Introduction: picturing Charlotte Brontë

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In response to the centenary of Charlotte Brontë's birth in 1916, the Brontë Society commissioned a volume of essays entitled *Charlotte Brontë, 1816–1916: A Centenary Memorial* (1917), with contributions by some well-known literary figures, including G. K. Chesterton and Edmund Gosse. It opened with a foreword by the then president of the Brontë Society, Mrs Humphry Ward, in which she explained that the book set out to offer 'fresh impressions and the first-hand research of competent writers who have spoken their minds with love and courage' (Ward, 1917: 5). One hundred years later, the current volume of essays, *Charlotte Brontë: Legacies and Afterlives*, also strives to offer 'fresh impressions' based on the 'first-hand research' of 'competent writers'; equally, most of the contributors can claim that a love of Brontë's work motivated this project. However, while the contributors to the 1917 volume considered courage to be required to assert Charlotte Brontë's importance, the writers in this book show no inclination to defend her reputation or argue for the significance of her work. Her 'genius', a term emphasised repeatedly, often anxiously, in the 1917 collection, can now be taken for granted, and for that comfortable assumption we have generations of feminist scholars to thank. The current volume instead charts the vast cultural impact of Charlotte Brontë since the appearance of her first published work, *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (1846), highlighting the richness and diversity of the author's legacy, her afterlife and the continuation of her plots and characters in new forms.

   Although the centenary and bicentenary collections share an aim to celebrate Charlotte Brontë's achievements, there are unsurprisingly

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significant differences between the two projects. A glance at the chapter titles of the *Centenary Memorial* indicates that many are personal reflections, such as 'Some Thoughts on Charlotte Brontë' by Mrs Humphry Ward; 'Charlotte Brontë: A Personal Sketch' by Arthur C. Benson, an anecdotal account by one who knew people who knew the author; and Edmund Gosse's 'A Word on Charlotte Brontë'. Others are impressionist essays focusing on her indebtedness to the Romantics, such as Halliwell Sutcliffe's 'The Spirit of the Moors' and G. K. Chesterton's 'Charlotte Brontë as a Romantic'. Some contributors to this earlier volume trace the real people and places that Brontë drew upon in her novels, incorporating evidence from the aged population of Haworth. These contributors also share a sense that Charlotte Brontë, for all her literary achievements, was a flawed genius, her work being inferior to that of her sister Emily.[1] Indeed, the early twentieth century can be read as a turning point for Charlotte's reputation, when a temporary decline set in. She was dismissed as irretrievably Victorian by modernist writers who valued the ambiguity of Emily's work as speaking more effectively to twentieth-century readers. Ward is typical of the contributors in the *Centenary Memorial* in asking, 'Which was the greater, [Charlotte] or Emily?', to which she answers: 'To my mind, Emily, by far', while Anne is not even mentioned (Ward, 1917: 37). Ward emphasises Charlotte as having a specifically 'Victorian' personality: 'a loving, faithful, suffering woman, with a personal story which, thanks to Mrs Gaskell's *Life*, will never cease to touch the hearts of English folk' (Ward, 1917: 30). The centenary essays share Ward's confidence in 'knowing Charlotte', assuming that Elizabeth Gaskell's version of her friend offers an accurate picture of the woman and her place in the world of letters. Two hundred years after the author's birth, academics are considerably less confident about their ability to 'know' Charlotte; significantly Claire Harman's recent biography is entitled *Charlotte Brontë: A Life* (2016), in contrast to Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857).

The impulse motivating the current volume of essays stems from the following questions: Why does Charlotte Brontë continue to be so widely read? What are the qualities that have made her a household name? Why do her characters endure in so many different cultural contexts? 'Charlotte Brontë' is a cultural phenomenon which continues to evolve, as do her literary legacies both in terms of her influence on later authors and the extraordinary afterlives of her plots and characters. Contributors to *Charlotte Brontë: Legacies and Afterlives* evaluate more than 150 years of cultural engagement with Charlotte Brontë, considering fluctuations

in her literary reputation; innumerable adaptations of her novels for film, television, radio, theatre and the Internet; biographies and fictional biographies; the development of an author cult and the growth of literary tourism; neo-Victorian reworkings of Charlotte Brontë's works; the legacy of her poetry; her influence on subsequent writers; the afterlives of her characters; and the evolution of critical approaches to her work. While the contributors to the 1917 collection attempted to offer a definitive image of the author and an evaluation of her genius, *Charlotte Brontë: Legacies and Afterlives* is engaging with current interests in Victorian afterlives with the aim of demonstrating the richness, variety and complexity of Charlotte Brontë's cultural impact.

This book focuses exclusively on Charlotte Brontë, not only because her bicentenary in 2016 has offered our contributors an occasion to reflect on her achievements and legacies but also because we wanted as much as possible to set her apart from her associations with the collective entity known as 'The Brontës'. The family's mythic status has resulted in the idea of shared attributes relating to Yorkshire and Englishness, genius and femininity, the Victorian family and rural life, passion and sexuality, feminism and liberation, working women and female mobility. However, this tendency to see the sisters as a collective has sometimes blurred their differences, leading to distortions which do not necessarily do full justice to each sisters' individual achievement. The most well known and well regarded of the three sisters during the Victorian period, Charlotte Brontë bequeathed a legacy which is more extensive and more complex than the legacies of Emily and Anne. Charlotte Brontë outlived her sisters, going on to develop relationships outside the family circle which have been recorded in extant letters and journal entries; she became the friend of fellow female writers Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau, sharing with them her experiences of literary endeavour and public life. She also socialised with other key literary figures of the day, including William Thackeray and G. H. Lewes. She was the only sister to marry, and her death in 1855, possibly from the effects of pregnancy, singles her out as different from her siblings – all of whom underwent early deaths from consumption in the late 1840s. Unlike Emily and Anne, Charlotte became the subject of many obituaries, journalistic sketches and biographies during the Victorian period. The archive of material on Charlotte is, then, more extensive and more diverse. Whether we accept Gaskell's representation of 'the wild little maiden from Haworth' (Gaskell, 1997: 78) or accommodate Edward Fitzgerald's view that she was the 'Mistress of the Disagreeable' (quoted in Ward, 1917: 22), or

consider her as an early feminist, or take seriously a twenty-first-century view of her as 'a filthy minx' (Gold, 2005), it is evident that focusing upon Charlotte Brontë has afforded the contributors to this volume a wealth of material to consider.

The *Centenary Memorial*, then, had a limited archive with which to work; nevertheless, its contributors felt confident in 'knowing Charlotte'.

1 George Richmond, *Charlotte Brontë* (1850)

Some of them refer to George Richmond's 1850 portrait (Fig. 1), well known from Gaskell's *Life*, and from this image they attempt to read the author's personality, presuming it to be an authoritative likeness and source. By contrast, examining Charlotte Brontë's life and work from the perspective of 2016, we feel more tentative about what we can know of the author's life. She died in her late thirties in 1855 and left relatively few autobiographical traces behind her. Our uncertainty is nowhere more apparent than in our inability to know what she looked like, prompting paradoxical desires to recover and re-read the mutable text of her invisible, ineluctable face. The convoluted, unfinished story of Charlotte's likenesses, portraits and visual depictions, therefore, provides an apt introduction and starting point for this new volume, speaking to our persistent fascination and creative engagement with the Brontës' life and work.

Charlotte Brontë, icon

In late July 1850, two parcels arrived at Haworth parsonage. Each contained a portrait, gifts from George Smith, Charlotte's publisher. The smaller parcel was intended for Charlotte and contained an engraving of Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. The larger parcel was intended for her father, Patrick, and contained her own image: a chalk portrait on brown paper, the work of George Richmond and commissioned by Smith at the cost of thirty guineas. Charlotte sat for the artist while in London the previous June, but from the first it was a contested likeness.[2] According to Smith, on first seeing the portrait Charlotte 'burst into tears, exclaiming that it was so like her sister Anne, who had died the year before' (Smith, 1900: 794). She had glimpsed a memory: the lines of a sister's face reflected in her own, both self and other. Tabby, the Brontës' servant, proved another unseeing audience (doubly so, when one considers she was nearing eighty and her eyesight was failing):

> our old servant […] tenaciously maintains that it is not like – that it is too old-looking; but as she, with equal tenacity, asserts that the Duke of Wellington's picture is a portrait of 'the Master' (meaning Papa), I am afraid not much weight is to be ascribed to her opinion.
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> (Brontë, 1995–2004: II, 434)

The Brontë sisters had adopted pseudonyms at the insistence of Emily, or Ellis Bell, but Charlotte clung to anonymity long after

she revealed her authorship to her publishers in 1848 (and despite becoming known in literary circles during the early 1850s). She continued to publish as Currer Bell, and, crucially, no authorial image was permitted to circulate in newspapers and periodicals or to accompany her works. 'What author would be without the advantage of being able to walk invisible?' (Brontë, 1995–2004: II, 4), she had once remarked. It is hardly surprising, then, that from 1850 until her death in 1855, Charlotte's only professional portrait taken from life hung upon the dining-room wall at the parsonage, a private image to be gazed at by family and friends. All this changed in 1857. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was unequivocal: Currer Bell was Charlotte Brontë, and a copy of Richmond's portrait was reproduced as an illustration. Gaskell fought hard to have the portrait accompany the biography – a work she was commissioned to undertake at the request of Charlotte's father.[3] At first, Arthur Bell Nicholls withheld permission for his late wife's likeness to be copied (Gaskell, 1966: 393). Charlotte's friend, Ellen Nussey, sympathised with Gaskell but not without qualification: 'I am very sorry about the refusal of the portrait. Though there would always have been regret for its painful expression to be perpetuated' (Wise and Symington, 1932: IV, 205). Undeterred, Gaskell enlisted the help and bluster of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth who appealed to the father and forced the hand of the widower (Gaskell, 1966: 399). Permission was secured in late July 1856 and by December she was in possession of a good-quality photograph (Gaskell, 1966: 423).[4] Nussey need not have worried: the engraving by J. C. Armytage, placed opposite the biography's title page and rendered greyscale in the printing, softened Charlotte's countenance. Likeness or not, Richmond's portrait was now a public image; though dead, Charlotte would never walk invisible again.

