

### CHAPTER III

#### A BRIEF APPROACH TO CHARLOTTE BRONTE, LUCY SNOWE'S CREATOR

##### A. Sketch of Charlotte Bronte

Charlotte Bronte was born in Thornton, Yorkshire, in 1816. She was the third daughter of Patrick Bronte, a clergyman of Irish descent; he had changed his name from the more commonplace Branty or Brunty after Lord Nelson's Sicilian dukedom. The mother was Maria Branswell of Penzance, Cornwall. The chief gifts, for good and ill, that Patrick and Maria gave their children were a double Celtic ancestry, a proneness to consumption, a belief in education, and literary ambition (Patrick published several unremarkable volumes of prose and verse, and Maria's letters and an unpublished religious essay show some literary talent).

After serving in several parishes they moved to Haworth in 1820 (Charlotte was 4 years old) when Patrick Bronte made a perpetual curate. After the death of Charlotte's mother in 1821 (Charlotte was 5 years old), her mother's sister, Elizabeth, came to look after the family. And the children, five daughters and one son, were left with a solitary father, a disciplinarian aunt and only each other for company. By settling at Haworth in the West Riding of Yorkshire, they incidentally provided the moorland background that was to stamp the imagination of Bronte's offspring.

At their new place, the decimated group of young Brontes in “the children’s study” engaged in precocious literary work. They read omnivorously, and, in minute booklets, they recorded in prose and poetry the adventures of the Glasstown Confederacy, a fantasy world inspired by a box of wooden soldiers brought home by Mr. Bronte for Branwell. Taking as their starting point Branwell’s twelve soldiers and a great deal of reading, they created a fantasy worlds of Angria and Gondal, writing annals and newspapers for these imaginary places. They grew up largely self-educated. Branwell, on whom the family’s hopes were centered, was the one who failed to reconcile the make-believe world with the real one. Though he had talents for poetry and painting, his course of increasing dissipation and of failed enterprises—as portrait painter, a railway clerk, and a tutor.

In 1824 (Charlotte was 8 years old) the four eldest girls (Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily) were sent to the Clergy Daughters’ School at Cowan Bridge, which Charlotte recreated as Lowood in *Jane Eyre*. Its poor condition hastened the death of Maria and Elizabeth (who died from tuberculosis in the same year) and damaged Charlotte’s health permanently. Charlotte and Emily then withdrew from the school.

In 1831 Charlotte was sent to Miss Wooler’s school. The time Charlotte spent at her second school, Rothead, between Leeds and Huddersfield, was far happier. Here she made one or two lifelong friends the only one of the sisters ever to do so. Her friendships appear in various guises

in her novels. In 1835 (she was 19 years old) she became a teacher there after completing her study. Her initial reason for taking the post was that Miss Wooler offered a free place at her school for one of her sisters; and the choice went to Emily. 'The other girls, Emily and Anne, also took positions as teachers and governess', but they were unhappy being separated and away from Haworth. In 1838 Charlotte returned to Haworth.

To keep family together, Charlotte, Brontes' guiding spirit, had the willpower to realize Bronte girls' ambitions. All spent some of their adolescence at boarding school, and all later had governess positions they bitterly resented, both because of the enforced absence from their beloved moors and because of the social humiliations involved. Hoping to start a school of their own, Charlotte and Emily set out for Brussels on 8 February 1842 (Charlotte was 26 years old) to study foreign languages and school management in a boarding school run by M. and Mme Constantin Heger. They returned home the next year at the death of their aunt, who had willed them her small fortune.

Both girls were offered positions at the pensionnat but only Charlotte returned in 1843. She was warmly received by the Hegers. She gave English lessons to M Heger and his brother-in-law. Charlotte's return to Brussels was to qualify her French and German. But the underlying reason, which she dared not admit herself, lay almost certainly her feeling of attachment for M Heger. Mme Heger, more clear-sighted than her husband and Charlotte, appeared to

have detected the passionate feeling; and in order to avoid scandal, she broke the contact between Charlotte and her husband. She went home the following year. Her hopeless love to M Heger was a turning point in her life. It was later satirized in *Villette*.

