

Charlotte Brontë's Juvenilia:
Precursors of *Jane Eyre*

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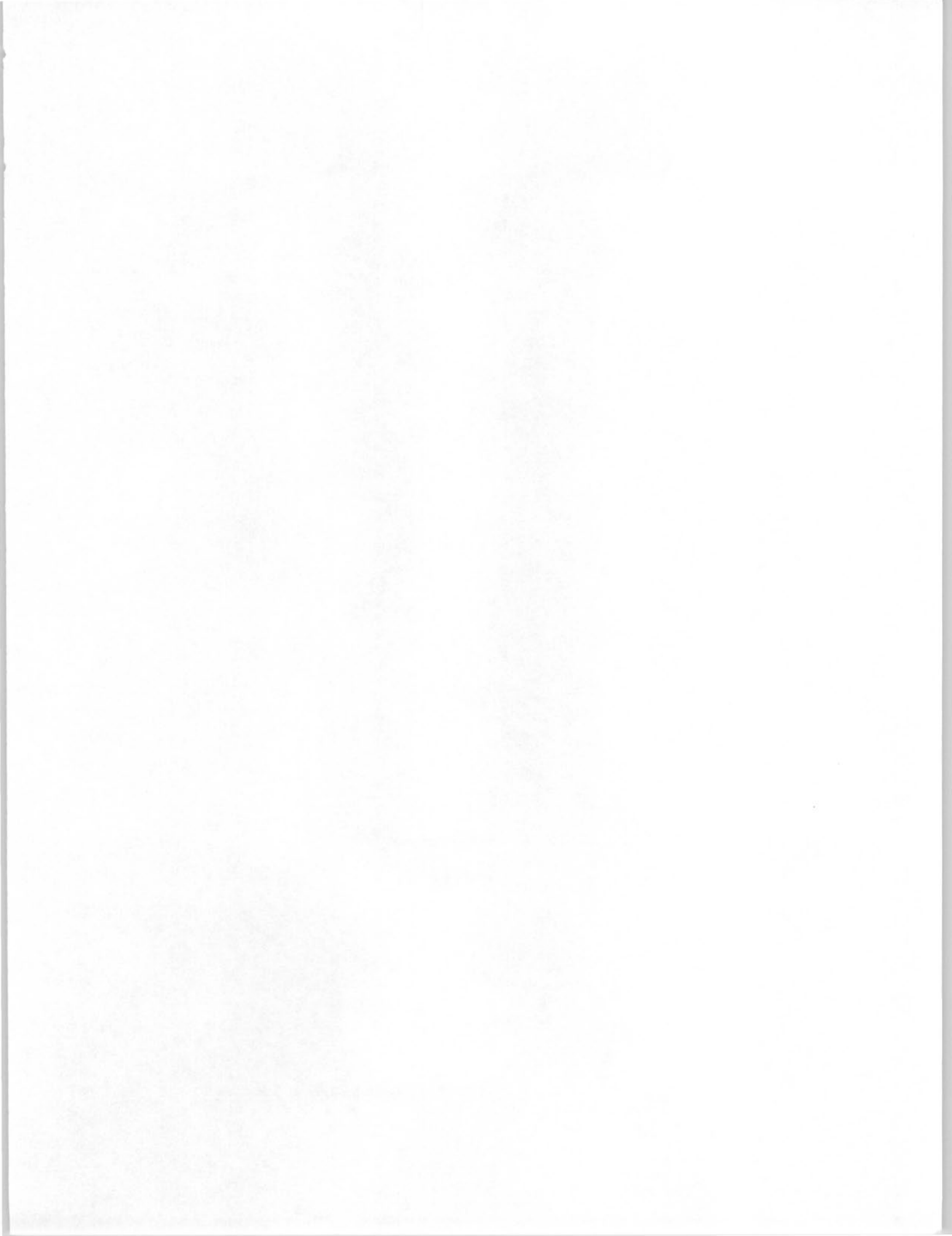
Charlotte Brontë's Juvenilia: Precursors of
Jane Eyre