Taking her cue from Erving Goffman's work on *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), in which he identifies 'social front' as an effect produced by performative elements that 'define [a] situation for those who observe' (Goffman, 1956: 13), Shearer West contends that portraiture renders visible and legible both sitter and 'front': '[p]ortraits are filled with the external signs of a person's socialized self', thus the portraitist must balance competing representational demands of inner and outer, individual and type (West, 2004: 30). In Charlotte, Richmond was faced with a subject doubly situated: two 'fronts', public writer and private woman, with competing signifiers attached to each identity. When the

finished portrait arrived at the parsonage, Patrick saw the writer first and foremost:

> Without ostentatious display, with admirable tact and delicacy, he has produced a correct, likeness, and succeeded, in a graphic representation of mind, as well as matter […] I may be partial, and perhaps, somewhat enthusiastic, in this case, but in looking on the picture, which improves upon acquaintance, as all real works of art do – I fancy I see strong indications, of the Genius, of the Author, of "Shirley", and "Jane Eyre".
>
> (Brontë, 1995–2004: II, 435)

Patrick admired the portrait's writerly 'front', reading and elucidating outward signs of interiority and intellect – the same features that Nussey considered her 'painful expression', perhaps. Likewise, in a late essay-memoir by George Smith, the extraordinariness of Charlotte's head comes in for scrutiny. Though he offers no direct comment upon the portrait, merely noting its commission and execution, Smith provides a lens through which to view the picture. He reproduces a phrenological report by T. P. Browne, the result of an examination undertaken for amusement while Charlotte was in London in 1851, just a year after sitting for her portrait:

> In its intellectual development this head is very remarkable. The forehead is at once very large and well formed. It bears the stamp of deep thoughtfulness and comprehensive understanding. It is highly philosophical. It exhibits the presence of an intellect at once perspicacious and perspicuous. […] This lady possesses a fine organ of language, and can, if she has done her talents justice by exercise, express her sentiments with clearness, precision, and force – sufficiently eloquent but not verbose.
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> (Smith, 1900: 787)

By the time Smith published the report, copies of Richmond's portrait had circulated far and wide. Readers would not have struggled to bring the image before their mind's eye, projecting the phrenologist's conclusions. But significantly, neither father nor publisher lose sight of the woman behind the writer. Patrick's language, his diction and register, strike an appropriately feminine note. His praise for the artist blends with approbation for the manner of Charlotte's presentation: Richmond's tact, delicacy and lack of ostentation stand as proxy for his subject – these features become her, signifying production, '[to] come into being', and correspondence, to 'suit, befit, grace' (*OED*) – and the portrait serves, paradoxically, as evidence of demure, retiring femininity. Smith too ensures that Charlotte's difference – her 'Genius', as Patrick would have

From an original painting by Chappel in the possession of the publishers.

Johnson, Wilson & Co., Publishers, New York

Entered according to act of Congress AD 1873 by Johnson, Wilson & Co in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

2 *Charlotte Brontë: From an original painting by Chappel* (1870s)

it – is safely accommodated within domestic ideology, the phrenologist's report equally emphasising the importance of duty and the 'warm and affectionate' conduct of her 'domestic relations' (Smith, 1900: 786). Richmond's portrait, read variously as indicative of writerly profession and womanly duty, was a singularly fitting image to accompany *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Gaskell divides her subject into 'parallel currents – her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman', and seeks to recount the 'separate duties belonging to each character' (Gaskell, 1997: 258–9). Biography and portrait thus sustain a dual iconography: made public together, they set an enduring and ineluctable precedent, a pattern for subsequent accounts and portrayals of Charlotte Brontë to adopt, adapt and contest.

Richmond's portrait soon began to proliferate, reproduction upon reproduction. Remarkably, this process began before *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* established the image as icon: George Smith appears to have arranged for a copy to be made before sending the original to Haworth (Brontë, 1995–2004: II, 430), and Arthur Bell Nicholls allowed (or indeed, commissioned) J. H. Thompson, Branwell Brontë's friend and fellow student of portraiture at Leeds, to make use of the picture as a template for a new portrait of his late wife.[5] During preparations for the biography, three photographs were taken to enable Armytage to execute his engraving, permission granted on condition that two photographs were returned (Gaskell, 1966: 421). Following publication, demand for and access to Charlotte's image could no longer be controlled: portrait, via engraving, crystallised her public image and prompted the circulation of countless copies. With Richmond as urtext, Jane Sellars notes the strong family likeness exhibited by these reproductions: 'Richmond's portrait established a kind of pictorial symbol for the face of Charlotte Brontë that persists to this day' (Sellars, 2012: 123). It was then, as now, a recognisable commodity. This fact was not lost upon Ellen Nussey when in 1868 she sought permission from Smith to reproduce the image (presumably Armytage's engraving, since she sent her request to the publishers, Smith, Elder) upon *cartes-de-visite* to sell at a church bazaar (Brontë, 1995–2004: I, 34). And yet, if Richmond established a 'pictorial symbol' for Charlotte's face, it has proved mutable, polysemic. This is not a question of in/fidelity to an original, for the subject of portraiture is always already absent – in this case, a living woman who may or may not have been 'like' (the term is vague) the figure depicted in chalk, a sitter who lived apart from its dead, flat paper. From the first, therefore, Richmond's portrait has been reimagined variously.

Charlotte's two 'fronts', writer and woman, established and explored through the pages of Gaskell's biography, have endured in the afterlife of Richmond's icon – sometimes the one, sometimes the other is ascendant. These variations and manipulations prove the testing ground for iconographic engagements with Charlotte's posthumous legacy and reputation. An 1870s engraving of a portrait by Alonzo Chappel (Fig. 2) reveals this to be a complex, contradictory process. Chappel follows Richmond's pattern in his depiction of the head and features, but he also supplies the absent body. Charlotte's figure is glamorous, sexualised, with a narrow waist and full skirts. But the implied presence of a corset also suggests strict regulation, her body conforming to nineteenth-century moral and medical strictures. As Birgitta Berglund reminds us, the corset was 'considered essential for back support and good posture', and 'a woman who did not wear a corset was considered indecent, "loose", as if the structural firmness of the corseted body equalled a moral firmness' (Bergland, 2012: 319). Likewise, Chappel's portrayal of Charlotte's hands sustains different readings. In her left, Charlotte holds a book, a clear symbol of authorship. But the volume is half closed, held casually, carelessly, tilted away from her gaze. In her right, Charlotte holds the lace-trimmed fabric of a handkerchief. This second symbol picks up and repeats the lace of her collar and sleeves, appropriately feminine (lacework being a suitable accomplishment and domestic pursuit). Gaskell's 'parallel currents' are clearly in evidence, but maintaining the visibility of both identities has proved a perennial problem for artists appropriating the Richmond portrait. Chappel struggles to marry the woman and writer: authorship, explicitly invoked, is overwritten by multiple signifiers of idealised femininity. An alternative strategy can be found in Maurice Clare's *A Day with Charlotte Brontë* (c.1911), illustrated by C. E. Brock. In contrast to Chappel's palimpsest, Brock separates woman from writer, turning twice to Richmond for inspiration. He produces two appropriative images to fit each 'front': a cover portrait in colour (Fig. 3) and a simple line drawing following the front endpaper (Fig. 4). The first portrays the woman; it is indebted to J. H. Thompson's reworking of the image, where Brock's light pastel shades (in watercolour, not the rich tones of Thompson's oils) extend his idealisation of Charlotte's femininity. The second, however, returns to the writer; it is a far more accurate copy of Richmond's portrait and technique, where the features emerge through the contrast between paper, line and hatching. Unlike Chappel, there is no book to symbolise Charlotte's writerly 'front', for Brock achieves this indirectly. In 1906, the National Portrait Gallery acquired Richmond's chalk original.[6] By

3 Cover illustration from Maurice Clare, *A Day with Charlotte Brontë* (c.1911)

4 Illustration from Maurice Clare, *A Day with Charlotte Brontë* (c.1911)

the time Clare's brief biography was published, it had been on public display for five years. So often reproduced and adapted, the portrait was now enshrined within a public institution dedicated to 'the appreciation and understanding of the men and women who have made and are making British history and culture' (NPG, 2016). Though ideal femininity and domestic duty are integral to Charlotte's posthumous reputation, her place upon the gallery's walls was earned by the labour of her pen. Brock's return to Richmond, his stripping away of details supplied by later artists like Thompson and Chappel, speaks to a reclamation of the image as writerly icon, granted official status as the portrait of a sitter who 'made' history and culture.

