WORLD'S CLASSICS

ANNE BRONTË

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS EDITION

Allott	*The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Miriam Allott, 1974
AOC	'Author's Own Copy', vol. ii of first edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*
BPM	Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth
BS	Brontë Society
BST	*Brontë Society Transactions*
Life	*The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, by E. C. Gaskell, 3rd edition, 'revised and corrected', 2 vols., 1857
LL	*The Brontës; Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence: In Four Volumes*, ed. T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, 1932 (part of the Shakespeare Head Brontë edition, 19 vols., 1931–8)
ODEP	*Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 3rd edition, 1971
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*

Page references to other Brontë novels are those of the World's Classics editions

INTRODUCTION

IN *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* Anne Brontë wished to 'tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral to those who are able to receive it'.[1] With courage and tenacity she set out to explode the romantic myths of the glamorous sinner reformed or transformed by love, and of the long-suffering heroine destined to perfect fulfilment or sublime apotheosis. Anne's unrelenting, even fierce, clarity of moral vision makes *The Tenant* a sharp commentary on her sisters' *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, yet to the lucidity of style evident in her own *Agnes Grey* are added an energy and imaginative heightening comparable to her sisters' work. But the realism and force which impressed readers of *The Tenant* also caused shock and indignation even among those reviewers who responded to the 'considerable abilities' of its author. Recognizing the common quality of 'rough vigour' in the 'whole batch of Bells', the *Spectator* found in 'Acton Bell's' *Tenant* 'a morbid love for the coarse, not to say the brutal'.[2] The *Rambler* praised the 'very considerable force and skill' of the narrative, but deplored scenes 'of the most disgusting and revolting species'.[3] Charles Kingsley, writing in *Fraser's Magazine*, approved of Anne's courage in creating 'a powerful and an interesting book' and believed that we should thank any author who exposed the 'foul and accursed undercurrents' beneath 'smug, respectable, whitewashed English society'; but he too criticized its 'unnecessary coarseness' and its occasional 'splenetic and bitter tone'.[4] For the *Sharpe's London Magazine* reviewer the 'powerful interest' and talent of the novel were to be positively deplored since they might actually induce 'lady-readers' to peruse it: 'so revolting are many of the scenes, so coarse and disgusting the language put into the mouths of some of the characters, that the reviewer to whom we entrusted it returned it to us, saying it was unfit to be noticed

[1] Anne Brontë's Preface to the second edition. See p. 3.
[2] *Spectator*, 8 July 1848, Allott, pp. 249–50.
[3] *Rambler*, Sept. 1848, Allott, pp. 266–8.
[4] *Fraser's Magazine*, Apr. 1849, Allott, pp. 269–73.

in the pages of *Sharpe*'.[5] Puzzled by the combination of this grossness with the 'excellent moral' of the tale, the reviewer could not decide whether Acton Bell was a man or a woman: 'A possible solution of the enigma is, that it may be the production of an authoress assisted by her husband, or some other *male* friend.'[6]

It is, on the face of it, astonishing that *The Tenant* should have been written by the youngest of the Brontë sisters, the 'dear, gentle Anne' described by Ellen Nussey, the 'poor child' who at the age of 19 was so hesitant in speech that Charlotte Brontë feared Anne's employer Mrs Ingham would think she had a 'natural impediment'. A decade later, with her poems and two novels to her credit, Anne seemed to the London publisher George Smith 'gentle, quiet, rather subdued' with a manner 'curiously expressive of a wish for protection and encouragement, a kind of constant appeal, which invited sympathy'.[7] Anne's preface to the second edition of *The Tenant* makes clear her motives for writing about scenes and people that seem so uncongenial to her retiring personality: she is spurred on by personal observation of characters like the 'unhappy scapegrace' Arthur Huntingdon and his profligate companions. They are an extreme case, but she knows 'such characters do exist, and if I have warned one rash youth from following in their steps, or prevented one thoughtless girl from falling into the very natural error of my heroine, the book has not been written in vain'.[8]