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The novels of Charlotte Brontë were not her first attempt at writing, as she acknowledges in her preface to what is ostensibly her first novel, *The Professor*: "A first attempt it certainly was not, as the pen which wrote it had been previously worn down a good deal in a practice of some years."¹ Indeed, Charlotte's major novels come after a long apprenticeship provided by her juvenilia -- an apprenticeship that lasted ten years. A study of Charlotte Brontë's juvenilia reveals an author in the process of becoming Currer Bell, the author of her masterpiece, *Jane Eyre*. Clearly, Charlotte's early work can be related to her later development as a writer and to her mature works. Although Charlotte's early work, which consists of poems and short stories, is the naive and faulty work of a child, threads found in the juvenilia can also be found woven into her later novels. In this thesis, I should like to demonstrate that within selected stories of Charlotte Brontë's juvenilia, one can find strong precursors of *Jane Eyre*'s characters, incidents, and themes.

At the age of thirteen, Charlotte Brontë began writing short stories and poems. Charlotte Brontë's writings from this time until her twenty-third year are now generally classified as her juvenilia. After Charlotte reached the age of twenty-three, she took a break from writing for a period of almost six years until she began what would become her first novel, *The Professor*. During the period of her juvenilia, Charlotte wrote stories, plays, and poems about the imaginary world which she and her brother and sisters had created. It is generally well known that the Brontë juvenilia began as the result of childhood play. On June 5, 1826, Charlotte's younger brother Branwell was given a set of twelve wooden toy soldiers for his birthday.²

Almost immediately, Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell took up soldiers and gave them names. Thus began the imaginary world that was to engross the children for years. The children began writing tiny books for and about "the Twelves," the collective name given to the twelve wooden toy soldiers. The children made these books out of tiny scraps of paper sewn together and written in microscopic, print-like script. They were made to look like actual published books on the scale of the toy soldiers. The early stories of the juvenilia tell how the Twelves founded the kingdom of Angria on the east coast of Africa. The area of Africa stretched along the coast of Guinea, westwards to the Atlantic Sea, eastwards to the desert, northwards to the Jibble Kumri Mountains, and southwards to the Gulf of Guinea. This area was then divided into five areas, each with its own capital, each capital, curiously enough, called Glasstown. Wellingtonsland was Charlotte's country; next, moving eastwards, was Emily's Parrysland; then Anne's Rossland; then Nigrilis, the central area which contains the Great Glasstown itself; finally, to the north-east of that was Branwell's Sneachiesland. These areas together with Monkey's and Stumps' Islands formed the Glasstown Confederacy. A separate king controlled each country, but each was subject to the control of the combined kingdoms in the Confederacy.³ The young Brontës used this imaginary kingdom to tell tales of wars, political conquests, jealousy, and romance. After 1831, Emily and Anne withdrew from their participation in the Glasstown stories to form their own legend of Gondal. Charlotte and Branwell continued for another eight years to build up their imaginary world centered on the kingdom of Angria.

This imaginary world created by Charlotte and Branwell is an elaborate one filled with wars, politics, and varying human relationships. Winifred Gérin, a well-known biographer of the Brontës, suggests that the main dramatic theme on which the literature of Angria was based was "the rivalry between Zamorna and Percy . . . and the infidelities of Zamorna."⁴ Zamorna, also known as the Marquis of Douro, and later King of Angria, is Charlotte's main character and her Byronic hero. Percy (the name may have been borrowed from the poet Shelley) is Branwell's key figure. Zamorna and Percy are friends until they begin to struggle for control of Angria. Percy helps Zamorna become King of Angria but later leads a revolt against him. Branwell's writing for the Angrian saga often covered the political and military incidents, while Charlotte focused upon the romances and romantic affairs.⁵ Charlotte seemed to become more and more fascinated with the predicaments of her heroines and their fascination for her Byronic hero, Zamorna. As the plots grew and developed, characters were continually added. Rivalries, conflicts, and love affairs added to the confusing relationships between characters. On top of this confusion, Charlotte and Branwell sometimes changed the names of their characters, thereby further complicating the narratives. These problems, combined with the additional fact that not all of the juvenile manuscripts have been found or transcribed, add to the confusion that sometimes surrounds the juvenilia. There are several holes in the chronology of the works which remain a mystery. For example, the story "Captain Henry Hastings" contains two parts, but it is obvious from the opening words of the second part that this part does not directly follow Part I. The intervening narrative has not been located, and

