

An Approach to the Brontë Juvenilia*

Haruko Iwakami

Introduction

I feel very honored to have this chance to give a presentation today. I've decided to title my short paper *An approach to the Brontë Juvenilia* because I want to try to show how to approach Charlotte Brontë's early work in order to get a better understanding of the thematic development of her later novels.

Thanks to the publication of *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë* edited by Dr. Christine Alexander, we are now entering a new era of the study of the Brontë juvenilia. So far, two scholars have been known for their studies of the Brontë juvenilia. One is Fannie Elizabeth Ratchford whose book *The Brontë's Web of Childhood* was published in 1941. She shed light on the unknown fictional world of the Brontë children for the first time after more than a hundred years had passed. Ratchford emphasized the importance of the juvenilia by pointing out the prototypes of the characters of Charlotte's later work in her early writings. The other scholar is Winifred Gérin whose biographies of the four Brontës, published in the 1960s, are based on the detailed study of the juvenilia, letters, diaries and other materials.

I think that we present-day Brontë scholars are greatly indebted to these pioneer scholars. Still as Dr. Alexander points out, they sometimes included some inaccurate references because they did not always consult the original manuscripts which were written in minute handwriting and which required laborious research to decipher. We cannot emphasize enough the value of the monumental editing work by Dr. Alexander. Thanks to her, we are now provided with an accurate reliable text of the Charlotte's juvenilia for the first time in the history of literary criticism.

The new study of the Brontë juvenilia should not aim to argue its literary merits nor to cover the biographical deficits. It is dangerous to look for direct relations between the early writings and later work just as it is dangerous to relate biography and literary works. Just pointing out prototypes does not lead to a correct analysis of later work unless a study discusses how those original characters developed into mature characters. What I would like to present today is an

* This short paper was presented for the Literary Juvenilia International Conference which was held during 28th-30th June 1996 at St. John's College, the University of Durham, England.

attempt to follow the formative process of the love-theme of Charlotte Brontë through the analysis of the development of heroes and heroines in Charlotte's juvenilia.

(1)

Charlotte's juvenilia can be divided into three periods. The first period is from 1829 when the Brontë children started to write down their plays onto small pieces of paper up to 1831 when Charlotte left for Roe Head as a student. The stories written during this period are called *The Glass Town Saga* from the name of the colonial town in which the first twelve adventurers settled. The second period is from 1832 up to 1836 and the third period is from 1837 up to 1839. The stories written during these periods are called *The Angrian Legend* from the name of the new nation built by the Duke of Zamorna and the Earl of Northangerland. The reason why I divided the second period at 1836, instead of 1835, as Dr. Alexander has, is because at the end of 1836, Charlotte decided to be independent from Branwell's war stories. Branwell promoted the series of Angrian wars and Charlotte used them as the frame work of her stories. In 1837, however, the great Angrian wars fought between Zamorna and Northangerland were gradually coming to an end.

The biggest difference between *The Glass Town Saga* and *The Angrian Legend* is that there are no female characters in *The Glass Town Saga*. Its central character is the Duke of Wellington who was created using the real Duke of Wellington as his model. He was a brave and just hero to lead the adventure stories set in an African colony or in an imaginary island. He was idealized as an almighty person so that he could fulfill the dreams of the Brontë children to run their fantasy world as they wished to.

In Charlotte's stories for *The Angrian Legend*, the hero is switched from the Duke of Wellington to his son Arthur who first has the title of Marquis of Douro and later Duke of Zamorna. Unlike his soldier father, Arthur is introduced in '*Albion and Marina*' as an elegant young man with handsome features and a melancholic expression. In this story, Arthur is not a soldier or a politician but the protagonist of a tragic love. The main interest of Charlotte is now not in wars and politics but in romantic love stories involving this handsome hero.

Arthur's character changes as the changes in his name reflects. I would like to go back to a detailed study of the nature of Charlotte's masculine figure later, but now I would just like to point out some striking features of Charlotte's Angrian Legend. The first thing we notice about Charlotte's love stories is that they are full of unrequited love, triangular love affairs, adulterous relationships, illegitimate children and even suicides. And most of the stories do not end with marriage. The relation between man and woman is far from equal. There is an absolute sexual distinction between the two sexes : women are vulnerable and submissive while men are selfish and never look back upon women. Women devote themselves completely to the dominant men in vain. The stories describe women's anguish rather than contentment. This is particularly distinctive in the stories which were written during the second period.

In the third period, however, we can see the focus of the stories move from heroes to heroines

even though the asymmetry in their relationship does not change. Marian Hume, the first heroine in *The Angrian Legend*, has her place soon taken by Mary Henrietta. Although Mary is as subordinated and devoted to Zamorna as Marian was, Mary is given more chance to express her own feelings. Mary is more fluent and more self-analytical than the immature Marian. This is one example which shows the development of Charlotte's molding of female characters. In later works such as *'Mina Laury'*, *'Henry Hastings'* and *'Caroline Vernon'*, the protagonists are not Zamorna but Mina, Elizabeth and Caroline respectively. Later, I would like to discuss the predominant features of these heroines but now I just want to emphasize that there is a shift from male-dominant stories to female dominant stories in the third period of Charlotte's juvenilia.