Aware of her integrity of purpose, Anne was deeply distressed by the hostile reviews. Charlotte Brontë wrote to her publisher's reader, W. S. Williams:

I wish my Sister felt the unfavourable [notices] less keenly. She does not *say* much, for she is of a remarkably taciturn, still, thoughtful nature, reserved even with her nearest of kin, but I cannot avoid seeing that her spirits are depressed sometimes. The fact is neither she nor any of us expected that view to be taken of the book which has been taken by some critics: that it had faults of execution, faults of art was obvious; but faults of intention or feeling could be suspected by

[5] *Sharpe's London Magazine*, Aug. 1848, Allott, pp. 263–5.
[6] Ibid.
[7] *Cornhill Magazine*, Dec. 1900.
[8] Preface to the second edition. See p. 4.

none who knew the writer. For my own part I consider the subject unfortunately chosen—it was one the author was not qualified to handle at once vigourously and truthfully—the simple and natural—quiet description and simple pathos are, I think, Acton Bell's forte. I liked 'Agnes Grey' better than the present work.[9]

Charlotte evidently felt excluded from the confidence of a sister whom she loved and wished to protect and influence; her judgement of *The Tenant* was affected by the double hurt of Anne's reticence and distress. Perhaps she felt too that strong passions and bold dialogue were the preserve of Currer and Ellis, not Acton Bell.

It was partly because Anne was outwardly still, but inwardly intense, that she was moved to express for a wider public what she could not say openly to her own family. Her recent experiences contrasted violently with her earlier life. Her childhood, as the special playmate of her sister Emily, had been comparatively normal and happy, and she shared with Emily a natural enjoyment of and talent for music, and a delight in writing stories about the exotic heroines and rascals of their imaginary land of Gondal. She was not sent to Cowan Bridge school—the fearsome Lowood of *Jane Eyre*—but for several years was taught at home. Her father writes with special affection of her in July 1835, when she was 15: 'My dear little Anne I intend to keep at home for another year under her aunt's tuition and my own.'[10] However, in October 1835 she became a pupil at Roe Head school, where Charlotte was teaching, taking the place of her homesick sister Emily, and benefiting from the thoroughly sound education offered by the Miss Woolers. Towards the end of 1837 a 'wretched' illness, caused or complicated by her recurrent asthma, coincided with a period of religious depression. Seeking spiritual reassurance, she was visited by the kindly and intelligent Moravian minister, the Revd James La Trobe, who helped to open her heart to 'the sweet views of salvation, pardon and peace'[11]—that belief in universal salvation to which Helen Huntingdon clings in *The Tenant*. After a little more

[9] Letter of 31 July 1848, MS Princeton University Library; *LL*, ii. 241.
[10] Letter to Mrs J. C. Franks, 6 July 1835, *LL*, i. 130
[11] W. Scruton in *BST* (1898), 27.

than a year at home, from December 1837 to April 1839, Anne felt confident enough to go as governess to the two eldest children of Joshua and Mary Ingham at Blake Hall, Mirfield. Unruly, spoilt, and tomboyish, they tormented Anne, who received little support from their parents. Charlotte wrote compassionately on 24 January 1840, after Anne had returned to Haworth for Christmas, of the 'unruly, violent family of Modern children . . . at Blake Hall—Anne is not to return—Mrs. Ingham is a placid mild woman—but as for the children it was one struggle of life-wearing exertion to keep them in anything like decent order'.[12] Such exertions are graphically described in *Agnes Grey*, where the governess-heroine is appalled by the sadistic ingenuity in mischief-making shown by both her pupils and their adult relatives. The reviewers would be shocked by Acton Bell's unvarnished account of brutalities such as the 7-year-old Tom Bloomfield's penchant for trapping birds: 'Sometimes I give them to the cat; sometimes I cut them in pieces with my penknife; but the next, I mean to roast alive.'[13] Worse still, Tom is actively encouraged by his parents and uncle in such exploits. Anne Brontë, affectionate, humane, and like all her family very fond of animals and birds, abhorred cruelty; yet she had the courage not to gloss over it in her novel, but to use it as an example of the terrifying consequences of parents' dereliction of their moral responsibility for the upbringing of their children—one of the main themes of *Agnes Grey*, as it was to be of *The Tenant*.