the contents can only be inferred by the rest of the narrative. Such gaps, unfortunately, make a somewhat complicated series of relationships even more confused.

In order to look at precursors of *Jane Eyre* found in Charlotte Brontë's juvenilia, I have selected five of Charlotte's juvenilia stories. The selected stories are "The Secret," "Lily Hart," "Mina Laury," "Captain Henry Hastings," and "Caroline Vernon." These stories range from the beginning period of Charlotte's juvenile works through the end. Each of these stories contains aspects which foreshadow Charlotte's mature writing. Before attempting to look closely at individual works in the juvenilia, I will present the plots of some selected individual stories and attempt to situate the stories among the complete body of juvenilia we presently have.

While Charlotte builds on Branwell's background of military adventure and political intrigue in her stories, her imagination turns to themes of passion and suffering. Charlotte explores these themes mainly through her hero, his friends, and his adventures. Her hero, Arthur Augustus Adrian Wellesley (the Marquis of Douro and later the Duke of Zamorna) is the noble, handsome, Byronic hero who is a poet, warrior, statesman, and lover rolled into one. Charlotte's choice of names for her hero reflects the enthusiasm she had for the English national hero, the Duke of Wellington. We will begin to look at Charlotte's exploration of passion and suffering with her works "The Secret" and "Lily Hart." Both these narratives are dated November 7, 1833. The date places the stories about halfway through the Glasstown saga when Charlotte was seventeen years of age.

In "The Secret," the focus falls not upon the hero, Douro, but upon his wife, Marian Hume, and his archrival, Alexander Percy. The story contains elements of romantic love framed against a background of blackmail, bigamy, secrets, and deceit. Marian Hume, the childhood sweetheart of Douro, has auburn hair arranged in waving ringlets, delicate features, and a pliant nature. In "The Secret," Marian receives a letter from her governess who had been exiled by Douro when he married Marian. The pathetic heroine is tortured by what the letter reveals. Although her whole world is centered upon her love for Douro, Marian learns from the letter that the man whom she had married in her early teenage years (whose existence she had kept a secret from Douro) was not dead as she believed. The governess also reveals that Marian's real father was not Alexander Hume, but Alexander Percy, Douro's sworn enemy. Marian is devastated by this news, but, being the dutiful person she is, Marian promises the governess not to reveal her forbidden visits with her former governess or divulge to her husband any of the information she received from the governess. The governess, Miss Foxley, controls Marian with her blackmail. Miss Foxley is attempting to seek revenge on Marian because Douro loved Marian instead of her. Miss Foxley also wants revenge on Douro for thwarting her plans to prevent his marriage to Marian. Although Marian believes that her first husband had died in a shipwreck and had even appeared to her as a ghost, Miss Foxley produces a man who looks like Marian's first husband and who has the ring which would identify him as such. She also convinces Marian that a paper exists which proves that Marian's real father is Alexander Percy, and Marian even goes so far as to pay her husband's rival a visit to ascertain the truth

about the document. Marian believes the evidence that Miss Foxley provides and assumes she will have to leave her love, Douro. Luckily, she reveals to her father-in-law the information that is haunting her, and the governess' story is proved to be a fraud when Douro reveals that he saw Miss Foxley purchase the ring only a few days prior to her meeting. Douro forces Miss Foxley to reveal her lies about Marian's first husband and about Marian's father. Miss Foxley is exiled to a distant country, and all is happily settled between Marian and Douro.

