregation were not regular church-goers, so they didn’t know the traditional hymns of the church, and many were illiterate, so hymn books were no help. Someone had the bright idea of writing simple words to rollicking music hall songs – the pop songs of the day – and so “Champagne Charlie is my name” became “Bless His name, He sets me free!”, and “I traced her little footsteps in the snow” became “The blood of Jesus cleanses white as snow” etc.

This unusual church developed into The Christian Mission, and before very long William and his staff were providing all sorts of help for the people of the East End – food, shelters for the homeless, workshops to provide employment etc.

The work of the Mission was based on three things – SOUP, SOAP and SALVATION – and William believed that it was pointless to talk to men and women about God if they were starving, and it was helpful to offer them soap, and clean clothing, and to help them to find work, and to give up the over-consumption of alcohol which caused so many problems for so many.

William’s original plan was to send his new converts back into the traditional churches, but the churches were often less than welcoming to these

ragged, perhaps rather unclean people, and Booth's converts missed his raucous revival meetings. Gradually The Christian Mission morphed into The Salvation Army, and 'General Superintendent Booth of the Mission' became 'General Booth of The Salvation Army'.

Right from the start the Army faced enormous opposition. Other churches were concerned that Booth's services were far too undignified, and publicans and brewers were concerned that their sales would suffer as people joined the new church and gave up alcohol – some hired local gangs to attack the Army's outdoor services, to try to discourage them. Many members of the Army went to prison for 'disturbing the peace' with their outdoor services: some Salvationists died when missiles were thrown at them.

It's perhaps no wonder that the concept of an 'army' evolved, with uniforms, and flags, and brass bands, and drums to encourage the loyal soldiers as they marched the streets, and military-style ranks added to the flavour. The Army bonnets were one of Catherine's innovations – the extra-wide brims worn in those early days were designed to protect the Army's women.

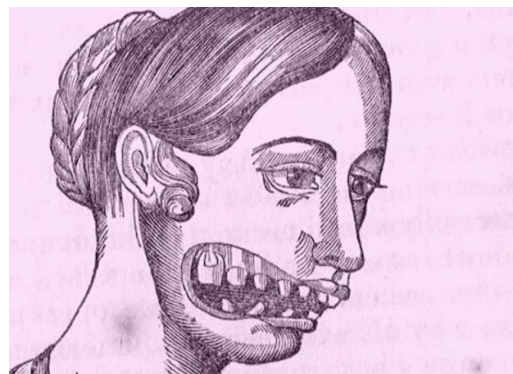
Catherine always insisted that female members of the Army must have equal rights within the organisation: William accepted this revolutionary idea, and is quoted many times as saying "Some of my best men are women".

William Booth's Salvation Army took on many of the social issues of the day, and I would like to briefly mention three such.

1. Booth agitated for better living conditions for the working classes, citing the treatment of the horses who drew London's horse-drawn cabs.

He wrote *"There are two points of the cab horse charter: when he (ie the horse) is down, he is helped up, and while he lives he has food, shelter, and warmth. That, although a humble standard, is at present absolutely unattainable by millions - literally millions – of our fellow men and women in this country!"*

2. Phossie jaw – phosphorous necrosis of the jaw, was a condition which afflicted thousands of workers (mainly women) who worked making matches. The white phosphorous which was used for the match tip was highly toxic, and over time it attacked the lower jaw: the only cure was to remove the jaw, which left these women severely disfigured. Bryant and May introduced 'safety matches', using red phosphorus, which is more expensive, but safe. (You will still find the term 'safety matches' on matchboxes today). In 1888 the match girls of London went on strike



because of the terrible conditions in these factories, and so in 1891 the Army opened its own match factory, using red phosphorous, with decent wages and better working conditions. (By 1906 the use of white phosphorous had become illegal, and within a few years it had died out completely.)

3. Child trafficking: Booth co-opted a well-known journalist, WT Stead, of the Pall Mall Gazette, to help him expose this awful trade, whereby young girls, many still children, were being sold into brothels in the UK and in Europe. Stead, in disguise, was able to buy a young woman, 13yo Eliza Armstrong, from her mother, for three pounds, with a promise of two more pounds once her virginity was confirmed. This done, she was handed into the care of a disguised Salvation Army worker, who took her to a safe house in France, thus demonstrating the ease with which this entire transaction could be accomplished. Stead then wrote a series of articles for the Gazette exposing this trade, and the resultant uproar resulted in various reforms to the law. And young Eliza? – she was admitted to a home for the protection and training of young girls, where she was to be given several years of schooling, and then placed into service.

From its earliest days The Salvation Army has worked with people who are addicted to alcohol – seeing at first hand the impact this can have on individuals, families and communities. Alcohol itself is not the problem – for most people the occasional glass of wine is just a normal part of life – but it is a sad fact that some lives are irrevocably altered by alcohol addiction. The Army is still engaged globally with people suffering directly or indirectly as a result of alcohol abuse and addiction, and so, in solidarity with those who come to the Army for help, Salvationists – members of the Army - still choose to live an alcohol-free life.

The Salvation Army's first service in Australia was held in September 1880 in Adelaide, in a cart drawn up under a red gum in Adelaide's Botanical Park. Two young Englishmen, John Gore and Edward Saunders, who had both been involved with the Army back in England, met up in Adelaide and decided that the Army was needed there, so they wrote to William Booth in London, asking for leaders to be sent. While they were waiting for a response, they simply went ahead and started holding Army-style services. When the new leaders arrived by boat, in February 1881, there were already 68 SA members, and a new Army hall was under construction.

At the end of that first meeting, under the gum tree in the park, John Gore said to the crowd which had gathered, *“If there's any man here who hasn't had a meal today, let him come home with me.”* William Booth would have loved that!

And now - to finish ...

Henry Lawson, the iconic Australian writer born in the 19th century, was an alcoholic who had a soft spot for the Army, and he wrote about the Army several times. This poem “**When the Army prays for Watty**”, was written in 1893 – ‘Watty’ was Watson Braithwaite, who ran a pub in Bourke in the late C19th.

When the ‘Army’ prays for Watty

When the kindly hours of darkness, save for light of moon and star,
Hide the picture on the signboard over Doughty’s Horse Bazaar:
When the last rose-tint is fading on the distant mulga scrub,
Then the army prays for Watty, at the entrance of his pub.

Now, I often sit at Watty’s when the night is very near,
With a head that’s full of jingles and the fumes of bottled beer,
For I always have a fancy that, if I am over there
When the Army prays for Watty, I’m included in the prayer.

Watty lounges in his arm-chair, in its old accustomed place,
With a fatherly expression on his round and placid face;
And his arms are clasped before him in a calm, contented way,
And he nods his head and dozes when he hears the Army pray.
And I wonder does he ponder on the distant years and dim,
Or his chances over yonder, when the Army prays for him?
Has he not a fear connected with the warm place down below,
Where, according to good Christians, all the publicans should go?

But his features give no token of a feeling in his breast,
Save of peace that is unbroken and a conscience well at rest;
And we guzzle as we guzzled long before the Army came,
And the loafers wait for ‘shouters’ – and they get there just the same.

It would take a lot of praying – lots of thumping on the drum-
To prepare our sinful, straying, erring souls for Kingdom Come:
But I love my fellow-sinners, and I hope, upon the whole,
That the Army gets a hearing when it prays for Watty’s soul.