By 1845 (Charlotte was 29 years old) all the Brontes were again at home. The sister's plan to found a school at Haworth in the parsonage failed in spite of an well-organized effort to publish a prospectus and to approach sympathetic patrons.

The next year, 1846 Charlotte had persuaded her sisters into a joint publication of *Poems, by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*; Currer was Charlotte, Ellis was Emily, and Acton was Anne. The poems attracted no attention, but by the summer of 1846 (Charlotte was 30 years old) each sister had also written a novel. While Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey* were eventually accepted for publication in 1847, Charlotte's *The Professor* toured the publishing house in vain. In August 1846, Patrick Bronte had an operation for the removal cataracts. Charlotte attended her father throughout his ordeal, sitting with him in his darkened room during the period of his recovery. Patrick's operation was memorable for Charlotte because in the five weeks he and Charlotte obliged to remain in seclusion in Manchester, Charlotte wrote the major portion of *Jane Eyre*. Undaunted, she wrote *Jane Eyre*, which she submitted to Smith Elder & Co. in August 1847.

Charlotte was fortunate in her publishers, with whom she maintained her friendship and correspondence until her death. It was through George M. Smith and his reader, William Smith William, that she was able to meet many of the major literary figures of the day.

*Jane Eyre* is her true claim to greatness. It is a success of Charlotte to lead to an exciting, even melodramatic, plot and to a world sometimes as highly colored as that of *Angria*. The book, immediately accepted, was published two months later, making Charlotte at once famous. Actually first published *Jane Eyre* was under the her pseudonym, Currer Bell. It was generally assumed that *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Height* were by the same author. Not did Charlotte and her sisters publish under their pseudonyms, but also they kept their secret from the immediate circle. Charlotte herself never told her father to whom was the novel entitled *Jane Eyre* she gave him.

In 1848 (Charlotte was 32 years old) family tragedy closed in Haworth. Branwell collapsed and died on September 24; Emily caught a chill at his funeral and died of galloping consumption on December 19, at which time Anne was already showing symptoms of the same disease. She died on May 28, 1849.

Charlotte, who was two thirds through *Shirley* (published in 1849) when Anne died, spent the next few years with her father in Haworth struggling with ill health and melancholia, writing slowly and painfully, and occasionally paying timid visits to London, where she was lionized. Throughout her visits to

London, she was perpetually nervous of being viewed as a celebrity. From this period dates her acquaintance with the literary figures as Thackeray and Harriet Martineau, an atheist. And her friendship with Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, the novelist, gave her longer enjoyment until her death. Mrs. Gaskell, whose famous *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) was the first telling of the Brontë saga to the world, was the most care people to Charlotte.

In 1851, Mr. Taylor, the business manager of Smith & Elder, proposed marriage. However, she refused his. This was the third offer of marriage; the first had been from a boorish Irish curate, and the second from Ellen Nussey's brother, Henry Nussey.

At the same year, Charlotte began what was to be her last novel, *Villette*. Based on her Brussels experience. The novel composition was constantly interrupted by bouts of severe depression and by illness. Her publishers became worried about her difficulties in finishing it. She eventually submitted *Villette* in November of the following year, 1852. Smith & Elder published it in January 1853 (she was 37 years old)

In December 1852, while the manuscript of *Villette* was still with her publisher, her father's curate, the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, made her a proposal of marriage. Nicholls, an Irishman like her father, had been a curate for six years and a sympathetic witness to the series of tragedies which pursued the family.

Even though Charlotte judged herself not in love with him, she was spared the embarrassment of a refusal by her father's reaction. When informed of Rev. Nicholls' proposal, Mr. Bronte, according to Charlotte, threw himself into a 'towering rage'. But, at last they got engaged in April. The marriage took place on 29 1854. Mr. Bronte refused to attend the ceremony.