Although "Lily Hart" follows "The Secret" in Charlotte's manuscript, the narrative events of "Lily Hart" take place before the story of "The Secret." "Lily Hart" takes place in the context of the great civil war which occurs between the government led by the Twelves and a group of rebels. The rebellion was started by Alexander Rogue, later to become Alexander Percy, Branwell's main character. His rebel forces are in control of Verdopolis (the new, more sophisticated name for Glasstown) when "Lily Hart" begins. Mrs. Hart, a respectable widow, discovers a wounded man, Mr. Seymour, outside her home. His friend, Colonel Percival, requests that Mr. Seymour remain in the Hart home until he is well. Mrs. Hart nurses Mr. Seymour back to health with the assistance of her daughter, Lily Hart. Lily is an attractive young woman, eighteen years old and "elegantly formed."⁶ Two months pass as Mr. Seymour recuperates in the Hart home and Lily's affection for the stranger grows. Mrs. Hart notices her daughter's growing affection for the young man, but she is unable to read Mr. Seymour's emotions. As soon as he is well enough, Mr. Seymour leaves, and Lily does not see him for a year. During this year, Lily's mother dies, and Lily

becomes destitute. When she sees Mr. Seymour again, she believes he ignores her. Actually, he follows her and reveals his true identity as John of Fidenia. He had kept his identity a secret during the rebellious time of his recuperation because he would have been imprisoned by the rebel forces if his true identity had been known. During the year that has passed, the government regained control of Verdopolis, and John of Fidenia led the battle which defeated the rebel forces. John asks Lily to marry him, and his friend Colonel Percival (actually Douro) is the witness. Their marriage is kept a secret to avoid John's father's disapproval until one day when they are discovered by John's family. John's sisters convince their father to welcome Lily into the family. Lily is able to assume her proper role in society as the wife of John of Fidenia, and the fairy-tale romance is complete.

The final three stories I have selected to examine were written late in Charlotte's juvenilia period, between 1838 and 1839. These stories show Charlotte maturing as a writer and concluding her involvement in the imaginary world of Angria. "Mina Laury," "Captain Henry Hastings," and "Caroline Vernon" all continue Charlotte's theme of the power of love. Each of these stories presents a different heroine; Charlotte's treatment of love varies for each heroine and each heroine's personality.

In "Mina Laury," the heroine plays the role of selfless lover. Mina Laury is a young woman with a "sweet face," an "exquisite figure," and "clusters of raven curls."⁷ She is "strong-minded beyond her sex," yet in the presence of Zamorna "she was as weak as a child - - she lost her identity -- her way of life was swallowed up in that of another."⁸ Mina is devoted to the unworthy Zamorna. She serves as Zamorna's exploited mistress. Lord

Hartford, a friend of Zamorna, has fallen in love with Mina and cannot stand to see her treated as Zamorna's distraction. Hartford reveals his love and proposes to Mina, but she refuses him. Hartford is enraged by the thought of Zamorna having the one he loves, so while in a drunken state, he challenges Zamorna to a duel. When the pistols are fired, Zamorna escapes unscathed, and Hartford is injured. Zamorna leaves immediately to visit Mina. Meanwhile, another carriage has approached the house where Mina stays. Mina believes the carriage brings her Zamorna, and she watches as it approaches and overturns. Instead of Zamorna, a young woman with "very small and feminine features" and "handsome eyes" is found in the carriage.⁹ Mina takes the woman into the house to recover and rest. Zamorna does arrive and begins cruelly to test Mina's loyalty and fidelity. Zamorna makes Mina believe that he thinks she has been unfaithful. Once Zamorna has determined that Mina remains faithful, he assures Mina that he will not leave her. Zamorna then discovers that the woman whose carriage had overturned is his wife. Zamorna greets his wife with a lie covering up the real reason for his appearance in this house. Charlotte then shows Zamorna's neglect of his wife, Mary, by having Zamorna send his wife on to her destination while he spends the night with his mistress, Mina Laury. The next morning Zamorna goes to meet his wife and accompany her on the rest of her journey leaving the future up to our imaginations.