Contested images

From 1914 it was possible to picture Charlotte differently. In March that year two rediscovered Brontë portraits were put on display at the National Portrait Gallery. Both were the work of Branwell: a surviving fragment from a lost group portrait, known as the Gun Group, from which Emily's likeness had been cut and preserved (c.1833–34), and *The Brontë Sisters* or Pillar Portrait (c.1834).[7] The paintings had been found in a wardrobe by Arthur Bell Nicholls' second wife, Mary. Nicholls had evidently not much cared for Branwell's efforts. Having cut Emily from the Gun Group, he destroyed the remaining canvas; and the Pillar Portrait was damaged when removed from its frame and folded.[8] Reframed and rehung, the portraits caused a minor sensation. *The Times* approved of the gallery's arrangements, noting the fitness of the sisters' illustrious company: 'effigies of the three sisters of genius, of their biographer [Elizabeth Gaskell], and of the man who made them known to the world of both hemispheres [George Smith] are placed in fortunate juxtaposition' (Anon., 1914).

These portraits were known before their rediscovery, though their lines and likenesses were lost to the vagaries of memory and poor quality reproduction. Gaskell twice describes the Pillar Portrait in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (Gaskell, 1997: 101–2, 412), and a rare photograph was sometimes reproduced.[9] Likewise, an engraving of the Gun Group was used to illustrate J. Horsfall Turner's *Haworth: Past and Present* (1879), with no comment upon its provenance beyond the following: 'Our picture of the Brontë group is a faithful reproduction of Mr Branwell's painting of himself and sisters' (Horsfall Turner, 1879: 170). Acquisition by the National Portrait Gallery revived these images in the popular imagination, but the act of restoration was partial. The Gun Group could never be

fully restored, of course; and, contrary to usual policy, the gallery decided to preserve, not repair, the damage to both paintings. For Christine Alexander and Jane Sellars, this decision accords with something illusive (and elusive) in the Brontës' posthumous legacies, an incompleteness that fascinates: the folds and frayed edges, cracks and holes, 'signified an important aspect of the poignant Brontë story, namely Nicholls' simultaneous act of preservation and censorship which speaks of his sensitivity to the preying biographers' (Alexander and Sellars, 1995: 311). The spectacle of their damage certainly enthralled the press. Coverage in the *Daily Graphic* and *Sphere* focused upon the 'romance' of their rediscovery, while prominent photographs concentrated attention upon their poor condition.[10] And though the *Saturday Review* considered it a 'great pity that one should have been ruthlessly folded and the other as ruthlessly cut', this pity soon commutes to reverence: the pictures '[look] more like tattered relics than works of art' (W. J. W., 1914: 337).

Branwell's artistry was not, it seems, a primary matter for concern; it was the paintings as family possessions, crafted by Brontë hands within the space of the parsonage, that captured the imagination. Looking upon the Pillar Portrait seemed to hold little promise of greater acquaintance with Charlotte's face. Gaskell had politely (but not convincingly) conceded that 'the likenesses were, I should think, admirable'. But she undermined her own claim, describing the work as 'not much better than sign-painting, as to manipulation', being merely a 'rough common-looking oil-painting' (Gaskell, 1997: 101, 412). By contrast, Richmond's chalk drawing had shaped Charlotte's posthumous legacy for fifty-seven years, and it would continue to serve as her writerly icon. Branwell's Pillar Portrait provided a private, amateur counterpart to this professional image: painted before the sisters achieved fame, poorly executed and poorly treated. And yet, the image has proliferated just as widely as Richmond's portrait, its fascination (and 'romance') increasing over time with the gradual re-emergence of Branwell's painted-out figure from behind the fading pillar.[11]

Branwell's portraits reveal the Brontës' likenesses to be persistent loci of desire. The Pillar Portrait and Gun Group pose unsolvable puzzles, seeming to conceal more than they reveal; and yet, we continue to seek for their lost faces. The Pillar Portrait has been subject to infra-red photography and x-ray examinations in the hope of revealing Branwell's figure, and various theories have been proffered to explain his erasure.[12] Likewise, individual and institutional collectors of Brontë relics and remains have sought to reconstruct the obliterated Gun Group. The engraving in

Horsfall Turner's *Haworth: Past and Present* was a constant though inexact reminder of what had been lost, but in 1932 C. Mabel Edgerley (honorary secretary of the Brontë Society) reported the existence of 'three old tracings of half length female figures' formerly in the possession of John Greenwood, the Haworth stationer, and thought to be the work of his hand (Edgerley, 1932: 29). The tracings were labelled with the Brontë sisters' names and ages, and Edgerley was permitted to try them against the Gun Group fragment at the National Portrait Gallery: the tracing labelled 'Emily' was a perfect fit. And so, suddenly, here were three more likenesses, though the tracings lack detail: pencil on waxed paper, they are but crude outlines of clothing, coiffure and facial features. The tracings were acquired by the Brontë Parsonage Museum in 1961, but in 1989 another exciting discovery was found in the museum collection: a photograph of the Gun Group, copied from an earlier daguerreotype.[13] The photograph is in poor condition. Branwell's eyes shine out from the centre-right of the frame, but it is difficult to discern the features of his sisters. Juliet Barker, who discovered the photograph, notes how the copying of a copy has increased this indistinctness: '[t]he heightening of the contrasts […] effectively blanks out the features of the sitters and darkens the shadows around them' (Barker, 1990: 9).[14] Paradoxically, then, the irrecoverable Gun Group remains with us, a revenant recalled through its ghostly traces. But these survivals elide and unsettle our ability to recognise the Brontës; they refuse to offer a pattern or template comparable to Richmond. Charlotte's painted image, like those belonging to her brother and sister, destroyed after her death by her widower, is reduced to an imprecise outline in a pencil tracing, a faceless figure in a fading photograph and a type of cartoonish womanhood in a second-rate engraving.

With so few surviving portraits taken from life, a host of images have sought to supply this lack, contesting their place within the Brontë portrait canon. Charlotte's archival traces have been co-opted in the process. Two claimed self-portraits, both executed in 1843 during her second sojourn in Brussels, have been discovered among her papers and books. The first, an ink sketch forming part of the postscript to a letter to Ellen Nussey, depicts Charlotte waving goodbye to Ellen, separated by a stretch of water, as the latter departs with a suitor (Brontë 1995–2004: I, 311–12 and plate 3).[15] The second, a pencil drawing on the reverse of a map in *Russell's General Atlas of Modern Geography*, has recently been identified by Claire Harman as a self-portrait, though the provenance in this case is less certain (Harman 2016: 178–9).[16] Both images have been viewed as manifestations of Charlotte's belief

in her own ugliness: a '[c]omic sketch showing a grotesque stunted little female figure' in the case of her letter to Nussey (Alexander and Sellars, 1995: 261); and in the case of the atlas sketch, a real-life counterpart to Jane Eyre's self-discipline: 'tomorrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect […]; write under it, "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain"' (Brontë, 2008: 161; Harman, 2016: 179). These readings respond to or project exaggeration; they identify ugliness and excess as a means to punish or satirise. As such Charlotte's self-portraits are more readily categorised as caricatures – that 'less exalted art' (West, 2004: 35) – for they do not adhere to forms of portraiture founded upon reference and moderation in the signification of 'front'. Just like Branwell's portraits, surviving and destroyed, these images excite rather than ease our desire to look upon Charlotte's face.

Satisfaction has been sought elsewhere. Misattributions, fakes and doubtful claims have found ready audiences and willing advocates: more than ever, we are driven to imagine Charlotte's face anew, hoping to recognise within the lines of a portrait or photograph the very person, or personality, that we feel we know. Representatives of the Brontë Parsonage Museum receive regular requests to comment upon and authenticate newly claimed or disputed likenesses. In an interview with the local press, principal curator Ann Dinsdale remarked that she had 'lost count' of the number of pictures received at the parsonage (Knights, 2015); and she has offered words of caution to accompany stories in national newspapers: 'You've got to think, why would there be a picture of them? […] Everybody wants to know what the Brontës looked like […]. We do what we can, but if the image has got no provenance and it's not documented anywhere, it's really difficult' (Sutherland, 2015). Dinsdale draws upon the relative obscurity of the Brontës during their lifetime to encourage a healthy scepticism, but it has proved difficult to counter the 'romance' of rediscovery. Since 2009 there have been three high-profile claims, their notoriety achieved on account of the large sums changing hands at auction or effective advocacy campaigns. In 2009 James Gorin von Grozny purchased a group portrait of three female figures for £150. He claimed it was a painting of the Brontë sisters by Edwin Landseer, executed c.1838. Despite a sceptical press reception (BBC News, 2009), the painting resold at auction in May 2012 for £14,000.[17] Auctioneers, J. P. Humbert, claimed the painting had been 'attributed' by the National Portrait Gallery (Anon., 2012b), prompting the Australian Brontë Association to report, enthusiastically, that the gallery had 'confirmed its link to both

Landseer and the renowned literary sisters' (Burns, 2012). But not all is as it seems. Enquiries at the National Portrait Gallery reveal their records to be equivocal at best: 'the image has been filed among "doubtful" portraits of the Brontë sisters and labelled as "possibly" by Edwin Landseer'.[18]

Photographs in particular have been coveted and contested, while online platforms and social media have been used to disseminate images and their claimed attributions. Perhaps the most visible of these sites is *The Brontë Sisters: A True Likeness?* (www.brontesisters.co.uk), founded by Robert Haley to communicate his research into a photograph held by a Scottish archive, inscribed upon the reverse 'Les Soeurs Brontës'. In 2011 the photograph was presented to the Parsonage Museum, but in the absence of clear provenance the image was not deemed to be authentic. By way of response, the website seeks to crowdsource opinion and evidence to support the claim, and it questions the likenesses and attributions of other Brontë images. Likewise, a photograph purchased on eBay in 2015 for just £15, with 'Bells' inscribed upon the reverse, has been the subject of a short-lived Twitter campaign (@realbrontes) led by the photograph's owner, Seamus Molloy. These photographs have spread online, going viral and provoking debate among online communities of Brontë devotees.[19] More than other media, perhaps, photography holds the greatest allure, seeming to promise that longed-for surrogate encounter with a once-living face.

