

A BRONTË COMPANION

By the same author

ONE RARE FAIR WOMAN
Thomas Hardy's letters to
Florence Henniker 1893-1922
(*edited with Evelyn Hardy*)

A COMMENTARY ON
THE POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY
THOMAS HARDY: ART AND THOUGHT

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A BRONTË COMPANION

Literary Assessment, Background, and Reference

F. B. PINION

M
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TO CATHERINE
(C.F.P.)

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Nos. 18b, 18c, 25a, and 26a originate from Louis Ambler, *The Old Halls and Manor-Houses of Yorkshire*, London, 1913; 11 and 25b from the Grant edition of the Brontës, Edinburgh, 1907; 5, 10a, 20, and 28a from the Haworth edition, London, 1899 and 1900; 18a from John Horner, *Buildings in the Town and Parish of Halifax*, 1835; 21 from Frederika Macdonald, *The Secret of Charlotte Brontë*, London, 1914; 3 from Frederick Ross, *The Ruined Abbeys of Britain*, London, 1882; 4 and 17a from William Scruton, *Thornton and the Brontës*, Bradford, 1898; 28b from Clement Shorter, *The Brontës, Life and Letters*, London, 1908; and 1, 6b, and 10b from J. A. Erskine Stuart, *The Brontë Country*, London, 1888.

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Abbreviations

- A.* *Agnes Grey*
J. *Jane Eyre*
P. *The Professor*
S. *Shirley*
T. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*
W. *Wuthering Heights*
- G.* Mrs Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*
H. (ed.) C. W. Hatfield, *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë*. The numbers refer to the poems, not the pages.
- BST.* *Brontë Society Transactions*. The Roman numerals denote annual numbers.
- NCF.* *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.
- PMLA.* *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.
- TLS.* *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Dates in parentheses, e.g. (12.1.48), give references to Brontë letters.

When references are given without full bibliographical information, (e.g. 'Lord David Cecil' or 'Simpson, 59'), this implies that details of the relevant essays or works are to be found in the Select Bibliography.

Preface

Most of this book is based on a study of the Brontë writings, including the poetry and early prose; by far the largest section is devoted to literary assessment. The biographical introduction is an important part of the background. Special attention is given to Patrick Brontë; the lives of the Brontës which follow have been presented separately for more convenient reference, and with the minimum of repetition.

Modern biographers have done justice to Patrick, but Brontë biography is still apt to include 'apocryphal' elements. They concern Branwell; the relation of his sisters to him and to each other in his last years; and, even more critically perhaps, Aunt Branwell.

The topographical background of most of the Brontë novels is of great interest, but traditional ascriptions may be found which do not tally with literary evidence. How far actual people contributed to Charlotte Brontë's characters can be assessed with some degree of certainty from her letters; it will be found, for example, that important links existed initially between Mary Taylor's brother Joseph and Ellen Nussey and the Robert Moore and Caroline Helstone of *Shirley*.

Literary influences on the writings of the Brontës provide a more significant background. Among these Byron must take precedence; accounts of his life, Thomas Moore's biography in particular, were a creative source not only for Charlotte Brontë in her Angrian fiction and *Jane Eyre* but also for Emily in *Wuthering Heights* and Anne (a neglected author) in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Emily's literary inspiration owes much, it will be seen, to Shelley.

The most valuable reference books for me have been the four volumes of the Brontë letters published for the Shakespeare Head

Press by Basil Blackwell; they have proved to be quite indispensable. I owe much detail to several articles in *The Brontë Society Transactions*, and to Winifred Gérin's *Charlotte Brontë*, especially with reference to Brussels. Other acknowledgments are made elsewhere in the course of this book.

Permission has been kindly given by the Columbia University Press to quote from C. W. Hatfield's edition of *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë* (New York, 1941), and by Basil Blackwell, publisher, to use the text of the Shakespeare Head Brontë for quotations from the Brontë letters, the miscellaneous writings, and the poetry of Charlotte, Branwell, and Anne Brontë, and also to reproduce an illustration from the same edition. These sketches by Branwell Brontë are included with the further approval of the Brotherton Library.

I am indebted to the University Library of Cambridge, the Huddersfield Central Public Library, the Sheffield Central Public Library, and the University Library of Sheffield for information, maps, and books. For assistance in a number of ways I am grateful to Mr P. J. Allott, Professor J. O. Bailey, Mr D. W. Bromley, Mr B. E. Coates, Miss Beatrix Collingham and Mrs R. F. Pearce of the British Council, Miss Brenda Davies of the British Film Institute, Mr R. H. Fairclough, Mrs Mabel Ferrett of the Red House Museum, Gomersal, Mr W. C. Kerr, Mrs Edith M. Kitching, Mrs Shirley White of the B.B.C., and Dr Tom Winniffrith. To Miss Amy Foster, archivist at the Brontë Parsonage Museum, I owe a great debt for her courtesy in answering inquiries on several occasions. Special acknowledgments are due to my wife for her patient scrutiny of the text, and to Mr T. M. Farmiloe and Mr H. W. Bawden for their co-operation on behalf of the publishers.