"Captain Henry Hastings" deals with two major themes: the choice in love between passion and moral conscience, and the relationship of a sister to her degenerate brother. The first section traces the hunt for and capture of Henry Hastings, a murderer and a deserter from the army, by Sir William

Percy and Lord Hartford in spite of Elizabeth Hastings' efforts to help her brother. The men have been hunting for Henry Hastings to bring him to trial for killing an officer. Between the first and second sections is a break in the manuscript. It is generally believed, because of other events in the narratives, that the missing section deals with Henry Hastings' escape from prison and his part in an attempt made on Zamorna's life. The second section describes Henry's trial and the growing love between Elizabeth Hastings and William Percy. Sir William's original scorn of Elizabeth's plain outward appearance gives way to an appreciation for her. During a romantic stroll in the country, Sir William woos Elizabeth. He proposes that Elizabeth become his mistress, and Elizabeth is very tempted. In the end, Elizabeth's moral conscience and self-respect win out, and she refuses Sir William's offer. Charlotte ends the tale with a tacked-on scene in which Zamorna's wife questions Zamorna's fidelity. Zamorna pledges his love for his wife, and they leave the room together and happy.

"Caroline Vernon," Charlotte's last Angrian tale, brings yet another woman to the forefront. Told in two sections, this story is about the seduction of Caroline Vernon. Caroline is the illegitimate daughter of Northangerland (Alexander Percy) and his mistress, Louisa Vernon. Caroline is first introduced in Charlotte's earlier work, "Julia," where Charlotte describes her as an animated and intelligent young girl who catches Zamorna's eye. The first section of this story details Caroline's life as a child living with her mother under the guardianship of Zamorna. The second section shows the effect of a Parisian education and the abandonment of the adolescent to her own devices and whims. While in

Paris, Caroline hears rumors about Zamorna's seamy side and his affairs with women such as Mina Laury. Caroline is interested in meeting her guardian again. Caroline writes to Zamorna, and Zamorna eventually writes her back. Caroline is so excited that she leaves her home and travels to the place Zamorna is staying. Passion dominates Caroline as she gives in to the charms of Zamorna. Caroline does not have the will to resist temptation which Elizabeth Hastings possessed when she refused Sir William's offer to be his mistress. Zamorna deposits his new conquest at his "treasure-house." The story ends with conflict between Northangerland and Zamorna, as Northangerland demands that Zamorna, his long-time enemy, not take another one of his daughters, a demand made because Zamorna is married to Mary Percy, Caroline's half-sister and Northangerland's daughter. Northangerland must live with the knowledge that Zamorna now possesses and tyrannizes both of his daughters.

The vast imaginary world which the Brontë children developed was both a playground and a training school. Charlotte's juvenilia helped her work out problems and develop her artistic skills. *Jane Eyre* did not just magically pop into Charlotte's head, but it was developed and evolved over time with the characters, incidents, and themes she used in her early writings. Charlotte was developing her romantic quality full of descriptions of people, scenery, and weather and creating the human relationship side to Branwell's "monotonous cataloguing."¹⁰ Charlotte Brontë's obsession with the make-believe world allowed her to immerse herself in a reality in which she created characters, incidents, and themes which foreshadow those in her mature novels, such as *Jane Eyre*. These five stories each reflects an aspect

of that immersion. In the following pages, I would like to examine the issues of characters, incidents, and themes as they appear in these stories and demonstrate how this juvenilia foreshadows the more sophisticated treatment of these topics as they appear in *Jane Eyre*.

