

CHAPTER III

SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

A. The Life of Anne Brontë

Born in Thornton, Yorkshire, in 1820, Anne Brontë was the youngest sister of Charlotte and Emily. Her father, Patrick Brontë, a clergyman of Irish descent, was made perpetual curate of Haworth near the Yorkshire Moors the year she was born. Following the death of Anne's mother in 1821, her aunt, Elizabeth Branwell, came to look after the family.

Left with a solitary father, a disciplinarian aunt, and only each other for company, the six Brontë children amused themselves for most of the time and, taking as their starting point Branwell's twelve soldiers and a great deal of reading, they created the fantasy worlds of Angria and Gondal, writing annals and newspapers for these imaginary places. Anne was particularly close to Emily and together they expanded their world of Gondal.

When the four eldest daughters were sent to Cowan Bridge School, Anne remained at home under the influence of her aunt, whose strong Wesleyan beliefs are thought to have rubbed off on her, making her a sensitive and rather melancholy child.

In 1836-1837, Anne accompanied Charlotte to Roehead and from there went on to take up her first position as a governess. She

worked first for a family called the Inghams in 1839, before moving in March 1841 to the Robinson family at Thorp Green Hall near York. Here she was joined by her brother Branwell, who undertook to tutor the family's twelve-year-old son. Their time here, however, was tarnished by Branwell's involvement with Mrs. Robinson, which led to his dismissal. Anne blamed herself for Branwell's subsequent breakdown and drunkenness, which stemmed from this incident.

In her novel Agnes Grey and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall she draws on incidents for her time as a governess to the over-privileged children of the Inghams and Robinsons, and the figure of Arthur Huntingdon in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is thought to be based on Branwell. Anne Brontë's novels appeared under the pseudonym of Acton Bell, as did a selection of her poems which were published together with Charlotte and Emily's in 1846.

Agnes Grey could have been written in 1845-1846 in the twelve months between the time Anne left Thorp Green and the time Charlotte wrote to Colburn, announcing that the novels were completed, Agnes Grey, together with The Professor and Wuthering Heights. Anne Brontë wrote Agnes Grey at the same time that her sisters Emily and Charlotte were working on their own novels, Wuthering Heights and The Professor. Talking through their ideas and reading aloud from their works, the three sisters were ready to find a publisher for their novels in the summer of 1846. Agnes Grey was

published in a volume with Wuthering Heights in December 1846. At that time it did not receive the critical attention it so rightly deserved, overshadowed as it was by her sister's masterpiece.

Following her sister's death on December, 1848 Anne Brontë died in May, 1849. As Charlotte noticed that she accordingly followed the same path with the slower step, and with a patience that equalled the other's fortitude, (Penguin Popular Classic, 1993 : 01).

B. Anne Brontë's Agnes Grey

This thesis deals with one of Anne's work that is Agnes Grey. Apart from George Moore's claim that it was the most perfect prose narrative in English literature, who has been treated with condescending indifference . Biographers in spite of several indications to the contrary have seized upon Agnes Grey as a faithful portrait of Anne's years as a governess, (Winnifrith, 1970 : 66).

Anne herself resembles her sister, Charlotte, in having similar experiences to draw upon. The material is plainly drawn from her own life. Anne Brontë herself is a clergyman's daughter, the youngest of the family, compelled to teach to earn her living, employed in the families of the gentry, while Agnes Grey's eventual modest though happy marriage is what Anne Brontë could without impropriety envisage for herself. Like Charlotte, she draws on more than herself. The loathsomeness of Bloomfield's children in her first post do not seem

to have been very like the Inghams of Anne's first post at Blake Hall; the Murray household do not seem at all like the Robinsons of Thorp Green, (1970 : 68).

However, Anne Brontë has used her work as a personal emotional release since she exposes the suffering of her work as a governess through her character. Agnes's feelings and thought are her expression of the unsatisfying condition which result the subservient role of a governess.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS