

Anne Brontë, William Cowper and the Pursuit of Universal Salvation

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The range of literary works and figures that influenced the Brontës is known to be considerable. While Charlotte, Branwell and Emily found their greatest source of inspiration in the works of Byron and Sir Walter Scott, Anne turned more frequently to the work of William Cowper. Elizabeth Langland comments that Anne was ‘more influenced by the eighteenth century than by the Romantic poets and novelists who shaped her sisters.’¹ Charlotte and Branwell make passing references to Cowper’s poetry within their writing, but Anne’s relationship with the poet is much more sustained and complex. Owing to Anne’s dedication poem ‘To Cowper’ her creative relationship with the poet has long been accepted and remarked upon by critics such as Inga-Stina Ewbank, P.J.M. Scott, Marianne Thormählen and Sara J. Lodge.² Yet while they acknowledge the impact Cowper had on Anne’s poetic composition, specific exploration of the verse is usually brief. In this essay I will build on their findings to produce a thorough analysis and exploration of this creative relationship, citing evidence of where it is present in Anne’s work.

Anne’s respect for Cowper was one that registered with her siblings. When Charlotte set out to capture the memory of Anne in her novel *Shirley*, through the character of Caroline Helstone, she made Cowper’s poetry central to it. Caroline recites ‘The Castaway’ before discussing with Shirley Keeldar, often considered to be a version of Emily, her feelings regarding the poet:

‘I hope William Cowper is safe and calm in heaven now,’ said Caroline.

‘Do you pity what he suffered on earth?’ asked Miss Keeldar.

‘Pity him, Shirley? What can I do else? He was nearly broken-hearted when he wrote that poem, and it almost breaks one’s heart to read it. But he found relief in writing it – I know he did; and that gift of poetry – the most divine bestowed on man – was, I believe, granted to allay emotions when their strength threatens harm. It seems to me, Shirley, that nobody should write poetry to exhibit intellect or attainment. Who cares for that sort of

poetry? Who cares for learning – who cares for fine words in poetry? And who does not care for feeling – real feeling – however simply, even rudely expressed?’³

Charlotte read and edited her sister’s work, and she was aware of Cowper’s creative impact as demonstrated here. Anne’s practice of writing her concerns and fears into her poetry, in order to process her spiritual anxieties, would have been well known to Charlotte. In *The Task* Cowper writes, ‘There is a pleasure in poetic pains / Which only poets know’ (II, 285-6).⁴ Both Cowper and Anne were familiar with the pleasure which creativity could offer; it would act as a source of relief from their spiritual pains. Cowper may have been the first to suggest to the young Anne Brontë that poetry was such a refuge in times of distress.

In this extract from the novel Charlotte also clearly shows Anne’s feelings regarding Cowper. She highlights the intensity of emotion Anne felt and her preoccupation with his salvation. Charlotte demonstrates the family connection with Cowper: it is her novel in which this scene appears, and her fictional representation of Emily is also aware of the poet. However, she chooses to foreground Anne’s connection to Cowper. His poetry was firmly situated within the family’s communal reading, but Anne formed an intimate relationship with the poet. She interacted with his work more than with any other apart from the Bible. Anne repeatedly returned to it as a form of inspiration and also as an avenue through which to voice alternating doubts and convictions about salvation.

This essay will explore how Anne, through her poetry, interacted with Cowper as a method of processing her own spiritual beliefs. I examine four of Anne’s foremost religious poems written during the period 1841-4: ‘Despondency’ (1841), ‘To Cowper’ (1842), ‘A Word to the Calvinists’ (1843), and ‘A Prayer’ (1844). Through an analysis of these poems I demonstrate how Anne used the suffering of others, and frequently Cowper’s, to express her own struggles with her faith. In an attempt to save Cowper, through her poetry, she ultimately attempted to save herself.

During this period Anne’s poems express feelings of doubt and spiritual backsliding, and Cowper is the central source of inspiration. However, as Langland explains, Anne and Cowper’s religious beliefs

differed considerably: 'Cowper was an especial favourite, in whose work Brontë found echoed her own religious preoccupations and questions. Yet in her insistence on Universal Salvation, Brontë diverged sharply from Cowper, a strict Calvinist given to fits of melancholy over his possible damnation.'⁵ Anne's divergence from Cowper is a product of what Susan Wolfson deemed interaction rather than influence, in which the writer's work does not demonstrate a loyal interpretation but rather exhibits strong feelings about certain aspects of the prior work, and shows a tendency to dwell upon them.⁶ Anne's emotional interaction with Cowper is profound but cautious when it comes to matters of faith. Sara J. Lodge argues that 'Anne's often deliberately plain religious lyrics and the concern her novels display with depression, particularly religious melancholy, as well as the promise of universal salvation, reflect her continued interest in the questions posed by Cowper's life and art.'⁷ Through her interaction with these questions, in relation to Cowper, Anne is able to explore her own spiritual progress and suffering.

There are numerous branches of influence from various Christian groups which can be located within the Brontës' lives and works, ranging from Evangelicalism and Wesleyan Methodism to Calvinism. Marianne Thormählen is clear in her belief that 'The Brontës resembled some of the leading religious thinkers of their time, notably Thomas Erskine and F.D. Maurice, in regarding religion as the concern of the individual soul guided by God.'⁸ The Brontë children were not strictly bound to one branch of Christianity. Each had their own particular beliefs, fuelled by Patrick Brontë's liberality with regard to his children's education. Anne's personal belief in the doctrine of Universal Salvation derives from the vision of Origen who, as Diarmaid MacCulloch explains, 'asserted that humankind will be saved through its own efforts with the help of Christ, through purging which goes on past human death. He could not accept that humankind or creation was totally fallen, as that would destroy all moral responsibility'.⁹ Anne's notions of Universal Salvation were present from her youth, likely encouraged by the deaths of her mother and sisters during her infancy. Universal Salvation, though not widely accepted, reached a level of prominence in the nineteenth century owing to the work of theologian Henry Bristow Wilson and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher.

A persistent theme in Anne's poetry and fiction is the notion that Hell is not a permanent situation; all can eventually earn their way to Heaven. Origen offered the confirmation Anne desired when he suggested that 'all, including Satan himself, have the chance to work back towards God's original purpose. All will be saved, since all come from God.'¹⁰ Origen's vision differs significantly from the Calvinist belief in predestination that developed later. The Calvinist notion, as explained by MacCulloch, suggests that 'If salvation was entirely in God's hands, as Luther said, and human works were of no avail, then logically God took decisions of individual salvation without reference to an individual's life-story. God decided to save some and logically also to consign others to damnation.'¹¹ Whilst it was suggested that predestination would bring comfort, as you could not lose your salvation, it filled Cowper and subsequently Anne with immense dread. Anne vehemently opposed this notion, as shall be seen in her poetry, and she used Cowper's experience as a warning.

In December 1848 Anne replied to a letter she received from Rev. D. Thom who had published *The Assurance of Faith: or Calvinism Identified with Universalism* in 1828. Thom wrote to Anne's pseudonym, Acton Bell, after reading *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Thom's letter is not extant but, from Anne's reply, it is clear that Universalism was the central focus. In response Anne wrote 'I have seen so little controversial Theology that I was not aware the doctrine of Universal Salvation had so able and ardent an advocate as yourself; but I have cherished it from my very childhood – with a trembling hope at first, and afterwards with a firm and glad conviction of its truth. I drew it secretly from my own heart and from the word of God before I knew that any other held it.'¹² This revelation from Anne reveals not only the personal nature of her faith but also the length of time she had held these beliefs. The indication of progression is most significant: as a child it was a 'trembling hope' and by 1848 it is 'firm'. It is in terms of this progression that Anne's poetic relationship with Cowper becomes significant.

In 1841 Anne wrote 'Despondency' which heavily interacts with Cowper's poem, 'The Castaway'. Whereas Cowper's castaway, 'drank / The stifling wave, and then he sank'¹³ Anne pleads, 'How can I rouse my sinking soul / From such a lethargy?' (5-6).¹⁴ The symbolism of drowning remained present in her mind, inherited from

‘The Castaway’, but unlike Cowper’s victim she had not yet given up. Throughout her poetry Cowper acts as a warning. Feeling the despair of Cowper’s castaway Anne’s poetic voice calls for assistance where Cowper’s does not. She wrote, ‘Lord Jesus, save me lest I die, / And hear a wretch’s prayer’ (35-36).¹⁵ Whilst she is pleading in desperation there is still hope. There is still faith that Christ will offer assistance in this time of need. Cowper, in contrast, wrote:

No voice divine the storm allay’d,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatch’d from all effectual aid,
We perish’d, each, alone... (61-64)¹⁶

In contrast to Anne’s poem there is no hope of assistance from God and a striking lack of entreaty to Him. Vincent Newey comments on how ‘Cowper’s outright acceptance in “The Castaway” of the fact that he has perished inwardly and spiritually is accompanied by a concomitant acceptance of a life and world without God. There is nothing in the text, in fact, to hold it to the belief that the universe is God-directed; He is simply not present’.¹⁷ Cowper’s complete loss of faith stood as a warning to Anne of the depths to which religious despair could drive a person.

Anne’s vision of hope shows that she did not simply locate herself within Cowper’s work; she used Cowper as an example to encourage her own spiritual progression. However, Anne’s progression frequently encountered challenges. Whilst there is still hope enough to ask for Christ’s assistance, a theme of doubt runs throughout, and it is in this mood that the poem concludes: ‘O how shall I arise!’ (32).¹⁸ Anne’s adoption of an exclamation point rather than a question mark is significant. Whilst this could have been an error in transcription, as Chitham mentions in the editorial notes,¹⁹ the meaning is in keeping with the tone of the piece. The line reads as a question – a question implying that there is faith in the possibility of help, that someone is listening. But by using an exclamation point the line reads as a cry of utter despair, suggesting that Anne’s voice is located closer to Cowper’s castaway than initially perceived.

Echoing Cowper, the scale of the despair expressed is extensive. Anne demonstrates this by the repetitive use of the conjunctive ‘And’

as the starting point of ten lines of the poem, portraying the sheer extent of her grief and building a mountain of despair that cannot be overcome without the aid of Christ. This is what Thormählen describes as ‘spiritual backsliding, a particularly painful condition’.²⁰ Brontë proclaimed, ‘I have gone backward in the work, / The labour has not sped’ (1-2).²¹ The noticeable discourse of fatigue – ‘Drowsy’, ‘dull’, ‘heavy’, ‘lethargy’ – indicates that Anne was not necessarily commenting on a backsliding into sin but rather a progression in faith which she deemed insufficient. The use of the word ‘work’ indicates how Anne viewed her faith; it is something that must continually be focused on and progression must be made through Christian works. Nevertheless, while this initial poem from Anne sobs with anguish it also retains hope as it closes with the speaker caught in the act of prayer. Anne heeded Cowper’s warning in ‘Hope’: ‘Life without hope can close but in despair’ (274).²²

Anne’s frequent questioning and interaction with varying notions of religious faith are recurring features throughout her poetry. As Edward Chitham remarks, ‘She is very rarely adamant, always leaves room for a counter-argument or a counter-character. Her religion is a quest, a patient sifting and internal discussion.’²³ In ‘To Cowper’, whilst she initially appears adamant in her assertion of Cowper’s salvation, the poem still exhibits her characteristic questioning and uncertainty – even when regarding a point about which she felt passionately. For the opening of the poem Anne does not discuss Cowper on his own merits but in terms of what he meant to her, her relationship, her emotions:

Sweet are thy strains, Celestial Bard,
And oft in childhood’s years
I’ve read them o’er and o’er again
With floods of silent tears.
The language of my inmost heart
I traced in every line –
My sins, *my* sorrows, hopes and fears
Were there, and only mine.
All for myself the sigh would swell,
The tear of anguish start;
I little knew what wilder woe
Had filled the poet’s heart. (1-12)²⁴

The use of the phrase ‘inmost heart’ indicates that Anne found in Cowper’s poetry emotions that she could not herself express. The stress placed upon ‘My’ is the most prominent indicator of Anne’s attempt to demonstrate the extent of her interaction with Cowper. It is a clear representation of the powerful personal feelings of identification Anne felt with Cowper and his work.

Anne’s focus on herself and her own feelings results in chastisement of her own emotional selfishness in relation to Cowper. Whilst the poem implies that she was not aware of Cowper’s suffering during her childhood it did not alleviate the guilt she felt. When interacting with Cowper she thought only of locating herself within his work at this time. For Anne to be so enamoured of Cowper’s poetry with no knowledge of his life was quite unusual. Newey comments, ‘One notices how often the reviewers stress the presence of Cowper’s “self” within and behind the poetry ... or focus directly upon its autobiographical content’²⁵, yet Anne remained unaware.

The discovery of Cowper’s personal suffering appears to have been the stimulus for this poem, and remains her focus for the subsequent eight stanzas. Of Cowper’s suffering Anne writes:

I did not know the nights of gloom,
The days of misery,
The long long years of dark despair
That crushed and tortured thee. (13-16)²⁶

Anne’s ‘nights of gloom’ refers to the troubled sleep Cowper recalls in *Adelphi* at the time of his suicide attempts. ‘Before I rose from bed it was suggested to me that there wanted nothing but murder to fill up the measure of my iniquity, and that though I had failed in my design, yet I had all the guilt of that crime to answer for. A sense of God’s wrath and a deep despair of escaping it instantly succeeded.’²⁷ It would undoubtedly have been shocking for Anne to read of her hero’s suicide attempts, but there is no judgement in her poem, only pity.

Despite the extensive suffering in Cowper’s life, Anne only dedicated this one stanza to his misery. A pitiful wallowing was not the intention of her poem. Instead the stanza is followed by Anne informing the reader and, it appears, Cowper himself of his fate:

But they are gone, and now from earth
Thy gentle soul is passed.
And in the bosom of its God
Has found its Home at last. (17-20)²⁸

Having read Cowper's works Anne refused to accept the fate he foresaw for himself. She used the strength of her own faith, at that moment, to inform him of his salvation. Her poetry would grant him the salvation he could not write for himself. By convincing herself of Cowper's salvation she could believe in her own.

Anne tried to support and enforce her point by asserting, 'It must be so if God is love', 'Then surely thou shalt dwell on high' (21, 23).²⁹ The use of 'must' and 'surely' suggests her certainty, yet the inclusion of 'if' reveals her doubt, and suddenly the stanza becomes one through which Anne tries to convince herself as well as Cowper. In an attempt to re-imbue the poem with the initial tone of certainty Anne responds to Cowper's claim in 'The Castaway' that in his darkest moments he was alone with: 'in thine hours of deepest woe / Thy God was still with thee' (27-28).³⁰ However, the poem subsequently begins to unravel as Anne's certainty dissolves into her usual questioning; the final three stanzas of the poem each close with a question. Anne's one stanza of certainty is quickly overshadowed by six subsequent stanzas of doubt.

Anne's initial pursuit of Cowper's salvation is unsuccessful as she is able to envisage but fails to provide it. The poem concludes:

Yet should thy darkest fears be true,
If heaven be so severe
That such a soul as thine is lost,
O! how shall I appear? (41-44)³¹

Not only does she contemplate the fears of Cowper's religious melancholy; she concludes by allowing these fears to influence her and induce religious doubt. As Thormählen explains, 'Anne's poems speak of recurrent attempts to shore up faltering faith, and even when she celebrates happy moments of religious conviction, calm assurance of permanence is absent.'³² Anne was left in fear for her own salvation.

Anne's search for salvation was not over, and within six months she would compose another poem filled with a ferocity and certainty lacking in her two previous poems. 'A Word to the Calvinists' is unusually

structured and could easily be read as two separate poems. The poem still adopts Anne's commonly used 4 line stanzas with an ABAB rhyme scheme, but the metre of stanzas 1-7 differs noticeably from that of stanzas 8-12; this arises from the distinctive tone of each section. The tone adopted in the initial section differs considerably from Anne's previous work. Thormählen has suggested that: 'It is a very powerful, one might almost and paradoxically say condemnatory, attack....All members of the Brontë family are on record as disapproving of the Calvinist doctrine of election....Charlotte and Anne rejected it with an intensity that bespeaks some sort of personal involvement.'³³ One case of Calvinism we can be certain encouraged Anne's animosity was that of Cowper.

In 'To Cowper' Anne had succumbed to doubt and failed to find the salvation she sought for Cowper and herself. She returned to her cause with a confidence she had previously lacked. Impassioned, she appears to interrogate Calvinists by demanding:

And when you looking on your fellow men
Behold them doomed to endless misery,
How can you talk of joy and rapture?
May God withhold such cruel joy from me! (21-24)³⁴

Cowper could clearly be seen as a victim of this endless misery. In a profound final declaration Anne condemns herself for the sake of others. The closing stanza shows her refusing salvation if all cannot be saved. Anne repeats 'And' throughout the poem to demonstrate the sheer urgency of her argument, as she did in her previous poem 'Despondency'. Previously she used the repetition to emphasise her grief, but in this case it drives home the cruelty and wrongdoing of the Calvinists, punctuating the long list of accusations she has for them. There is also Anne's characteristic questioning, but where previously she was asking Christ for guidance, in this case the questions proceed from disbelief and disgust. Previously it was her faith on trial; in this poem she is the one in control as she puts their faith under scrutiny.

The latter half of the poem differs not only in metre and tone, but also greatly in approach. Whereas the first half was dominated by questions, in the second Anne states in the text itself that she does not want to ask questions: 'I ask not how remote the day / Nor what the sinner's woe /

Before their dross is purged away' (41-43).³⁵ In this poem Anne's faith is stable and unquestioning, rather than doubtful. She also clearly specifies that even those who have turned their back on Christ will be saved, 'That even the wicked shall at last / Be fitted for the skies' (37-38), 'They'll cling to what they once disdained / And live by him that died' (47-48)³⁶ – a staple of her faith in Universal Salvation. At this moment the doubt previously described in 'Despondency' and 'To Cowper' is silenced. No matter what Cowper did and suffered, and no matter her own moments of spiritual backsliding, she is adamant that eventually they will be saved.

Thormählen claims that 'It is impossible to overstate the boldness of Anne's position as regards salvation... It was one thing to argue, as her father and Adam Clarke did, that all *may* be saved. It is quite another to assert that all *will ultimately* be saved, through God's mercy and Christ's Atonement.'³⁷ Anne retained her universalist position, that all would be saved, throughout her subsequent writing career. At this point, although her notions regarding her spiritual progress appeared stable, belief in her faith and salvation continued to be shaken. In 'A Prayer', composed a year after 'A Word to the Calvinists', she explores the ongoing trials she continued to experience with her faith.

Unlike the previous three poems, 'A Prayer' is composed as a hymn, perhaps inspired by the hymns of Cowper. Following her 'Celestial Bard', Anne did not shy away from the struggles of faith in her hymns. In *Adelphi*, Cowper made the struggles he faced when it came to prayer clear. He confessed that he 'then for the first time attempted prayer in secret, but being little accustomed to that exercise of the heart and having very childish notions of religion, I found it a difficult and painful task and was even then frightened at my own insensibility.'³⁸ This struggle with prayer foreshadows Cowper's madness and suicide attempts; it acts as a forewarning of the danger that can arise if prayer is abandoned. In 'A Word to the Calvinists' Anne may have fought for and found the salvation she desired for Cowper, but her own salvation was something she could not be sure of. The battle for her faith continued in her verse.

In 'A Prayer' she reverted to her feelings of spiritual backsliding, explored three years earlier in 'Despondency'. Through the personal tone of the poem Anne also brought herself rather than others, such as

Cowper, to the fore. Whether using her own poetic voice, or that of a Gondal character,³⁹ there is a consistent focus on the individual rather than an overarching, representative message in the majority of Anne's poetry. This highlights the significance of 'To Cowper' and 'A Word to the Calvinists' in which Anne chose, instead, to speak for others and it is what makes these poems some of her most passionate. They foreshadow the creative fire and the fearless step into controversy she would later take in her second novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; Anne's voice is strongest when protesting for others. By adopting the hymn form Anne used her own suffering to assist fellow sufferers, the way Cowper did for her.

The problem of spiritual backsliding was one experienced by many. As Thormählen observes, 'Holding on to one's childhood faith is a feat which very few religious thinkers at any point in time have accomplished'.⁴⁰ Cowper's poetry, as Anne herself experienced, proved a balm to the spiritual distress of many and this is what Anne attempted to replicate. In accordance with the musical nature of the hymn she adopts lyrical techniques such as alliteration – 'feeble faith'(4), 'future fills'(7)⁴¹ – and a refrain, repeating the final line of each stanza. These techniques dramatise Anne's portrayal of suffering and lend a desperation to the poetic voice; her faith is feeble and the future she foresees fills her with dismay.