II

Charlotte Brontë had such a vivid imagination and was able to immerse herself so completely in her imaginary world of Angria that apparently her characters seemed as if they were real people in her mind. Although Charlotte eventually abandoned the world of Angria, it is unrealistic to think that the characters who had become so concrete to her over a period of ten years would simply vanish from her thoughts. As Charlotte grew older and experienced more of life, she in turn would have new characters from life to analyze, and she would be able to use these new characters in her writing. However, in her mature years, occasionally the characters of that old world of Angria would find their way into Charlotte's creative thoughts. As a result, echoes of Angrian characters can be found throughout Charlotte's mature work bringing the aura of Romanticism to her more realistic novels. Not surprisingly, the characters who once consumed Charlotte's every juvenile thought evolved into characters in her later novels and especially in her classic *Jane Eyre*.

One example of a character prototype found in the aforementioned juvenile stories is John of Fidenia, the gentleman disguised as Mr. Seymour in "Lily Hart." This John is an early study for another John, the religious idealist St. John Rivers of *Jane Eyre*. The physical descriptions of the two

men are very similar. In "Lily Hart," Charlotte says that John of Fidenia "was very tall, and so erect as to appear at times rather stiff and formal. His features were regularly formed, his forehead lofty and open. . . . A general air of dignified gravity pervaded his whole countenance and, notwithstanding his youth, for he did not appear to be above twenty-five or six years of age, became him extremely well."¹¹ Charlotte paints a mental portrait of St. John Rivers in *Jane Eyre* that is very similar to her description of John of Fidenia from the years of her juvenilia. Charlotte uses *Jane Eyre* to observe and describe the physical nature of St. John. Jane says that St. John "was young -- perhaps from twenty-eight to thirty -- tall, slender; his face riveted the eye; it was like a Greek face, very pure in outline: quite a straight, classic nose: quite an Athenian mouth and chin . . . high forehead, colourless as ivory."¹² Both John of Fidenia and St. John Rivers are marked with the same reserve, the same sense of exalted standards. Christine Alexander, who has commented extensively on Charlotte Brontë's early writings, describes the two characters as "stern embodiments of intellect and religion."¹³ At one point in Charlotte's juvenilia, John of Fidenia is referred to as "the Royal Philosopher."

How grave! what severe virtue! what deep, far-sought and well-treasured wisdom! what inflexible uprightness! Integrity that Death could not turn from the path of right; Firmness that would stoop to the block rather than yield one jot of its just, mature, righteous resolution; . . . the virtues pictured in his stately features seem of that high and holy order which almost exempt their possessor from sympathy with mankind.

Thoughts of martyrs and patriots, and zealous but stern
prophets . . . recur to our minds.¹⁴

This cold, rigid religious idealism is also characteristic in an extreme sense of St. John Rivers, the zealous minister who devotes himself to his religious work, but denies his humanity and walks away from love. Although the relationship between John and Lily is not as full of conflict as St. John and Jane's relationship, the similarities between the two men are undeniable.

Another character who would be a precursor of future characters was Charlotte's favorite, her hero Douro, or Zamorna. Zamorna's evolution would eventually lead to the development of the hero of *Jane Eyre*, Rochester. The character, Douro, who suffered many modifications and much moral deterioration as time passed, was initially an innocent youth. Douro is described often in Charlotte's juvenilia. Charlotte describes him as "A youth of lofty stature and remarkable graceful demeanour . . . rich curls of dark glossy hair clustering round a countenance distinguished by the noble beauty of its features, but still more by the radiant fire of genius and intelligence visible . . . in his large, dark, and lustrous eyes . . ." This description would remain true of Zamorna throughout the juvenilia except for the addition of a touch of Gothic.

It is well documented that Byron and Byron's poetry had a significant impact on the development of Charlotte's creative ability and became a source of inspiration to her. Charlotte became acquainted with Byron's poetry at a very young age. She was only ten years old when she could quote Byron's work quite freely. Thus, it was only a matter of time before she endowed her hero with the diabolic attributes proper to the Byronic

male. Gradually, the character of Zamorna changes in the juvenilia to a dark, brooding, arrogant man who is able to love and use many women.