In May 1840, after about four months at home, Anne—believing herself, like Agnes Grey, 'seasoned by adversity, and tutored by experience'—became a governess in the family of the Revd Edmund Robinson and his wife Lydia at Thorp Green near York. All her pupils were older than the Ingham children, and Anne was eventually to win the affectionate regard of at least the two surviving younger daughters, Elizabeth and Mary. (The baby of the family, the 2½-year-old Georgiana Jane, died in March 1841.) Nevertheless Anne's experiences at

[12] Letter to Ellen Nussey, MS Pierpont Morgan Library; *LL*, i. 196.
[13] *Agnes Grey*, p. 18.

Thorp Green for the five years of her governess-ship, and their aftermath in the next two years back at home, provided the compelling motives for writing *The Tenant*. On 30 July 1841 she wrote, 'I dislike the situation and wish to change it for another',[14] while Emily, in her 'diary paper' at Haworth, sent from far 'an exhortation of Courage courage! to exiled and harassed Anne'.[15] By January 1842 Anne had 'rendered herself so valuable in her difficult situation that they have entreated her to return to them'.[16] Anne returned, and a year later must have at least acquiesced in the appointment of her brother Branwell as tutor to the only son, the 11-year-old Edmund Robinson, in January 1843. Charlotte Brontë reported to a friend on 23 January 1844 that both Anne and Branwell were 'wondrously valued in their situations'.[17] In fact by that date Mrs Robinson's behaviour to Branwell had convinced him that she was strongly attracted to him. He responded with increasing warmth, and alleged that by mid-May 1845 she had declared 'more than ordinary feeling' for him, and that there had been 'reciprocations which [he] had little looked for'.[18] He believed his future lay with her. On 1 June 1846, almost a year after he had been dismissed by Mr Robinson for proceedings unspecified but 'bad beyond expression', Branwell wrote a poem called 'Lydia Gisborne'—Mrs Robinson's maiden name:

> On Ouse's grassy banks, last Whitsuntide,
> I sat, with fears and pleasures in my soul
> Commingled, as 'it roamed, without controul',
> O'er present hours and through a future wide
> Where love, methought, should keep my heart beside
> Her, whose own prison home I looked upon.[19]

When Anne left Thorp Green for home on or about 12 June 1845 she had already decided not to return. She must have given in her month's notice at Whitsuntide, 12 May, the date

[14] Anne Brontë, Diary Paper; *LL*, i. 239.
[15] Emily Brontë, Diary Paper; *LL*, i. 238. Text from facsimile MS in BPM.
[16] Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey; *LL*, i. 249.
[17] Letter to Ellen Nussey; *LL*, ii. 3.
[18] Branwell Brontë to Francis H. Grundy, Oct. 1845; *LL*, ii. 64.
[19] *The Poems of Patrick Branwell Brontë*, ed. Victor A. Neufeldt (1990), 282.

which held some special significance for Branwell. Anne was clearly aware that all was not well. At some stage she pencilled into her Prayer Book the words, 'Sick of mankind and their disgusting ways',[20] and on 31 July 1845 wrote in her diary paper that she had only 'just escaped' from Thorp Green where she had had 'some very unpleasant and undreamt-of experience of human nature'.[21] She did not attempt to contradict Branwell's account of the affair, either then or later when his collapse into drink, drugs, and despair made family life at Haworth almost intolerable. Branwell's downward path, ending in his death on 24 September 1848 at the age of 31, was accelerated by what he called his 'finishing stroke'—his realization that Mrs Robinson could not or would not marry him after the death of her husband in May 1846.

In *Agnes Grey*, completed before that date, Anne had used some of her experiences at Thorp Green in portraying the worldly mistress of Horton Lodge and her daughters and their petty world of mercenary matchmaking, shallow piety, and thoughtless blood sports, but she had not touched on its deeper corruption. It was undoubtedly the spectacle of Branwell's pitiable, terrible, and apparently irreversible degradation after May 1846 which moved her to write *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. She believed it her duty: 'She hated her work, but would pursue it. When reasoned with on the subject, she regarded such reasonings as a temptation to self-indulgence. She must be honest; she must not varnish, soften, or conceal.'[22] Charlotte Brontë referred briefly and bitterly to Branwell's downfall in *The Professor*, written at the same time as *Agnes Grey*: 'I had once had the opportunity of contemplating near at hand an example of the results produced by a course of interesting and romantic domestic treachery . . . I saw a mind degraded by the practice of mean subterfuge, by the habit of perfidious deception, and a body depraved by the infectious influence of the

[20] Winifred Gérin, *Anne Brontë: A Biography* (1976 ed.), 200.

[21] Anne Brontë, Diary Paper; *LL*, ii. 52.

[22] Charlotte Brontë, 'Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell.' See Clarendon edition of *Wuthering Heights* (1976), 439.

vice-polluted soul.'[23] Charlotte was perhaps too personally hurt by the fate of her brother, the much-loved companion of her childhood and adolescence, to emulate Anne's crusading fervour in using such real-life material at full length.

The Tenant transcends its didactic origins—or rather it conveys its moral message forcefully because of the bold naturalism of its central scenes, the psychological insight shown in Anne's depiction of the principal characters, her imaginative power, and the assured versatility of her style. By the time she wrote *The Tenant* Anne was an experienced writer who had also read perhaps not widely but with feeling and intelligence. As the notes to this edition show, Shakespeare's plays had deeply impressed her, and she quotes tellingly from both comedies and tragedies, but most often from *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, both of them sombre tragedies whose violence is linked with gross betrayal of trust. Like Charlotte, Anne was also familiar with the novels of Richardson, and her heroine's pious hope that she may recall Huntingdon 'to the path of virtue' once she is married to him echoes Clarissa Harlowe's 'secret pleasure' in the possibility of reclaiming Lovelace 'to the paths of virtue and honour'. The finely observed and skilfully used descriptions of natural landscapes in *The Tenant* remind one of Anne's own poems and drawings, and of the poets whose work she loved—Gray, Young, Cowper, Scott, and Wordsworth—all of them quoted with delicate aptness in the novel.

Anne's imaginative engagement with her central theme of the need for moral nurture and the dire consequences of its neglect is evident in the potent image of the neglected garden at Wildfell Hall. The isolated hall is approached through a landscape of 'savage wildness' where 'ragweeds and rushes usurped supremacy over the scanty herbage'; its garden, once stocked with hardy plants, is 'abandoned to the weeds and the grass', and its trees and shrubs, long ago shaped by the 'gardener's torturing shears', have either withered away or 'grown beyond all reasonable bounds'. The former topiary is either mutilated or grotesquely misshapen: 'the old boxwood swan . . . had lost its neck and half its body; the castellated towers of laurel . . .

[23] *The Professor*, p. 174.

were sprouted into such fantastic shapes as resembled nothing either in Heaven or earth' (p. 20). To Gilbert Markham they have a 'goblinish appearance'; to the reader, still in ignorance of the true situation within the hall, the impact is one of distortion, mutilation, disorder—to be disturbingly recalled as the novel unfolds. For we are made aware of just these qualities in the human world of the novel, where all, including the heroine, are to some extent morally scarred, and where the outcome of their struggle towards healthy growth, wholeness, and order is not predictable. The monstrous garden is the setting for Helen's entry on the scene—and this too is startling and abnormal: Helen 'darts' upon Gilbert, who has rescued her little boy from falling, and snatches the child 'as if some dire contamination' were in his touch. Her concern for the moral principles of her child seems obsessive: 'If I thought he would grow up to be what you call a man of the world . . . I would rather that he died to-morrow!—rather a thousand times!' (p. 31). Anne exploits the mystery of this excessive, apparently unbalanced behaviour in the chapters leading up to the seeming revelation in Chapter 12. Until this point Gilbert Markham's growing attraction to Helen has been kept in tension by her reticence and by the mounting chorus of village gossip about her character; now his evening visit to her seems the prelude to declarations of mutual love—but we are reminded of the misshapen garden: the 'blood-red moon' is just rising 'over one of the grim, fantastic evergreens'. What he sees by its fully risen light, an apparent confirmation of Helen's treachery, throws him into a state of violent disorder, imaged as 'not a mere barren wilderness, but full of thorns and briars'. The result is the moral anarchy of his assault on Helen's supposed lover. The abnormality and violence are all the more disturbing because they erupt in what has been convincingly painted as a normal small farming community. Anne has ensured that we both need and wish to know the truth about Helen, and there follows her long journal account of her history.

This was the part of the novel—the central narrative—that both impressed and upset the reviewers, for it is here that Helen shatters the Victorian icon of the submissive wife by shutting the bedroom door against her profligate husband, and

finally escaping from him to earn an independent living for herself and her son. In real life Anne's father, the Reverend Patrick Brontë, had advised the desperate and cruelly treated wife of a dissolute curate, John Collins, to do exactly what Helen does in the novel; but in fiction the rebellious wife was a bad model for young lady readers. Hence the reviewers disapproved not only of the 'disgusting and revolting' scenes of debauchery, presented with 'offensive minuteness', which drove Helen to her defiance, but also of the heroine's 'false' or 'bad' religious sentiments—presumably those which motivate her escape.

In fact Anne is continuing to explore the moral 'mutilation and disorder' resulting from faulty nurture, and their repercussions in adult relationships—especially in marriage, where the close bond means that faulty characters can inflict the maximum damage on each other. Anne's greatest concern is for the 'contamination' of this disorder on the children of the marriage. Helen's wish to rescue her child from this danger, and not her own desire to detach herself from it, is her overriding motive. The theme of nurture is indeed pervasive in this section of the novel, as elsewhere. The heroine's rash choice of a marriage partner is in part the result of her own faulty upbringing. Psychologically damaged by the lack of love from a father who hands her over to relatives, shows no interest in her as she grows up, and eventually drinks himself to death, she has been brought up by a well-meaning but conventional aunt who urges her to marry the smug, narrow-minded but respectable Mr Boarham—a minor comic figure who recalls Jane Austen's Mr Collins. Infatuated by the handsome rake Huntingdon she marries him, foolishly confident in her own influence for good. Huntingdon also has been spoilt by his upbringing—resentful of the restrictions imposed by a selfish father, he is encouraged to deceive him by an indulgent mother. The deterioration of the marriage is compellingly portrayed through the eyes of the gradually disillusioned Helen, and the climactic revelation of a double adultery is managed with considerable skill, if rather stagily. It is, appropriately, a night-scene amid trees, with a gust of wind scattering the dead leaves, 'like blighted hopes' (p. 292).

