



Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life

By Lyndall Gordon

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An unconventional biography discovers the real Charlotte Brontë+a5 behind the loneliness, loss, and unrequited love--a strong woman with a fierce belief in herself, creative energy, and powerful ambition, who shaped her life and transformed it into art.

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An unconventional biography discovers the real Charlotte Bronte—a woman behind the loneliness, loss, and unrequited love—a strong woman with a fierce belief in herself, creative energy, and powerful ambition, who shaped her life and transformed it into art.

Charlotte Bronte: A Passionate Life By Lyndall Gordon Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this eloquent revisionist biography of English novelist Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), Gordon (Shared Lives) argues that she hid a passionate nature beneath the facade of a dutiful Victorian woman. She and her sisters Anne (The Tenant of Wildfell Hall) and Emily (Wuthering Heights) penned fiction and poetry during Yorkshire evenings at the Haworth Parsonage where they lived with their dictatorial father. Although the sisters initially published under male pseudonyms, Charlotte revealed their identities after she wrote Jane Eyre (1847). Gordon draws on letters and her analysis of Charlotte's autobiographical fiction (Shirley; Villette) to reveal an ambitious writer with tart humor who raged against the constraints society placed on her sex, as well as a woman who, after two unrequited love affairs, embarked on a brief but happy marriage. Earlier accounts that portrayed Charlotte as a lonely, tragic figure, Gordon maintains, were skewed because of the morality of the times and Charlotte's grief at the deaths of her two sisters and brother Branwell. Illustrations.

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From School Library Journal

YA?After her death, Charlotte Bronte's father, husband, lifelong friends, and her first biographer set about to whitewash her character. While this may be a somewhat harsh evaluation, it does seem that the efforts of these original guardians of her legacy have served to lessen the impact of her personality and made the passionate life of Gordon's title into one befitting a proper and pious Victorian wife and daughter. In this fascinating look at her true motives and desires, Gordon shows that Charlotte continually desired to push to the limits the situation of women in Victorian life. In a readable and engrossing account, the author leads readers into the mind and even the soul of her subject. They can follow her development from a romantic, solitary child, happy only in the company of her siblings; through her life as a student, teacher, governess; and finally as a wife. YAs will come to understand why, in the end, she willingly sacrifices her art for her marriage. This is a vivid description of the place of women in Victorian society as well as an excellent biography. It includes extensive notes, a bibliography, both primary and secondary sources with much coverage of the Brontes' juvenalia, as well as photographs and sketches.?Susan H. Woodcock, King's Park Library, Burke, VA

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From Library Journal

In this passionate take on the life of the undervalued English novelist Charlotte Bronte, Gordon (Shared Lives, LJ 5/1/92) unfolds the painful tale of smoldering genius struggling to come to light. In the Victorian age, when women of little means or beauty were relegated for the most part to menial teaching professions, Charlotte and her sisters Emily and Ann (and brother, Branwell, though as a boy he had more opportunities) wrote in the cold, lonely parsonage of West Yorkshire where they grew up. Under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, they all published and soon after died-except Charlotte, who in 1849 received instant success with Jane Eyre, the novel which proved that a heroine could in fact be plain and passionate. Gordon's reconstruction of Charlotte's brief, tempestuous life reveals an admirably careful reading of her letters and novels, though she too summarily touches on the work of the other sisters. The suppressed rage of this "quivering mouse" is palpable on every page. A sterling biography for all collections.

Amy Boaz, "Library Journal"

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Users Review

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