

'Poems by Three Sisters', Professor Isobel Armstrong

The very first publication of the Brontë sisters was of poetry, rather than the narrative they are famous for. This lecture will consider the different kinds of experiment evident in the poems. Some poems relate to the narratives begun by the sisters in their childhood, some explore other themes. How they responded to the poets they read, past and contemporary, and to the conventions they encountered in their reading, will be a theme of the lecture. There will be a handout provided ahead of the lecture.

Isobel Armstrong is a Fellow of the British Academy, an International Scholar of the American Academy and Emeritus Professor of English at Birkbeck, University of London. She writes widely on Nineteenth-Century literature and culture: her *Victorian Glassworlds* won the James Russell Lowell Prize in 2008; the second edition of *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Politics and Poetics* (1993) was published this year, 2019.

Below is a book list to enable you to get started on research.

Poems of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë: Book List

The first Brontë poems appeared in *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (London: Aylott and James) 1846.

The British Library holds, among other Brontë manuscripts, Charlotte's poem, 'Richard Coeur de Lion and Blondel' (1833, Ashley, 170), and Emily's 'Poetical Notebook used for Fair Copies' (1837-1839, Ashley 175) and her 'The Gondal Poems' (1844-38, Add MS 43483).

Early criticism of the 'Bell' volume is collected in *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Miriam Allott (London and New York: Routledge), reprinted, 2010. Criticism of the poems is often embedded in general critical works and biographies, such as Juliet Barker's *The Brontës*, revised edition (London: Abacus) 2010, or Stevie Davies, *Emily Brontë: The Artist as a Free Woman* (London: Macmillan) 1983, or Tom Winnifrith and Edward Chitham, *Charlotte and Emily Brontë: Literary Lives* (New York: St Martin's Press) 1989. Or you will find contextual material in Deborah Lutz, *The Brontë Cabinet: Three Lives in Nine Objects* (New York: Norton), 2015. See also the special issue of *Women's Writing*, 20, 3 (2013): 'The Brontës in the World of the Arts', which explores the aesthetics of the Brontës.

Charlotte Brontë

Christine Alexander, *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford: Blackwell), 1983.

The Poems of Charlotte Brontë: A New Annotated and Enlarged Edition of the Shakespeare Head Brontë, ed. Tom Winnifrith (Oxford and New York, Blackwell), 1984.

The Poems of Charlotte Brontë: A new Text and Commentary, ed, Victor A. Neufeldt (New York: Garland), 1985.

The Belgian Essays by Charlotte Brontë and Emily Brontë, Sue Lonoff, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1996.

Claire Harmon, *Charlotte Brontë: A Life*, second edition (London: Penguin) 2016.

Emily Brontë

Poets have been particularly insightful on Emily Brontë's work: see A. C. Swinburne (1883), in *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 431-437, and C. Day Lewis, 'Emily Brontë and Freedom', *Notable Images of Virtue* (Toronto: Ryerson), 1954.

The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë, ed. C. W. Hatfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1941.

Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford, *Emily Brontë: Her Life and Work* (London: Owen), 1953.

The Poems of Emily Brontë, ed. Derek Roper and Edward Chitham (Oxford, Clarendon Press), 1991.

Subjectivity and Literature from the Romantics to the Present Day, ed. Philip Shaw, Peter Stockwell, (London and New York: Pinter) 1991. See essays by Kathryn Burlinson and Emma Francis.

Janet Gezari, *Last Things: Emily Brontë's Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2008.

The Complete Poems by Emily Brontë, ed. Janet Gezari (London and New York: Penguin) 2012.

Anne Brontë

The Complete Poems of Anne Brontë, ed. Clement Shorter (London: Hodder and Stoughton), 1920.

The Poems of Anne Brontë, ed. Edward Chitham (London: Macmillan) 1979.

Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Education) 1989.

Betty Jay, *Anne Brontë* (Tavistock: Northcote House) 2000.

Marianne Thormählen, ed., *The Brontës in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2012.