It is tempting to smile at the popular faith shown in the most unlikely (and unlike) of Brontë portraits. And yet, professionals working at the Parsonage Museum and National Portrait Gallery have not proved themselves immune: both hold images with contested or disproved attributions in their collections. Certain objects at the Parsonage Museum reveal the intricacies of interpersonal archives, where attributions become uncertain and confused as a result of complex paper trails and sustained correspondence between friends and acquaintances – where sitters and subjects become indistinct, interchangeable figures within the historical record. In 2004 the museum purchased a small chalk portrait believed to be of Charlotte and drawn by her friend, Mary Dixon, while they were together in Brussels in 1843.[20] The drawing's provenance can be traced to Martha Brown, the Brontës' servant, and is believed to have been a gift from Charlotte. Claire Harman, however, contests this attribution. Turning to the evidence of Charlotte's correspondence with Dixon, it appears they exchanged portraits (Brontë, 1995–2004: I, 336). Therefore, the likeness retained in Charlotte's possession and later gifted to Brown could just as likely – more likely, for Harman – be of Dixon herself

(Harman, 2016: 162). Trickier still is the museum's possession of two similar *carte-de-visite* photographs with contradictory inscriptions and attributions.[21] Both entered the collection in 1896 as part of a bequest from Elizabeth Seton-Gordon, George Smith's granddaughter. One photograph bears an ink inscription on the reverse, 'Within a year of CB's death', and seems to confirm the provenance of a glass negative held by the National Portrait Gallery, part of the Emery Walker collection and indexed as being 'from a *carte-de-visite* of Charlotte Brontë, taken within a year of her death' (Barker, 1986: 27).[22] An accompanying letter reveals the negative was made sometime before January 1918 and that the sitter was assumed to be Charlotte (Barker, 1986: 27–8), but this was long after George Smith (who could have verified the likeness) had died. The other photograph bears a pencil inscription on the reverse: 'Miss Ellen Nussey friend of Charlotte Brontë circa 1860' (Harman, 2016: 340). Some hold that the first *carte-de-visite* does indeed portray Charlotte, photographed shortly after her marriage to Arthur Bell Nicholls, possibly while on honeymoon (Foister, 1985; Barker, 1986). Others, however, consider the presence of Nussey among Smith's papers to be the more likely scenario; some claim that she is the sitter in both photographs, the items being in Smith's possession on account of Nussey's failed negotiations to bring out an edition of her Brontë letters (Harman, 2016). The Parsonage Museum does not hold a definite position on the chalk drawing or *cartes-de-visite*: they 'remain open minded about the possibility that [the photograph] could be Ellen and that the chalk portrait is likely to be Mary Dixon'.[23] The provenance for each item, though failing to reveal absolutely the sitter's identity, does successfully associate the material with the Brontë family and their close associates. This in itself justifies a place in the museum collection. But there does appear to have been a quiet withdrawal from the *carte-de-visite* photograph claimed as Charlotte. Until recently, the image formed part of the Brontë Society's online picture library – captioned '*Carte-de-visite*, likely to be Charlotte's only known photograph' – but in 2016, Charlotte's bicentenary year, it was removed.[24] It is possible that this change reflects a shift in the general weight of opinion, a tacit acknowledgement that the photograph and its history cannot be disentangled from a mass of interrelated lives and likenesses.

Our willingness to see Charlotte's face in the features of another is grist to the forger's mill, while the money changing hands for Brontë portraits, with or without provenance, is a constant temptation. Most famously, in 1906, the National Portrait Gallery purchased what it considered to be

a painting of Charlotte executed in 1850 by an artist signing themselves 'Paul Héger'.[25] Esther Chadwick records that the purchase was arranged by Smith, Elder: Charlotte's former publishers were approached by Alice Boyd Green, whose family (it was claimed) acquired the painting from a friend of the Heger family (Chadwick, 1914: 396). The portrait depicts a woman wearing a green dress reading from an open book: the title page reveals this to be *Shirley* (1849) and gives the author's name as 'C. Brontë'. Upon the reverse of the canvas two inscriptions reaffirm the sitter to be Charlotte. In late September 1906 the painting was hung upon the gallery's walls and a photograph published in Smith, Elder's *Cornhill Magazine* (post-dated October 1906). The accompanying editorial declared it was the work of 'M. Paul Heger', hastily explaining away the discrepancy between the artist's name and that belonging to Charlotte's Brussels teacher (Constantin): 'M. Heger is accepted as having sat for the character of Paul Emanuel of *Villette*' (Anon., 1906). Almost immediately Brontë scholars and devotees spoke out against the image and denounced the gallery's acquisition policy. Clement Shorter was invited by the gallery director, Lionel Cust, to examine the portrait. Writing publicly in the *Sphere*, Shorter described it as 'an obvious forgery' and listed his many objections (to name but a few): the artist's name was signed with an acute accent, whereas Heger was unaccented; M. Heger did not see Charlotte again after she left Brussels in December 1843, so the portrait could not be 'from life'; *Shirley* was published under the Currer Bell pseudonym, not Charlotte's name, and the Hegers did not then know of her authorship (Shorter, 1906: 82). Moreover, Shorter reproduced a letter in French from Heger's surviving son that denied all connection between his family and the portrait. Such was the vehemence of Shorter's account, Cust put pen to paper, writing a letter to the editor of *The Times* and firmly standing his ground:

> The tone of this attack is such that it might be more seemly for the Trustees [of the National Portrait Gallery] to take no public notice of it. As, however, silence might be taken to mean assent, it would be an advantage to the public to know that the attack was by no means unexpected, and that the evidence at present in the possession of the Trustees justifies them, at all events for the present, while giving all attention to the important details of the attack, in not regarding it as in any way convincing.
>
> (Cust, 1906: 10)

Over the next few days, Shorter and Cust wrote letters back and forth in *The Times*: Shorter repeated his criticisms and Cust continued to censure his 'tone' (while studiously avoiding his objections). The matter

was revived in February 1907 when *The Times* reported the gallery's recent acquisition of the Richmond portrait, used as an occasion to announce the findings of a 'searching investigation' into the provenance of the claimed Heger painting: it was declared 'an authentic likeness of Charlotte Brontë' (Anon., 1907: 22). Incensed, Shorter wrote again to *The Times* demanding proof: 'I shall be glad […] to acknowledge my error in sackcloth and ashes when the Trustees have left the region of mere assertion and have furnished the public with something in the shape of evidence' (Anon., 1907: 23).

Shorter was vindicated in the sequel. In 1913, Esther Chadwick convinced the new gallery director, C. J. Holmes, to re-examine the case. She claimed success in persuading him that Charlotte's teacher 'always used the signature "C. Heger," and his son, Dr. Paul Heger, was only a boy of four in 1850'.[26] As a result, the plate attached to the frame, which read 'Signed Paul Heger 1850', was 'removed in [her] presence'; soon after, 'the officials of the National Portrait Gallery found an impression of an inscription in large hand across the back of the painting "Portrait of Miss Mary Vickers"' (Chadwick, 1914: 397, 399). The picture was eventually taken down from the gallery's walls, but it remains in their collection and continues to be associated with the Brontë name, albeit at one remove. Now entitled *Unknown Woman, Formerly Known as Charlotte Brontë*, the gallery's website links the painting to other images where Charlotte is sitter, including Richmond's chalk drawing and Branwell's Pillar Portrait. The story of its acquisition, the public disagreements and slow unravelling of its provenance means the picture is an object of interest in its own right. It might not be able to show us what Charlotte looked like, or how her dual 'social front' as woman and writer was conceived and negotiated by the Heger family, but it can tell us volumes about Charlotte's post-humous legacy: an object of desire, a commodity of value, a persistent enigma. By maintaining the link to Charlotte's name, the National Portrait Gallery recognises the forged portrait as an integral part of these contested constructions of Brontë iconography, celebrity and mythology – histories that continue to be written.

Recent reimaginings

The proliferation of Charlotte's image, the muddling of attributions and spurious claims, has reached its acme and apotheosis with the Internet and our digital age. Nothing represents this better than a Google Images

search under Charlotte's name: thousands of results; reproduction upon appropriation of Richmond's drawing and Branwell's painting; stills from film and TV adaptations of the sisters' works; book covers and illustrations; cartoons and cosplay. There has been a democratising of Charlotte's image in a culture of file-sharing and image manipulation, testing to the limit those laws of copyright and licensing that can be employed to monetise Brontë portraiture, where the interest in a surrogate is protected (such as a photograph or other duplicate) rather than the original. It would be impossible to trace or stop the spread of an accessible image file of a Brontë portrait, recognised likeness or not; and it would be impossible to prevent creative engagements with these images via Photoshop and other graphics software. Fan-art appropriations abound. The same Google Images search will reveal Charlotte Brontë memes, her face (typically a version of the Richmond portrait) accompanied by an inspirational quotation from her work, most often those famous lines from *Jane Eyre* (1847): 'I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will' (Brontë, 2008: 253). Similarly, the *Wall Street Journal* recently illustrated a bicentenary article surveying rewrites, mash-ups and spin-offs with a Brontë photocollage. The 1870s engraving of Chappel's portrait, based upon Richmond (see above), was transformed into colourised pop art: Charlotte, complete with sunglasses and carrying a satchel, cuts an appropriately postmodern figure (Maloney, 2016).

Charlotte's accepted portraits have been reimagined and made to speak to new audiences and situations. The Richmond portrait and its derivations have proved particularly durable and adaptable, with amateur and professional artists alike returning to this foundational image to commit repeated acts of iconoclasm or icon renewal. If Richmond could be accused of flattering his subject by emphasising and moulding her features to fit ideals of beauty (Bostridge, 1976), more recent artists have paid homage by returning to the portrait as an icon of Charlotte as writer. The Parsonage Museum as an official site dedicated to the lives, work and legacies of the Brontë family has been at the forefront of these imaginative engagements. A reproduction of the Richmond portrait hangs upon the chimney breast in the dining room, the very place occupied by the original during Patrick Brontë's lifetime. But this is not a house museum in slavish pursuit of an impossible authenticity in the recreation of space. Such tendencies are held in check, and interrogated, by the museum's contemporary arts programme. In 2013, the photographic artist Charlotte Cory was invited to explore the heritage and tourist industries built upon the Brontës' lives and work. Cory is best

5 Charlotte Cory, *Her Portrait by Richmond* (2013)

known for her work in surrealist collage and 'Visitoriana', an alternative nineteenth century imaginatively located in '[a] post-Darwinian universe of reworked, recycled, collaged and montaged Victorian photography and taxidermy in which the animals are clearly in charge' (Cory, n.d.). Cory's exhibition, entitled *Capturing the Brontës*, transformed the parsonage into a 'Visitorian' museum: images and artefacts portraying the Brontës as animals were installed throughout the parsonage, drawing upon

human-animal encounters and animal representations documented in their writings and other accounts.[27] During the exhibition, the museum's reproduction of Richmond's portrait was replaced by a 'Visitorian' reimagining (*Her Portrait by Richmond*; Cory, 2013: 137; see Fig. 5). The head and features were those of dog, with Cory taking her inspiration from a letter to W. S. Williams, first published in Gaskell's biography, in which Charlotte mused upon the gendered expectations of authorship:

> The original of Mr Hall [a character in *Shirley* (1849)] I have seen; he knows me slightly; but he would as soon think I had closely observed him or taken him for a character – he would as soon, indeed, suspect me of writing a book – a novel – as he would his dog, Prince.
>
> (Brontë, 1995–2004: II, 260)

Having constructed a *carte-de-visite* photograph of Charlotte-as-woman-writer-come-dog (*An Unswerving Conviction*, Cory, 2013: 121), Cory made use of the same canine head, rendered in brushstrokes, for her 'Visitorian' portrait.[28]

Cory's work and its treatment of Brontë iconography is irreverent. This playfulness, though grounded in Charlotte's and her siblings' words, was perceived by some visitors to the museum to be an act of desecration, one committed within and legitimised by the very authority and site established to preserve the Brontës' posthumous legacy. TripAdvisor reviews bear witness to this dissatisfaction: one visitor thought the museum had been 'vandalised by a bizarre, ill-judged initiative', while another noted that the exhibition had proved 'much to the distaste of most contributors to the visitors' book'.[29] But the provocation posed by Cory's work prompts us to question how Brontë relics and remains can and have been read and employed variously. Richmond's public icon had been a private portrait in the family home until the publication of Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* ensured the celebrity of both the image and its sitter. Cory's erasure of Charlotte's face returns the human subject to the obscurity she enjoyed while alive, prompting the viewer to reconsider Charlotte's own words concerning anonymity ('the advantage of being able to walk invisible') and the incredulity that often accompanies a woman's entrance into the literary public sphere. One further TripAdvisor review complained that *Capturing the Brontës* '[muddled] the authenticity of the rest of the exhibits'.[30] Here too is a provocation. In the case of Richmond's portrait, Cory's canine reimagining did not replace the original artefact but a reproduction, a counterfeit revealed only to those who take time to scrutinise interpretation cards and souvenir guides. And so we are prompted

to question the reconstructed space of the house museum and whether Cory's image is any less authentic than a reproduction of a portrait that has itself been copied, adapted and disseminated *ad infinitum*.

Charlotte's bicentenary year, 2016, has provided the cue and occasion to reflect upon her legacies and afterlives, the appropriation and transformation of her life and work. Reimagining her image forms an integral part of this process, ongoing since the publication of Gaskell's biography in 1857. This has proved particularly true of media and museum contributions to the bicentenary celebration. On screen, Charlotte's face and figure have been imitated and performed, reimagined through embodiment. For a BBC documentary entitled *Being the Brontës*, broadcast in March 2016, actors and volunteers restaged Charlotte's wedding to Arthur Bell Nicholls.[31] Sophie Trott was corseted, bonneted and dressed in a bridal gown that matched, as far as possible, eyewitness accounts and Charlotte's surviving clothing. Likewise, *To Walk Invisible*, a recent feature-length BBC drama written and directed by Sally Wainwright, saw actress Finn Atkins in the role of Charlotte. Filmed partly in and around Haworth, the production required the building of a replica parsonage on Penistone Hill. Atkins' styling, her costuming, make-up and hair design have set new televisual patterns for contemporary conceptions of Charlotte's visual appearance – just as the replica parsonage, when viewed on screen, was largely indistinguishable from its stone original.

Museums have also turned to Charlotte's face and features to conceptualise or brand, through her recognisable iconography, their bicentenary events and exhibitions. The Parsonage Museum has set up a network of *Brontë 200* webpages dedicated to forthcoming bicentenaries, from Charlotte in 2016 to Anne in 2020. The banner for 'Charlotte 2016' is a photocollage combining four distinct images: a colour photograph of the moors is overlaid by a black-and-white photograph of the parsonage before the Wade extension was built during the 1870s; and a page of Charlotte's handwriting is overlaid by J. H. Thompson's portrait (BPM, 2016). 'Official' bicentenary events, organised or endorsed by the Parsonage Museum, join together and cohere under this banner. Visitors to the webpage encounter a visual reminder of Charlotte's profession and the importance of place to her work and subsequent legacies. But there is, undoubtedly, a marketing subtext: her face and words blend with the Yorkshire landscape and Haworth locale, the suggestion being that 'authentic' engagements with both the woman and writer are tied

to a visit, or pilgrimage, to the sites, sights and spaces she occupied and traversed during her lifetime.

If recognisability has been key to the Parsonage Museum's visual approach to the bicentenary, the Sir John Soane's Museum in London, in direct contrast, has turned to anonymity and unknowing. Exploiting the absence of any claim to Brontë biography, the curatorial team were freed from any too exacting imperative to reconstruct the past. Charlotte did not visit the museum on any of her trips to London, and so, for their bicentenary exhibition, the Soane invited Charlotte Cory to turn her attention once more to the Brontës and 'Visitoriana'. The resulting collaboration, *Charlotte Brontë at the Soane*, was comprised of objects from the Soane collection or on loan from the Parsonage Museum set alongside Cory's original artwork.[32] The exhibition explored Charlotte's time in the capital and sought to 'bring her to the Museum at last' (Cory, 2016a). Portraiture, both real and imagined, played an important role in this (re-)locating of the subject. Cory's 'Visitorian' reimaginings of the Richmond portrait were again in evidence: her 2013 canine revision hung upon the gallery's walls, and in a nearby cabinet there were cut and collaged versions of the same icon, including one that imagined what Charlotte's likeness and iconography could have been if she had accepted John Everett Millais as her portraitist (Cory, 2016b: item 10c).[33] Displayed alongside these imagined likenesses were 'genuine' drawings by Anne Brontë, sketched upon the pages of a family book and possibly depicting her sisters. The centrepiece was a dress considered by many to have been worn by Charlotte while attending a dinner at William Thackeray's house.[34] Illustrations on display boards, reproduced in the exhibition guide and on the webpage, depicted a colourful, cartoon-like Charlotte wearing this dress and timidly exploring the Soane. Next to the dress was a portrait set upon an easel, an unknown woman taken by Cory as cipher for the lost image of Charlotte in Branwell's Gun Group painting (*The Missing Charlotte?*, 2015; Cory, 2016b: item 11). That the face of an unknown woman in a space unvisited by the purported subject could be made to signify meaningfully as a portrait of Charlotte Brontë challenges us to consider the contingencies of our received iconography, passed down through more than 150 years of adaptation and appropriation. Picturing Charlotte Brontë in the year of her bicentenary, and beyond, remains a provocative activity, one productive of new engagements with her life and work. We continue to see her anew.