Both before and after this crisis, Anne shows how the child of the marriage is endangered. While the episodes of drunken violence are genuinely shocking, in the *Wuthering Heights* mode, Huntingdon's efforts to corrupt Arthur by 'making a man of him', and his manipulation of his son in the marital battle, are more insidiously repulsive, and therefore effective in arousing the reader's indignation. They are realistic too, for Huntingdon's relationship with his son is acutely observed. Self-centred and immature, Huntingdon resents Helen's new love for the child. There is an odd, sour comedy in the father's jealous railings against his offspring: 'As long as you have that ugly little creature to doat upon, you care not a farthing what becomes of me.' Helen fancies that he will love the baby if he feels it in his arms: 'I deposited the precious burden in his hands, and retreated to the other side of the room, laughing at the ludicrous, half embarrassed air with which he sat, holding it at arm's length' (p. 230).

As Arthur grows, Huntingdon, bored with life in the country and annoyed by Helen's attempts to moderate his drinking, sees his son as a source of amusement and a possible ally against her. Slyly aware of what will hurt her most, he uses all his superficial charm to win Arthur to his side. Because Anne has previously given such attractive pictures of the child, this betrayal and misuse of innocence seems monstrous. We recall in contrast the servant Rachel 'beside the water, amusing the laughing baby in her arms, with a twig of willow laden with golden catkins' (p. 235) or Helen and her friend Milicent romping with their children 'almost as merry and wild as themselves' pausing 'to recover breath and rectify our hair' while the boy and girl 'toddled together along the broad, sunny walk' (p. 270). The natural affection of children has been stressed—Arthur's for his mother, and the little Helen's for her rough father Hattersley, whom she greets with a 'shrill scream of delight', running 'crowing towards him—balancing her course with out-stretched arms', then embracing his knee, throwing back her head and laughing in his face (p. 274). These lovingly detailed vignettes of small children throw into strong relief the irresponsible behaviour of Huntingdon—though Anne does not sentimentalize: when Huntingdon spoils him, the child natur-

ally prefers his cheerfully indulgent father to the stricter discipline of his mother, and is frightened by the demonstrative love that accompanies her discipline. 'He turned struggling from me and cried out aloud for his papa.' Thus, she thinks, Huntingdon 'destroys my influence over his tender mind, and robs me of his very love' (p. 312). Huntingdon for his part is 'not going to have the little fellow moped to death between an old nurse and a cursed fool of a mother. So the little fellow came down every evening, in spite of his cross mamma, and learnt to tipple wine like papa, to swear like Mr. Hattersley, and to have his own way like a man, and sent mamma to the devil when she tried to prevent him' (p. 335)—much to the delight of Huntingdon's drinking companions. Heathcliff's corruption of the child Hareton in *Wuthering Heights* is for the most part a *fait accompli*; but here Anne shows the actual process of perversion, subtly weaving it into the drama of Hargrave's attempt to seduce Helen—for Hargrave, to win Helen's gratitude, lifts the child from his father's knee—'where he was sitting half tipsy, cocking his head and laughing at' his mother and execrating her 'with words he little knew the meaning of'—and hands the boy over to Helen (p. 336). Later Huntingdon uses his son as an excuse to introduce his mistress into the house as a 'governess'—a last 'turn of the screw' for Helen, who realizes that this is the ultimate reversal of all her principles of moral nurture.

In the framing narrative Anne shows Gilbert Markham, in contrast to Huntingdon, in a kindly and natural relationship to the child. They are drawn together pleasantly by Arthur's gleeful delight in romping and racing with Sancho, Gilbert's 'beautiful black and white setter'. The little boy sits on Gilbert's knee to admire pictures of animals and model farms, and Gilbert watches him 'constructing dams and breakwaters' in the stream as his mother paints her pictures. Later Gilbert gives him 'a little waddling puppy' and a carefully selected book. The gifts are designed to please Helen, of course, but Gilbert, unlike Hargrave, imagines that Helen is free to respond to him. Arthur, a 'merry simple-hearted child', is an innocent mediator in his meetings with Helen. In the concluding scene Arthur's joyous excitement at seeing his friend again is a charming and unconventional element in the reunion of Helen and Gilbert.