(2)

Now I would like to discuss Charlotte's heroes. In *The Glass Town Saga*, which was written in her early teens, her hero, the Duke of Wellington, was described as a patriarchal leader. He had been trying to protect his family and his country from outside enemies. In him, we can see the ideal image of man in the Victorian era and we can also sense the Rev. Brontë himself who was a great admirer of the real Duke of Wellington. Although the Duke of Wellington soon disappears from Charlotte's stories, some of his powerful and protective father-like image remains as the basis for the male characters in Charlotte's later work. (The master/pupil or employer/servant relationship in her later novels has, I think, something to do with Charlotte's idea of protective man as a basis.)

In *The Angrian Legend*, which started when Charlotte was sixteen, however, her hero is not a father-figure but a masculine figure reflecting her own sexual development. Charlotte now tries to mold her young hero through the influence of Byron's heroes. By following the changes of the character of the hero, I think, we can see the process of how Charlotte created her Byronic hero and how she finally moved away from that romanticism.

Arthur, namely the Marquis of Douro, first appears as an innocent young lover of Marina in Charlotte's first love story *'Albion and Marina'*. He soon gets married with her in *'The Bridal'*. But he is not a faithful husband, as we can see in the collected stories entitled *'Arthuriana'*. Douro has secret relationships with several women, including his first lover Mina Laury, whom he met when he was only fifteen years old. In *'High Life in Verdopolis'*, it is revealed that he has had a son with Helen Victorine before he got married with Marian. These past incidents concerning Douro were all added later. Charlotte is now changing Douro into the licentious Zamorna whose main concern is to fulfill his own desire for love and power.

Most of the stories are written by Charles, who has a strong inferiority complex towards his brother, Arthur. Charles is critical about his immoral brother but, at the same time, he is jealous of his brother's sexual attractiveness to women. His ambivalent attitude, I think, reflects Charlotte's own complicated feelings toward her brilliant hero. Although Charlotte created this hero in her ideal image, she could not forget the feeling that he was out of her reach. This

warped feeling is, I think, reflected in Charles' complicated attitudes toward his brother. Here we can see a big difference between Charlotte and Branwell, who completely identified himself with his rebellious hero, the Earl of Northangerland.

Zamorna is in the heyday of his power in 1834. He is now the king of Angria. He is described as a proud, melancholic and cynical man with a strong influence upon women. To them, Zamorna is more than a man and his inner life is beyond their understanding. He attracts women but does not pay any attention to them. Women are only flowers for him to view and they are just replaced by new ones when they wither. Zamorna is now compared to Byron's Childe Harold, Milton's Satan and the Turkish Sultan to emphasize his immoral and hedonistic nature.

It is around 1837 when Zamorna begins to show some changes. In *'Julia'*, which is set just before the war of Evesham, Zamorna's army is ready to counterattack Northangerland's army to retrieve his lost country. Zamorna, however, is no longer interested in the war. He even curses wars which have separated him from his wife, Mary. The ambition, passion and pride which have made him a superman are now decaying. Zamorna, described in *'Mina Laury'* and *'Caroline Vernon'*, is again a licentious hero but this is only in the eyes of the heroines. The narrator keeps a distance from the seducing hero and the enthralled heroine as we can see in *'Caroline Vernon'*.

Charlotte had started with naive Arthur, who soon became ambitious and unfaithful Douro, and later she developed this character into the licentious and satanic Zamorna. The more strongly he attracted women, the more mysterious he became because he was described mainly through the images reflected in the eyes of the women who were sexually subjugated to him. In the stories for the second period, we notice that Zamorna was molded by women's insubstantial rhetoric. In other words, the unrequited love of women has created this Byronic hero of Zamorna. In the stories of the third period, however, there is a shift of focus from Zamorna to the heroines who have been suffering from loving him. Charlotte now found more reality in and sympathy with the tragic women who were infatuated with Zamorna .

(3)

Unlike the hero, there are several major heroines in *The Angrian Legend*. There is a great disparity between the first heroine, Marian Hume, and the last one, Elizabeth Hastings. This change in the evolution of the heroines is closely related to the development of Charlotte Brontë's love-theme. Now I would like to discuss the predominant features of five heroines so that we can see the process through which Charlotte came to create her original heroine who had her own identity and self-assertion.

Marian Hume was created under the influence of Scott's romance. She is fated to die young with heartbreak when Douro leaves her. In *'The Secret'*, she is entrapped even by her former governess. In this work, Marian is scared that her past engagement will be known by her present husband, Douro. Marian is not to blame because the engagement was arranged by her mother a long time ago and her fiancé had already drowned at sea. She dare not, however, tell

this to her husband because she is fearful of losing his love. We can see some of Charlotte's originality in Marian who suffers because of love.