Legacies and afterlives

Charlotte Brontë: Legacies and Afterlives explores, among other things, readers' desires to 'see' and 'know' the author. Analysing Brontë's evolving legacy, varied afterlife and impact on cultures at home and abroad, the twelve essays in the current volume together cover the period from Brontë's first publication in 1846 to her work's presence in the early twenty-first century. Contributors examine a range of topics: Victorian responses to Brontë's life and work in the forms of obituaries, essays and the biographies which appeared shortly after her death, along with evaluations of the importance of her poetry to her later prose writings, and her influence on later female writers. Some contributors consider the radical transformation of the parsonage at Haworth from the incumbent's home to a literary museum and major tourist attraction, while the creation of a Brontë heritage site in Brussels, the model for the city of Villette, is also explored. Other contributors consider how Brontë's life and work have been adapted across different media: theatre, film, radio, television and internet sources, emphasising how valuable her life and work have been to many cultural industries. Some contributors demonstrate how the emerging genre of neo-Victorian fiction has drawn upon her literary legacy for many of its plots, themes, characters and motifs. This book shows how these influential and commercially powerful uses of 'Charlotte Brontë' have kept the author at the forefront of Western, indeed global, literary and screen cultures. It assesses Brontë's legacy in terms of literary genre, narrative style, language, national and regional identities, sexuality and gender identity, adaptation theories, Cultural Studies, post-colonial and transnational readings, as well as analyses of her reception across the century and a half since her death.

The first section of the book, 'Ghostly Afterlives: Cults, Literary Tourism and Staging the Life', focuses on the myths associated with Charlotte Brontë's life. Many of these originated in Gaskell's biography, her careful presentation of her friend living an isolated life in rural Yorkshire and suffering bereavements, disappointments and self-denial. Gaskell's descriptions of Brontë's physical frailties and femininity prompted a myth of female genius that helped to propel literary pilgrims to visit Haworth and its parsonage after the author's death. Indeed, Gaskell was also responsible for a widespread belief that Charlotte haunted Haworth, so much so that some Victorian visitors travelling to Yorkshire were disappointed *not* to experience a ghostly encounter with the author. Deborah Wynne's chapter, 'The "Charlotte" Cult: Writing

the Literary Pilgrimage, from Gaskell to Woolf', examines the origins of the impulse to seek 'Charlotte' in Haworth. Treating such tourism as a symptom of 'author love', a concept identified by Helen Deutsch as an emotional response to a dead author who has suffered in life and deserves our pity and protection (Deutsch, 2005), Wynne argues that Gaskell's presentation of Charlotte as frail, dutiful and unhappy was the catalyst for the late-Victorian 'Charlotte' cult. Its original devotees were instrumental in forming the Brontë Society in 1893 and the first museum of Brontë relics in Haworth's Yorkshire Penny Bank in 1895. They also worked tirelessly towards the establishment of the Brontë Parsonage Museum in 1928. Wynne examines diaries, letters, obituaries, poems and published accounts written by visitors to Haworth from 1855 to the turn of the twentieth century, tracing from these the shifts in perceptions of the author after her death. In 'Haworth, November 1904', an essay written following a visit to the village, Virginia Woolf expresses impatience with emotional tourism redolent of Victorian sentimentality. Questioning the value of the literary pilgrimage, Woolf wonders what impact these tourist encounters might have upon an author's literary reputation. Nevertheless, as Wynne demonstrates, Woolf herself succumbed to 'author love', recording her feelings on seeing Charlotte Brontë's relics on display. Wynne charts some of the misconceptions engendered by the Victorian cult of 'Charlotte', while recognising the achievements of its devotees in preserving Brontë heritage and successfully promoting her legacy.

Charlotte Brontë's association with Haworth has sometimes obscured the fact that she was the most adventurous and well-travelled member of the Brontë family, as Jude Piesse's chapter, 'The Path Out of Haworth: Mobility, Migration and the Global in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and the Writings of Mary Taylor', shows. Piesse highlights Brontë's interest in travel, demonstrating the limitations of those who have seen the author as physically and imaginatively bound to her native village. Examining 'Brontë's topical fascination with labour migration for single, middle-class women' in *Shirley*, Piesse analyses this in relation to her friendship with Mary Taylor, the model for the novel's intrepid Rose Yorke (p. 59). Taylor's significance for Brontë has sometimes been overlooked. An emigrant to Wellington, New Zealand, where she established her own shop, and always an outspoken feminist, Mary Taylor had previously worked as a teacher in Germany, while in later life she became a writer. She offered Charlotte Brontë a model of a successful, well-travelled, single woman. Yet as Piesse shows, Brontë's work also

had a considerable influence on 'Taylor's own powerful fiction and travel writing, shaped by her experiences of emigrating to New Zealand and touring the Alps' (p. 60). This body of writing can be viewed 'as one of Brontë's most radical legacies; one which has been obscured by Gaskell's more famous memorialisation' (p. 60). Through detailed close readings of Taylor's published work, and the surviving letters she exchanged with her friend, Piesse shows that *Shirley* challenges the 'Brontë myth' which has obscured her fascination with travel and the global.

Charlotte Brontë's sojourn abroad is the subject of Charlotte Mathieson's essay, 'Brontë Countries: Nation, Gender and Place in the Literary Landscapes of Haworth and Brussels', which emphasises the importance of Brussels in Charlotte's life. The author's relationship to Belgium offers an alternative way of situating her within a broader paradigm of gender and nation. Like Piesse, Mathieson argues that Charlotte Brontë's connection with Haworth has created a myth which limits her to concepts of Englishness, the local and rural. For Mathieson, 'Brussels offers a space where an alternative narrative unfolds' (p. 80), and she analyses the accounts written by literary tourists who visited the Pensionnat Heger in Brussels' Quartier Isabelle before its demolition in the early twentieth century. The late nineteenth century saw increasing interest in Brontë tourism in the city, with literary pilgrims often determined to collect relics and buy souvenirs. *Villette* (1853), set in a Belgian school, has been considered by many readers as a thinly disguised autobiography, a reflection of the author's own experiences as a pupil-teacher in Brussels between 1842 and 1843. The earliest published account of literary tourism to Brussels appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1871, while the surprising publication in 1913 of Charlotte Brontë's passionate, even desperate letters to her teacher, Constantin Heger, stimulated even more interest in Brussels as a Brontë shrine, further intensifying the blurring of Charlotte's life and *Villette*. Through her readings of the accounts of literary tourists to Belgium, Mathieson reveals a key aspect of Charlotte Brontë's afterlife which removes her from the domestic stasis central to the mythology of Haworth and places her within another story of 'female independence through cosmopolitan interactions' (p. 80).

Brontë tourists in Brussels sought to locate the site of the Pensionnat Heger, its garden and the pear tree where *Villette*'s ghostly nun is thought to have appeared to the heroine, Lucy Snowe. Finding this garden was the aim of Marion Harland, the American novelist and biographer, who visited Brussels in the 1890s and published an account of her journey in a book entitled *Where Ghosts Walk: The Haunts of Familiar Characters*

in History and Literature (1898). Victorian visitors to Haworth also looked for the ghosts of the sisters, and some recorded feeling their ghostly presence in the vicinity. Amber Pouliot's chapter examines commemorative poetry and fictional biographies to trace how the idea of the ghostly frames understandings of Charlotte Brontë's afterlife. In her chapter, 'Reading the Revenant in Charlotte Brontë's Literary Afterlives: Charting the Path from the "Silent Country" to the Séance', Pouliot identifies Gaskell's biography, with its repeated references to folk tales and superstitions, and the uncanny qualities of the Brontë home, as stimulating the idea of Charlotte Brontë as haunted and haunting. The craze for seances and spiritualism even resulted in the publication in 1893 of a 'spirit photograph' purporting to be of Charlotte's ghost. Gaskell's account of the author as a fey spirit continued to inspire the writers of fictional biographies in the early twentieth century; however, as Pouliot shows, while Victorian accounts presented the Brontë sisters as 'mute and inaccessible spirits', later stories became more playful in tone, depicting them as 'listening, noisy poltergeists, striving to communicate with the living' (p. 108).