The emotional desolation of this poem is the most extreme of the four explored in this essay; the second stanza even suggests thoughts of suicide:

Not only for the past I grieve,
The future fills me with dismay;
Unless Thou hasten to relieve,
I know my heart will fall away. (6-9)⁴²

Previously Anne expressed religious doubt, but now her grief has progressed. In 'A Prayer' she no longer feels capable of saving herself. It is unclear whether she is referring to the loss of her faith, the loss of her sanity, or the loss of her life, but of loss she is certain. In her desperation Anne asks God to take strong action: she writes, 'O, take this heart I cannot give. / Do Thou my Strength my Saviour be; / And make me to Thy glory live!' (15-17).⁴³ The use of 'take' and 'make' demonstrate the

extent of her spiritual turmoil. The poetic voice is helpless, unwilling, and in what remains of her faith she asks for divine intervention.

An intriguing element within this tone of helplessness is the word ‘cannot’. While it could suggest spiritual and physical exhaustion, meaning Anne is unable to fulfil her duty to God, it could also suggest an unexplained resistance – the aspect of character from which she wanted to be rescued. In her 1845 diary paper, Anne revealed the personal turmoil she underwent during that period. Of her time at Thorp Green she wrote, ‘I have had some very unpleasant and undreamt of experience of human nature.’⁴⁴ Whilst the experience can only be conjectured, witnessing her brother become involved in an extra-marital affair with their employer is undoubtedly an aspect. Watching her brother descend into sin required Anne’s faith in Universal Salvation to be firm, to not believe her brother condemned, and yet her faith appeared shaken beyond repair. Anne wrote the diary paper nine months after she composed ‘A Prayer’ and yet her feelings had not recovered. She wrote of her own personal despair, ‘I for my part cannot well be flatter or older in mind than I am now.’⁴⁵

The four poems demonstrate that Anne did have moments of certainty, but that ultimately her spiritual progress was still not complete. Through her writing, Anne may have been able to convince herself of Cowper’s salvation but not her own. P.J.M. Scott suggested that to find the spiritual answers she desired and come to terms with these in order to gain peace for herself and others was ‘a major – perhaps the major – task in Anne Brontë’s life...the difficulty of the gulf she had laboriously to traverse in pain of mind, body and spirit before she arrived at peace.’⁴⁶ In regard to Cowper, Newey has suggested that ‘only in death did he find lasting release from the insistent claims of cheerless and self-conscious vision.’⁴⁷ For the majority of her adult life Anne replicated similar spiritual and psychological traumas to those that Cowper experienced. She continued to draw inspiration from Cowper;⁴⁸ he may only have found peace in death but Anne persevered in her spiritual progression.

It was not in her poetry but in her final novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, that Anne achieved the spiritual stability she had sought throughout her writing. After her husband’s death Helen Huntingdon, the novel’s heroine, laments:

How could I endure to think that that poor trembling soul was hurried away to everlasting torment? it would drive me mad! But thank God I have hope – not only from a vague dependence on the possibility that penitence and pardon might have reached him at the last, but from the blessed confidence that, through whatever purging fires the erring spirit may be doomed to pass – whatever fate awaits it, still, it is not lost, and God, who hateth nothing that he hath made, *will* bless it in the end!⁴⁹

This echoes the pity and hope that were characteristic of Anne's poetry. Gone is the questioning and doubt; she could finally express her spiritual beliefs with certainty. She underlined the strength of belief with the italicisation of '*will*' and the concluding exclamation mark. She no longer relies on 'vague dependence' but has 'blessed confidence' in her spiritual convictions.

This essay has traced Anne Brontë's spiritual progression, inspired by her interaction with William Cowper's works, and expressed in her poetry. Anne's adoption of Cowper as her focus allowed her to explore her own spiritual concerns. This source of personal inspiration allowed her to develop individually as a writer and to find that her key strength lay in writing on behalf of others. In the preface to the second edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* she declared: 'Such humble talents as God has given me I will endeavour to put to their greatest use...when I feel it my duty to speak an unpalatable truth, with the help of God, I *will* speak it.'⁵⁰ Through her interaction with Cowper's works, which encouraged her own brutally honest compositions, Anne achieved the confidence and determination to tackle the harsh realities of her final novel.