Charlotte's marriage life was short and much of it passed in a state of severe illness. Nevertheless, in the first month of her marriage her heart and spirits both improved. However, for all her recognition of his lack of "fine talents, congenial tastes and thought", she had a few happy months with him. Yet her final illness and decline were as dramatic as her sisters'. In November 1854, she caught an acute cold. Then, towards the end of January, she began to suffer from violent and continuous sickness and became terribly emaciated. On 17 February, their old servant, Tabitha Aykroyd, fell ill and died. Charlotte by this time was too weak to attend the funeral.

Charlotte died on 31 March 1855, at the age of 39. Her death certificate gave phthisis, or tuberculosis, as the cause of death and also its correlation with her pregnancy.

## **B. Exploration around Charlotte Bronte's idea and thoughts**

Generally talking about Brontes, we will find them the romantic rebels to the later 19<sup>th</sup> century but to 20<sup>th</sup> century they are sometimes regarded as true Victorians, "custodians of the standard" (Encyclopedia Britannica).

However, the Brontes belong to no clearly definable school. They are a school of unique creators.

Their works show traces of the Romantic Movement, especially in their feeling for the nature and childhood and in the Byronic heritage of such heroes as Rochester in *Jane Eyre* and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*; but essentially it is the product of a peculiar combination of the heredity and environment. The Brontes may not belong to the "great tradition" of the English novel, as recognized by formal literary criticism, but as storytellers of a peculiar intensity they are likely to survive as long novels are read. Charlotte, the oldest living child, was the generator of young Bronte's fight against their nightmare. She was the owner of high spirit among Brontes.

As a literary man, Charlotte is assumed as a subjective author; even she is the first subjective novelist. Her range is limited those aspect of experience which stimulate to significance and activity the private consciousness of her various heroines. She images her heroines, especially Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, as a women who doesn't try to disentangle the chaos of the consciousness, she doesn't analyze their emotions or motives. Lucy Snowe is made to feel very strongly about everything.

Charlotte is a story-teller, and a story in her hand shows characters in action, character, that is, as it appears in contact with the world of external event and personality. She created living fictional characters. However, the relation of Charlotte Bronte's imagination to this world is different from that



of most novelists. Charlotte Bronte's picture of the external world is a picture of her "own" *reactions* to the external world and not the "realistic" reactions to it. For example her account of Vashti's acting in *Villette* doesn't go into its aesthetic value but only into the impression it made on Lucy Snowe the major character. And, similarly her secondary characters are presented only when they are meeting face to face with the main characters.

Charlotte's novels show women struggling with the real, not the ideal conditions of the life. Charlotte Bronte spoke for those women who were imprisoned by an idealization that rendered their lives a vacuum. Like ordinary Victorian women, she sought to lead useful life and nourished ambition that was unlikely to be fulfilled. She did not challenge the sacredness of domesticity, but she did attack the cult of female idleness. Mary Taylor, her correspondence discussion pal, in her *Miss Miles* stated:

For though England held many thousands of women suffering from the same misery they bore it in solitude and without hope. Had they all met together to make their wants known, and asked for help, no advice could have been given them, except to win a living for themselves, and not beg for it. (Gordon, 96)

Charlotte Bronte was fortunate in having the courage and the genius to win a living for herself. On one level, her novels record the cost of that struggle.

Charlotte Bronte is categorized as a modern woman among Victorian women. Although the writer doesn't come to a conclusion to an idea of feminism, Charlotte Bronte's works are now glanced over by some feminism critics as a feminism movement. Her modernity was shown by her pride of *being able to get money from her profession as a teacher* as symbolized her heroines in almost all of her novels. Governess' and teacher are two posts occupied wholly by middle class Victorian woman. Actually the taste of becoming a teacher or governess was not a satisfactory for all of them for they weren't touching the essence of freedom in that jobs. Charlotte did it in order to avoid unemployment.

Being a daughter of a vicar, it is a logic risk that Charlotte Bronte was religious. And, the happenings surrounding her house contributed much in building her religion tower of faith. The high mortality rate of the period (between 1838 and 1849, for example, 41,6 per cent of the Haworth population died before the age of six) would have been illustrated by the burials taking place before her (and her sisters' and brother's) eyes in the churchyard next to the parsonage. The fear of hell, struggling against the hope of salvation, troubled their adolescence and emerged powerfully as a theme in their work. In Charlotte's thought, salvation became very significant value. Charlotte's most important religious theme to emerge was *salvation*. It is a view that anyone, no matter how she/he is wicked, can be saved, by God's grace.