The Victorian 'Charlotte' cult, with its powerful mythologising of the author, began with Gaskell's *Life* and gained momentum in the decades after her death. By the early twentieth century traces of the myth had surfaced on the stage in the form of biodramas. Dramatisations of the Brontës' lives became particularly fashionable in the 1930s, as Amber Regis demonstrates in her chapter, 'Charlotte Brontë on Stage: 1930s Biodrama and the Archive/Museum Performed'. Plays with suggestive titles, such as *Empurpled Moors* (1932) and *Stone Walls* (first performed 1933; published 1936), reinforced ideas of the sisters' isolation and the Yorkshire landscape as integral to an understanding their lives. The opening of Haworth parsonage as the Brontë Parsonage Museum in 1928 provided access to a new archive of Brontë material and relics. Additionally, playwrights were inspired by the publication of hitherto unknown Brontë texts, such as the juvenilia and unfinished novels, in the Shakespeare Head edition of their works (1931–38), as well as new letters continually coming to light. As Regis demonstrates, playwrights sought 'to construct and authenticate a particular account of the family's interconnecting lives: actors speak lines extracted from the Brontë corpus as they perform on stages filled with reproduction copies of their former possessions, prop relics that find their counterpart in the objects on display at the Parsonage Museum' (p. 117). Brontë biodramas thus constituted 'a critically reflexive art: a notable example

of popular culture in dialogue with scholarship, heritage and tourism' (p. 117). Focusing on two plays which take Charlotte's life as their main subject, Alfred Sangster's *The Brontës* (1932), a popular melodrama, and Rachel Ferguson's more self-reflexive comedy *Charlotte Brontë* (1933), Regis analyses how each playwright balances long-established myths about Charlotte with new evidence from the developing archive of materials collected by museum curators and literary editors. Through a detailed analysis of both plays, Regis shows how each biodrama presents a different version of Charlotte's life. Sangster draws on well-known biographical information about the sisters, such as their habit of pacing around the dining table each evening to discuss their writing, but he also exploits newly available letters, such as those Charlotte wrote to Heger, to construct a heightened, melodramatic version of her emotional life. Ferguson, by contrast, pokes fun at the popular desire to find out everything there is to know about Charlotte Brontë, even down to the small objects she owned, exposed to full view in display cases at the Brontë Parsonage Museum. Ferguson sets out to debunk the emotional excess and importunate curiosity that renders Charlotte 'the infuriating subject of myth' (p. 139). However, the world was not yet ready for a deflation of the Brontë myth, for Ferguson's play failed to find its way to the professional stage.

Rachel Ferguson, like Virginia Woolf, was impatient of the tendency to mythologise famous authors, especially when the myths distorted their literary achievements. The essays in the second part of this collection, 'Textual Legacies: Influences and Adaptations', focus on how Charlotte Brontë's literary works have endured and been adapted. Anna Barton's chapter, '"Poetry, as I Comprehend the Word": Charlotte Brontë's Lyric Afterlife', shows how Brontë's poetry, which appeared in print before any of her novels and is often dismissed as of negligible importance, haunts her later fiction in the form of 'an ongoing and revisionary internal exchange', a process Barton describes as a 'kind of self-encounter', whereby some of her poems become literally incorporated into her later prose narratives (pp. 147, 149). Barton identifies Charlotte as working within the Romantic tradition, self-consciously incorporating her own poetry into her later literary productions 'in a way that might both grant it a marketable posthumousness and secure the survival of the (feminine) lyric voice for the printed page' (p. 152). Through close readings of *The Professor* (published posthumously, 1857), *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*, Barton uncovers an afterlife for Brontë's juvenilia and the poetry she wrote in early adulthood. Read in this way, her early lyrics find a new significance,

revealing a hitherto unacknowledged dimension to Charlotte Brontë's creative praxis.

Barton is one of the few critics to consider the significance of Charlotte Brontë's poetry. Other contributors to this collection are also keen to move beyond the overwhelming dominance of *Jane Eyre* in Charlotte Brontë Studies. A number of chapters explore the important cultural influence of *Villette*, a novel not widely read by general readers, unlike *Jane Eyre*. *Villette*'s depiction of the maturation of a single working woman, Lucy Snowe, striving to achieve a radical independence as a teacher, inspired a generation of feminist writers born in the late Victorian period, such as Virginia Woolf, Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby. Emma Liggins, in her chapter, 'The Legacy of Lucy Snowe: Reconfiguring Spinsterhood and the Victorian Family in Inter-War Women's Writing', highlights how many women publishing fiction and political writing between 1910 and 1940 valued Brontë's model of a working woman offered by Lucy Snowe as they reinterpreted and reworked the oblique feminist message of *Villette*. While these writers felt that Charlotte Brontë's life story offered only a partial inspiration for working women, the achievements of her heroine Lucy Snowe presented a more valuable role model for twentieth-century working women. In her chapter Liggins analyses the political and auto/biographical writing of Virginia Woolf, May Sinclair and Vera Brittain, as well as the new spinster heroines of modernist novels such as Sinclair's *The Three Sisters* (1914) and Winifred Holtby's *The Crowded Street* (1926). Inter-war women writers in rebellion against the Victorian family and domineering fathers were inspired by *Villette*'s depiction of a woman free of domestic ties and able to travel and earn her own living. Liggins argues that these writers created an alternative mythology around Charlotte Brontë, uncovering a more radical image of the author which had failed to register in Gaskell's biography. For them, Brontë's emergence from the Victorian myth of dutiful daughter revealed her to be a 'revolutionary thinker' whose work spoke to modern working women (p. 179).

Villette has been overshadowed by *Jane Eyre* in popular culture, possibly because it lacks a cinematic presence; nevertheless, it has long been an important novel for other forms of adaptation. Benjamin Poore's chapter, 'Hunger, Rebellion and Rage: Adapting *Villette*' focuses on its popularity for stage and radio adaptations. He identifies *Villette* as a problem novel in that its heroine's extreme reticence and complex interior life offer challenges to adaptors. *Villette* has also suffered from the common presumption that it is an autobiographical account of Brontë's

life as a pupil-teacher in a Brussels girls' school. The novel's depiction of an irascible older professor befriending a retiring young English teacher inevitably suggested to some readers the story of Charlotte's love for Heger. Highlighting the inadequacies of such readings, Poore shows how alternative readings of Lucy Snowe's story have led to successful, often experimental adaptations for the stage and radio. Whereas the numerous stage and screen adaptations of the better-known *Jane Eyre* inevitably reference each other, the lack of a screen tradition based on *Villette* has allowed greater freedom for playwrights in interpreting Brontë's most enigmatic and ambiguous novel.

In contrast to the relative obscurity of *Villette*, there have been no short-ages of film and television adaptations of *Jane Eyre*. Indeed, the novel has also figured extensively in neo-Victorian fiction, ranging from rework-ings, prequels and sequels to stories that echo the characters and plot. Alexandra Lewis's chapter, 'The Ethics of Appropriation; or, the "Mere Spectre" of Jane Eyre: Emma Tennant's *Thornfield Hall*, Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* and Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights*', examines the impact of *Jane Eyre* on writers of neo-Victorian fiction. She asks how *Jane Eyre* 'has been reflected upon and invoked in twentieth- and twenty-first-century novels about the Victorians, and with what range of textual and wider cultural effects?' (p. 197). Lewis's close reading of *Jane Eyre*-based novels by Tennant, Fforde and Jones reveals how Brontë's text has simultane-ously generated a sense of nostalgia and enabled reflections upon current cultural concerns. One of these concerns is the 'ethics of appropriation', and Lewis demonstrates how Tennant, Fforde and Jones each 'grapple with issues of intertextuality and originality; fidelity and creativity', con-sidering 'the way the allusive power (or broad communal meaning) of an archetypal text can be contingent upon the oversimplification of literary and cultural complexities' (p. 199).

A concern with the 'ethics of appropriation' beset Jean Rhys when she wrote her ground-breaking prequel to *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). In a letter she expressed her doubts about rewriting Bertha Rochester as 'Antoinette', her main protagonist, wondering whether it was right 'to get cheap publicity' by using Brontë's novel (Wyndham and Melly, 1984: 263). As Jessica Cox demonstrates in her essay '"The Insane Creole": The Afterlife of Bertha Mason', Bertha, the 'madwoman' confined to the third storey of Thornfield Hall, had a complex afterlife even before Rhys's novel. Bertha has been prominent in many critical accounts of *Jane Eyre*; she is the personification of female rebellion in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's influential feminist reading of Charlotte Brontë's

work in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), and she was interpreted as the disruptive force of racial difference in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1985 post-colonial reading of *Jane Eyre*, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism'. In her chapter, Cox analyses Bertha's afterlife 'as object of pity, femme fatale, proto-feminist figure, and Gothic monster' (p. 221), a character who has long haunted readers' and critics' imaginations, as well as being present in neo-Victorian writing, theatre, screen adaptations and art. Cox shows that the impulse to bring Bertha from the shadows of *Jane Eyre* has a long history, and her analysis of a range of adaptations, from early plays such as John Courtney's melodrama *Jane Eyre; or, The Secrets of Thornfield Manor* (1848) and Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's *Jane Eyre; or, The Orphan of Lowood* (1870), through films such as Christy Cabanne's 1934 *Jane Eyre* and Cary Fukanaga's version released in 2011, to the web series, *The Autobiography of Jane Eyre* (2013–14), demonstrates how representations of Bertha reflect changing responses to female sexuality and mental health. As Cox argues, increasing sympathy for Bertha in more recent reworkings and adaptations inevitably impinge on Rochester's heroic status: if Bertha is wrongly incarcerated and inhumanly treated, then Rochester must be the novel's villain rather than its hero, rendering Jane's marriage to him a problem rather than a happy point of closure for the heroine.