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Notes

- ¹ Elizabeth Langland, *Women Writers: Anne Brontë – The Other One* (London: Macmillan Education, 1989), p. 30.
- ² See the following works: Inga-Stina Ewbank, *Their Proper Sphere* (London: Edward Arnold., 1966), P.J.M. Scott, *Anne Brontë: A New Critical Assessment* (London & New Jersey: Vision Press and Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), Marianne Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Sara J. Lodge, 'Literary influences on the Brontës' in

- The Brontës in Context*, ed. Marianne Thormählen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 143-50.
- ³ Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* [1849] (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 213-14.
 - ⁴ William Cowper, *The Task*, in *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H.S. Milford, 4th edn. (Oxford University Press: London, 1950), pp. 127-241, (p.152).
 - ⁵ Langland, p. 32.
 - ⁶ Susan J. Wolfson, *Romantic Interactions: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 9-10.
 - ⁷ Sara J. Lodge, 'Literary influences on the Brontës' in *The Brontës in Context*, ed. Marianne Thormählen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 143-50, (p. 145).
 - ⁸ Marianne Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 47.
 - ⁹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity – The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), p. 153.
 - ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
 - ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 634.
 - ¹² Anne Brontë to Revd D. Thom, 30 December 1848 in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë with a selection of letters by family and friends*, vol. 2, ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 160-1, (p.160).
 - ¹³ William Cowper, 'The Castaway', *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H.S. Milford, 4th edn (Oxford University Press: London, 1950), pp. 431-2 (p.432).
 - ¹⁴ Anne Brontë, 'Despondency' in *The Poems of Anne Brontë: A New Text and Commentary*, ed. Edward Chitham (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 80-81 (p. 80).
 - ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.
 - ¹⁶ Cowper, 'The Castaway', p. 432.
 - ¹⁷ Vincent Newey, *Cowper's Poetry – A Critical Study and Reassessment* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982), p. 274.
 - ¹⁸ Anne Brontë, 'Despondency', p. 81.
 - ¹⁹ *The Poems of Anne Brontë: A New Text and Commentary*, ed. Edward Chitham (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 81.
 - ²⁰ Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion*, p. 343.
 - ²¹ Anne Brontë, 'Despondency', p. 80.
 - ²² William Cowper, 'Hope', *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H.S. Milford, 4th edn. (Oxford University Press: London, 1950), pp. 59-76 (p.65).
 - ²³ Edward Chitham, 'Religion, Nature and Art in the work of Anne Bronte', *Brontë Society Transactions*, 24, 2 (1999), 129-45 (p. 133).

- ²⁴ Anne Brontë, 'To Cowper', p. 84.
- ²⁵ Newey, p. 4.
- ²⁶ Anne Brontë, 'To Cowper', p. 84.
- ²⁷ William Cowper, *Adelphi*, in *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, ed. James King and Charles Ryskamp, 5 vols (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1979-86) VI (1979), p. 25.
- ²⁸ Anne Brontë, 'To Cowper', p. 84.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion*, p. 94.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 86.
- ³⁴ Anne Brontë, 'A Word to the Calvinists' in *The Poems of Anne Brontë: A New Text and Commentary*, ed. Edward Chitham (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 89-90, (p. 89).
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 90.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion*, p. 343.
- ³⁸ Cowper, *Adelphi*, VI (1979), p. 7.
- ³⁹ Gondal was the setting of Emily and Anne's juvenilia, and they continued to write for it for the rest of their lives. No prose remains, but large quantities of their poetry derive from Gondal.
- ⁴⁰ Thormählen, p. 72.
- ⁴¹ Anne Brontë, 'A Prayer' in *The Poems of Anne Brontë: A New Text and Commentary*, ed. Edward Chitham (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 105.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Anne Brontë, '31st July 1845, Diary Paper' in Juliet Barker, *The Brontës – A Life in Letters* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 132-3, (p. 132).
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ P.J.M. Scott, *Anne Brontë: A New Critical Assessment* (London & New Jersey: Vision Press and Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), pp. 59-60.
- ⁴⁷ Newey, p. 32.
- ⁴⁸ Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* [1848] (London: Penguin, 1996) p. 447.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Anne Brontë, 'Preface to the Second Edition', in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 3-5 (p. 5).