Arthur enthusiastically welcomes Gilbert, his blue eyes 'beaming with gladness' as he proudly stretches himself up to the 'full height' of his seven years. Helen's careful nurture has produced a happy child, but not an unnatural paragon. Arthur is pert at his aunt's expense, but quickly realizes he has hurt her, silently puts his arm round her neck, and kisses her cheek. Eventually, cherished by both Gilbert and Helen, he realizes his mother's 'brightest expectations' and makes a happy marriage.

Gilbert himself is a rather unimpressive character in the book as a whole, and by no means as memorable as Huntingdon and his cronies, so powerfully brought to life in Helen's narrative. The structure of the novel, too, means that we are in danger of forgetting Gilbert altogether in the central section, since he is not shown to react to the diary as he reads it. Anne manipulates the different narrative modes as Emily so skilfully does in *Wuthering Heights*, but with inferior mastery. We never really see Gilbert through Helen's eyes as Emily makes us see both Edgar and Heathcliff through the eyes of Catherine. Anne's presentation of Gilbert as a benign, likeable, and companionable friend for Arthur goes some way to atone for this failure, and gives his character more substance and coherence.

At the end of the novel both Gilbert and Helen are associated with images of healthy growth, fruitfulness, and order—images which counter and replace those of the neglected garden at its opening. Helen offers Gilbert a white Christmas rose (like Jane Eyre, taking the initiative in what is virtually a proposal), they walk together in a winter garden, are eventually married on a glorious August morning, and continue to be happy in each other's society, their 'promising young scions' growing up about them.

This is perhaps a lightweight ending for a novel in which marriage, and human relationships in general, have been presented as frighteningly adversarial. In Helen's narrative the dominant images are those of the predator, intent on wounding and capture, and the antagonist, seeking to outmanœuvre and outwit by skill or subterfuge. With all too vivid memories of Thorp Green and the neighbouring estates, Anne sets an appropriate scene for such a marriage in a country house where

the highlight of the year is the shooting season, and where the men's talk is of horses, drink, and gaming. Here the handsome worldly fainéant who detests books and mocks piety brings his accomplished, pious, and passionate bride. After the honeymoon period, the match rapidly becomes a rustic version of Hogarth's *Mariage à la Mode*, for Anne has a similar skill in the use of significant images and in her delineation of the weak bridegroom and the vulpine or vacuous hangers-on of his entourage. Huntingdon is most often seen foolishly laughing or sulking—no writer has better conveyed the unlovely quality of peevishness. When he has been drinking, he becomes dull-eyed, 'his face red and bloated . . . imbecile in body and mind'. The pallid Grimsby drawls out his speeches with an unnatural solemnity as he slops his tea into saucer and sugar-basin, while the temperate but more dangerous Hargrave can look at the same time 'deep and cool' but as 'keen and cruel' as if he would drain Helen's heart's blood. Lord Lowborough, a near-tragic figure whose portrait owes something to Anne's observation of Branwell, is memorably described throughout. One wonders whether Anne had seen gamblers as well as drinkers: at cards or dice Lowborough in his trembling, blinded eagerness is no match for the unscrupulous Grimsby—he 'lost again, and fell dead sick'. Ruined, he forswears drink and play, but watches with greedy eyes every drop the drinkers carry to their lips, glaring with 'hungry regret' until he can stand it no longer, and, seizing the brandy bottle, he 'sucks' it dry (p. 182). One of the most nauseating aspects of this scene is the combined callousness and relish with which Lowborough's companions, led by Huntingdon, urge him on to drink again, 'simultaneously' pushing up their glasses to him. He is a victim here, and later, in his betrayal by his wife. Helen comes to recognize that in spite of his dissolute past, he is a fellow-sufferer, with the capacity, like her, to think and feel. The process of his painfully won redemption strengthens the structure and moral content of the novel by moving in parallel to Helen's experiences and in contrast to Huntingdon's.

The pervasive imagery of predation in this central section of the novel is impressed on us even before the marriage, when