The afterlife of *Jane Eyre* and its characters in film and recently developed media is the subject of Monika Pietrzak-Franger's chapter, '*Jane Eyre*'s Transmedia Lives'. She examines a range of adaptations and media explorations of Brontë's work, particularly the newly emerging form of the web series. Pietrzak-Franger shows how *Jane Eyre* and its protagonist 'have loosened themselves from their literary form to become veritable transmedia phenomena' (p. 241). In her analysis of *The Autobiography of Jane Eyre*, she discusses the effects of the heroine's liberation from the novel's romance plot when she is placed in other relationships. This, she argues, has resulted in more radical versions of the story than those offered by most film-makers. Web series have generated different forms of reading and online community engagements with *The Autobiography of Jane Eyre* complicate traditional notions of authorship. Like Lewis, Pietrzak-Franger also explores the issues of the ethics of transmedia adaptation, pointing out that while young audiences are now able to 'appropriate the Victorians in ways hitherto unheard of', this may have created the side-effect of promoting the belief that Victorian texts 'have become our property – to be adapted, exchanged, and refurbished' in a way that risks obliterating the original novel (p. 254).

Ethical issues relating to Charlotte Brontë's textual afterlife are also discussed by Louisa Yates in her chapter '"Reader, I [Shagged/Beat/Whipped/F****d /Rewrote] Him": The Sexual and Financial Afterlives of *Jane Eyre*'. Analysing E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) and other erotic makeovers alongside more 'legitimate' neo-Victoriana in the form of D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte* (2000), Yates argues that all 'blend cultural capital with financial potential' to render Brontë's celebrity 'as much a commodity as her text' (p. 261). Tapping into the cultural cachet associated with canonical Victorian authors can reap enormous financial benefits, Yates contends, and simply by referencing Charlotte Brontë authors have boosted sales. 'Charlotte Brontë' is increasingly exploited by acclaimed authors, as well as unknowns writing for commercial publications such as erotic makeovers. The implications of this trend, Yates argues, have not been sufficiently debated in neo-Victorian scholarship. And, as we can see from this book's appendix, compiled by Kimberley Braxton, the long list of texts drawing upon her life and work shows that Charlotte Brontë's legacy is extensive and ongoing. Her writing has now been adopted/adapted within so many commercially lucrative ventures that her commodification is both a wonder and a worry. While *Charlotte Brontë's Legacies and Afterlives* takes stock of the basis of Charlotte Brontë's allure and welcomes the diversity of her afterlives, it still hopes to celebrate the author herself and her achievements.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 To avoid confusion between the many Brontës that feature in this book, and to relieve readers from the repetition of the family name, editors and contributors alike will often refer to individuals by their first names.
2 For an account of the commission and execution of Richmond's portrait, see Foister (1985).
3 Gaskell began this fight before she was commissioned to write the biography. In May 1855, she expressed a desire to have the portrait copied for a private memento (Gaskell, 1966: 345).

4 The first print Gaskell received from Mr Stuart, the photographer, was ruined when glass covering the image 'got smashed in the post' (Gaskell, 1966: 421).

5 Held in the collection at the Brontë Parsonage Museum (BPM P25). Esther Chadwick claimed that Branwell began this portrait and Thompson completed it (Chadwick, 1914: 485).

6 Richmond's portrait was bequeathed to the National Portrait Gallery by Arthur Bell Nicholls (NPG 1452).

7 *Emily Brontë* (NPG 1724) and *The Brontë Sisters* (NPG 1725).

8 For an account of the discovery of Branwell's portraits, see Alexander and Sellars (1995: 307–12).

9 For example, Clement Shorter's 1897 article on 'Relics of Emily Brontë' reproduced a photograph of the Pillar Portrait sent to him by an unnamed 'correspondent'. The image is mislabelled: Charlotte is listed as 'Aunt Branwell'. Shorter also records Arthur Bell Nicholls' response to the photograph: 'while the one on the extreme left has some small resemblance to Anne, not one has the least resemblance to Emily or to his wife' (Shorter, 1897: 911) – this despite his being in possession of the original painting at his home in Banagher, Co. Offaly, Ireland!

10 Cuttings from the *Daily Graphic* and *Sphere* are reproduced on the National Portrait Gallery website as part of an article exploring the acquisition history of Branwell's portraits (NPG, n.d.).

11 Branwell's painted-out figure was first spotted in 1957 by Jean and Ingeborg Nixon. For the latter's account of the discovery, see Nixon (1958).

12 In most cases, commentators assume that Branwell removed himself from the group portrait; see Nixon (1958) and Barker (2010). Christopher Heywood, however, argues that Charlotte could have been responsible, forming 'part of her effort to eliminate her disgraced brother from her family's history' (Heywood, 2009: 17).

13 Greenwood tracings (BPM P69:1–3) and the Gun Group photograph (BPM Ph118). For reproductions of these images, see Alexander and Sellars (1995: 307–8) and Barker (1990).

14 Barker also notes the photograph proved, beyond doubt, that the surviving Emily fragment was cut from the Gun Group (Barker, 1990: 10). Previously many commentators assumed it had been taken from a third group portrait, see Edgerley 1932: 28–9) and Nixon (1958: 233).

15 See also Alexander and Sellars (1995: 261–2). Held in the collection at the Brontë Parsonage Museum (BPM BS50.4).

16 See also Alexander and Sellars (1995: 430), where the drawing is identified as 'possibly a sketch of a fellow pupil in Brussels'. Held in the collection at the Pierpont Morgan Library (PML Bonnell: MA 2696).

17 The painting was originally scheduled to go under the hammer in April 2012 but was withdrawn at the last minute pending further research (BBC News, 2012).

18 E. Ingham, personal communication, 13 April 2016.

19 Haley's website links to extensive debate in the comments below a *Brontë Blog* article ('Are these the Brontës?', 2012). For one blogger's response to the Molloy photograph, see Ross (2015). Emily Ross's blogsite, *The Brontë Link* (www.emilyeross.wordpress.com), is dedicated to her research into Brontë portraiture, photography and the siblings' physical appearances.

20 Chalk portrait of Charlotte Brontë (BPM P191). Before its acquisition, this drawing had been on loan at the museum. For a reproduction of this image, see Terry (2002: 259–60).

21 *Carte-de-visite* photographs (BPM SG109 and SB3045).

22 Material in the Seton-Gordon bequest proved the glass negative had been made using the *carte-de-visite*. But as Claire Harman explains, this merely confirmed that Emery Walker's studio index followed (and perhaps misread) the photograph's inscription (Harman, 2016: 340).

23 S. Laycock, personal communication, 4 August 2016.

24 The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine reveals that the *carte-de-visite* was part of the online picture library as late as March 2016: https://web.archive.org/web/20160324113323/https://www.bronte.org.uk/museum-and-library/picture-library (accessed 3 August 2016).

25 *Unknown Woman, Formerly Known as Charlotte Brontë* (NPG 1444).

26 In an ironic twist, Chadwick explains the forger's error with reference to Clement Shorter. His *Charlotte Brontë and Her Sisters*, part of Hodder & Stoughton's Literary Lives series, had been published in 1905 – just one year before the forgery was purchased by the National Portrait Gallery. This book mislabels a photograph of Heger: 'M. Paul Héger, The Hero of "Villette" and "The Professor"' (Shorter, 1905: 198). But Chadwick was not free from error herself: she confused the publication date of *Charlotte Brontë and Her Sisters* with that of Shorter's earlier work, *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle* (1896).

27 *Capturing the Brontës*, Brontë Parsonage Museum, 4 October to 31 December 2013: www.bronte.org.uk/whats-on/52/charlotte-cory-capturing-the-brontes/53 (accessed 8 August 2016).

28 Cory's 'Visitorian' portrait can be seen, in situ, hanging upon the chimney breast in the dining room at Haworth parsonage, in her YouTube video tour of the exhibition: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kis0H-B42lE (accessed 4 August 2016).

29   'robprior' (2013) 'Go, but not till after Christmas', www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g186409-d211789-r183164483-Bronte_Parsonage_Museum-Haworth_Keighley_West_Yorkshire_England.html (accessed 4 August 2016); 'Michael K' (2013) 'A moving insight into the conditions that created passionate novels', www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g186409-d211789-r183416170-Bronte_Parsonage_Museum-Haworth_Keighley_West_Yorkshire_England.html (accessed 4 August 2016).

30 'Cassini' (2013) 'Superb museum, silly exhibition (but it's over soon)', www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g186409-d211789-r182953913-Bronte_Parsonage_Museum-Haworth_Keighley_West_Yorkshire_England.html (accessed 4 August 2016).
31 Aired on BBC Two, 22 March 2016: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03kcd3l (accessed 8 August 2016).
32 *Charlotte Brontë at the Soane*, Sir John Soane's Museum, 15 March to 7 May 2016: www.soane.org/whats-on/exhibitions/charlotte-brontë-soane (accessed 8 August 2016).
33 Sidney Lee records Charlotte's refusal of Millais in his account of 'Charlotte Brontë in London' (Lee, 1909: 116).
34 Recent research has cast doubt on this being the dress worn by Charlotte at Thackeray's dinner, see Houghton (2016).

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