Charlotte put religious person to occupy all her heroines' positions. And it is very clear that her Christianity (she was an Evangelical Anglican) becomes a tool of judgement of hers in some places in her novels. She believed that the Evangelical Movement took firm root from the Anglican itself. The Established Church was in her mind a status quo. Her attitude towards Roman Catholicism was particularly complex. One of proves will be found in *Villette* in which she described Catholic milieu of Belgium implicitly negative and fairly prejudiced. In Charlotte's novels, figure of vicar, whether the priest represents her faith or the faith she would criticize, is a powerful witness about her religious tendency. Harriet Martineau gave her a comment in *Daily News*, 3 February 1853 edition dealing with Charlotte's *dislike* to Catholicism:

'Currer Bell' goes out of her way to express a passionate hatred of Romanism... We do not exactly see the moral necessity for this (there is no artificial necessity) and we are rather sorry for it occurring as it does at a time when Catholics and Protestants hate each other quite sufficiently. (Gordon, 81)

However, Charlotte and her family weren't at last very inclined to her Evangelical Anglican. Her letter to Ellen Nussey (7 April 1840) was an evident of it. Her comment about them is "I consider them bigoted, intolerant, and wholly unjustifiable on the grounds of common sense (Gordon, 79)". In her *Shirley* she satirized three curates as a mixture of social crassness and

complacency. She also had written to Miss Wooler (14 February 1850). She mentioned:

...that the Clergy do not like the doctrine of Universal Salvation; I think it is a great pity for their sakes, but surely they are not so unreasonable as to expect me to deny or suppress what I believe to be the truth. (Gordon, 83)

By the way, the reading in her father's library, besides theological books, became her media of self-education by absorbing history, politics, and also geography in order to incorporate them into her fictions. The Bible formed the theological linguistic bedrock of her mind. She also read Scott's, Bunyan's, Milton's, Dr. Johnson's, the Romantic poets', et cetera.

Charlotte's interest of reading yielded in her work. She was influenced much by full-of-love power. It does not mean that she was dominated by passion for love in her idea was sincere love of which ones have to love everyone for the sake of nothing but love. Her heroines are always helped by Love in solving their life complex problems. And it is Love sought by her characters. Love becomes the crucial element in Charlotte's theme. Love, for Charlotte, made everything possible to happen.

One other important element in her theme is rebellion. Her heroines, Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, Cathy Earnshaw, Shirley are all rebellious against their continuous time tradition. And, the spirit of their rebellion is desire of

independence, or in larger terminology freedom. That is the remarkable creative-process-result of Charlotte Bronte.

*Shirley* is her single novel, which talks about the working class unrest explicitly. In her *Shirley*, Charlotte expressed her desire of rebelling against the continuous manner. She made Shirley as a woman with newly thought in religion. Shirley with her courage changed the concept of Christianity upon the process of Eve (the first woman) creation. In *Shirley* she wrote that woman was heaven born, that is made directly from God, not from Adam's rib. In her thought, woman was not the derivation of man. Eventually, Charlotte cut this Shirley's thought (actually Charlotte own thought). It means Charlotte went back to her consciousness of Christianity.

As in the characters of Shirley, Lucy Snowe and also Jane Eyre, Charlotte seems to undergo a confusion of stating her idea of freedom due to the fact that she was bound to a faith. She did state her opinion about independent woman implicitly, if not timidly or unfinished. Charlotte got difficulty to communicate her ideal thought to her ideal faith; and, the result: she made women readers, particularly in her time, get difficulty in defining or even imagining how a new-order-woman should be.

Last but not least, that historical idea of Charlotte Bronte suggests that her particular and eccentric experience attained a degree of universality. Here, the readers of Charlotte's may feel the sense of universality in the case of Lucy

Snowe's struggle in touching the essence of freedom, although by her assumption limitation.

## **CHAPTER IV**

## **ANALYSIS**