Zenobia Errington was created as a rival to Marian. Although Zenobia was modeled on Zenobia of Palmyra, as her name suggests, her dominant feature is sexual passion which Marian lacks. She is so proud of her knowledge, beauty and social status, and is so sure of her being chosen by Douro that she is beside herself when her love is thwarted in *'The Bridal'*. Here she reveals her self-contradiction: she believes in her superiority to others even while she offers to be a servant to Douro. Even after she marries Alexander Percy, she is still attracted by Douro who becomes more and more idolized by her. For Zenobia, love is nothing but jealousy. Passion was one of the attractions of Zamorna, but in the case of Zenobia, it is presented as a negative element which makes her lose her sensibility.

Zamorna's second wife, Mary Henrietta, is a daughter of Northangerland. The power struggle between Zamorna and Northangerland places her in a predicament and finally drives her to the brink of death. This testifies to the relative insignificance of women's existence in the Angrian Legend. Zamorna is everything for Mary while Mary is nothing for Zamorna. This is where her anguish comes from. Mary is fully aware that she cannot live without Zamorna's love. Here love includes a sexual aspect. In comparison with the sexless Marian, Mary is described as more of a sexual being. We can see one example in the scene where Quasha, Zamorna's antagonist, violates Mary's bedroom and indulges himself in her imaginary rape. Here Mary is described through man's viewpoint. We have to wait until later for Mina Laury to appear with sexuality attributed as part of her nature.

In *'Mina Laury'*, Charlotte explores women's psycho-sexuality. Mina regards herself as one of Zamorna's devoted lovers. When she confronts Zamorna's wife Mary in *'The Spell'*, Mina overwhelms Mary with her confidence in self-sacrificial love toward Zamorna. In *'Mina Laury'*, she devotes herself to him to the extent that she 'belongs to Zamorna' or he 'becomes part of her nature'. She reminds us of Jane Eyre who reflects: 'My future husband was becoming to me my whole world'. When Mina declined the proposal of Lord Hartford, he was shocked to find that intelligent Mina loses her self-esteem in the presence of Zamorna and considers herself as the property of Zamorna.

Mina feels consoled, however, for her humiliation when capricious Zamorna caresses her. The narrator makes a comment, and I quote, "Strong-minded beyond her sex, active, energetic, and accomplished in all other points of view, here she was as weak as a child. She lost her identity; her very life was swallowed up in that of another". Mina is presented as a victim of love which alienates women from their own selves. Here Charlotte uses the word 'identity' for the first time, indicating her awareness of the conflict between female sexuality and independence. This will be one of the themes in Charlotte's later novels.

It is clear that Charlotte is trying to mold a new type of heroine in Elizabeth Hastings. She has no beauty, no social status and no property. She has to make a living as a companion to Jane Moore, the queen of the Angrian high society. Actually, Elizabeth is described by contrast with Jane who has outward beauty but little intelligence and morality. William Percy, who was first

interested in Jane, soon recognizes Elizabeth's hidden attractions.

Just as Elizabeth is different from other Angrian heroines, William is also different from the Angrian hero, Zamorna. William was rejected by his father, Alexander Percy, at birth and had to make a living with his cruel brother, Edward. William grew into a cynical man whose inner life cannot easily be reached. Unlike Zamorna, who becomes more mysterious to women, however, we know that William is a passionate and romantic man, in spite of his outward reserve, through his diary and letters. We can see that he seeks love from the fact that he has to see his sister Mary Henrietta for comfort. William has some similarities with Elizabeth who cannot live without love.

'*Henry Hastings*' foreshadows *Jane Eyre* in many respects. One of the most important things is that here we have the first couple who turn to each other for mutual understanding. There was little communication between Zamorna and his women because their relation was restricted solely to devotion from the women's side. Although William has some of the characteristic Angrian licentiousness which makes him a seducer at the end of the story, he is also sensitive to, in William's term, the 'ardent, imaginative temperament' of Elizabeth. They seek each other because they share this same sensitivity which forms the essence of their existence.

Although 'Henry Hastings' presents a possibility of the ideal relationship between man and woman, this is thwarted when William turns out to be a seducer in the end. Elizabeth has to choose either love or independence. The fact that she is left no other choice is indictment of women's limited position in the Victorian era. This also raises the question of men's attitude toward love. The most important issue, however, is that Elizabeth's emotional life will remain unfulfilled in the future.

(4)

Charlotte began her stories of *The Angrian Legends* with admiration for the Byronic hero, Zamorna. But her main concern later shifted to the agonized heroines who were attracted by the faithless Zamorna. They suffer from love which requires from them total self-negation. Moreover, even if they devote themselves totally to him, they cannot feel contented because of their bruised egos. Through her depiction of the agonies of these women, Charlotte forms her theme of conflict between love and independence in women.

Angrian heroines are women who cannot live without love. This trait is inherited by later heroines, although their dependence on love is changed. They need to love and to be loved in order to feel themselves a whole person. In love, they seek something which gives meaning to their life. The women's self-negating love, which had been depicted in *The Angrian Legend*, is in later novels transformed into the ideal love which is based on an equal relationship between men and women.

Thank you very much for your attention. I would now like to invite your questions and comments about my presentation.