The ghost of Zamorna haunts the pages of *Jane Eyre* in the form of Rochester. Rochester is described in a fashion similar to Zamorna. Jane Eyre says that Rochester had "broad and jetty eyebrows, his square forehead, made squarer by the horizontal sweep of his black hair. . . . his decisive nose . . . his grim mouth, chin, and jaw. . . ." ¹⁵ Rochester also takes on the qualities of the Byronic hero. Rochester has a gruff exterior to complement his decisive nature. He has wandered across the continent of Europe searching for love, finding only empty relationships with a series of mistresses. Zamorna's influence is apparent, for this earlier fictional hero seems to have inspired the creation of Rochester who had French mistresses and an illegitimate child, Adèle and boasted of them to Jane, the child's governess. Rochester's decision to propose to a girl of Jane's rectitude to live as his mistress after having disclosed his unhappy secret is an action representative of the arrogant Zamorna. Rochester and his actions appear much more understandable through a knowledge of Zamorna and the evolution of Charlotte's Byronic hero.

Another character that was constantly evolving in Charlotte's juvenilia was her heroine. Charlotte's depiction of the women in her early stories gradually changed as Charlotte became more experienced in the world and developed into an educated young woman who felt the bonds of being a dependent female. Yet the heroines of Charlotte's later writing have their precursors in the juvenilia. The character Jane Eyre developed over a long period of time and was a result of a combination of characters in the

juvenilia. The early heroines of Charlotte's juvenilia were chiefly the products of fairy-tale and fiction, while the later women seemed to be more a product of experience.

Charlotte's early heroines like Marian Hume and Lily Hart were, for the most part, fairy-tale women drawn from the images of beautiful society women Charlotte had seen in magazines.¹⁶ There was not much substance to these women other than their devotion to the one man in their lives. With the development of Mina Laury, Charlotte began to delve into the moral aspects of love and passion rather than playing along with the romantic fantasies. Mina Laury is careless of her reputation and honor. Her world is totally consumed by the man she loves and sees as her "master," Zamorna. Mina has no thoughts of relinquishing her devotion to Zamorna, no matter how he treats her. His infidelity is accepted as part of his male prowess, and it is gratifying for Mina just to be one of the chosen.

In the later heroine, Caroline Vernon, Charlotte explores the development of a mind "destined for such wilful self-destruction."¹⁷ Fed by romantic dreams, Caroline confuses her love for her guardian with adolescent fantasy. Her conscience is feeble compared to dawning passion. She is "as clay in the hands of the Potter."¹⁸ Zamorna provides the opportunity for temptation, but it is Caroline's own nature, predisposed to imaginative excess by a neglected childhood, that causes her to identify her guardian with romantic dreams and idols.

These developing characters lead up to what is probably the prototype for Jane Eyre, Elizabeth Hastings. Only Elizabeth Hastings has the strength of will to suppress the dictates of passion. As the fairy-tale element of the

early juvenilia diminishes, a more realistic and autobiographical heroine emerges. The character of Elizabeth Hastings is a positive step on the road towards the creation of Jane Eyre. In "Captain Henry Hastings," Sir William's initial reaction upon seeing Elizabeth Hastings is scorn of her plain outward appearance. During an evening, he watches her more closely and discovers that she was "by no means ugly -- her eyes were very fine and seemed as if they could express anything . . . her movements were restrained and guarded"19 Jane Eyre's appearance is also described as being very plain and simple. Rochester says that she is "quaint, quiet, grave, and simple"20 Rochester also tells her several times that he can read her expressions and thoughts in her eyes. Elizabeth Hastings runs her own school and is proud of her independence. Jane Eyre is also a governess and is proud of her initiative. The similarities between the two characters continue when they are faced with similar situations. Elizabeth Hastings is wooed by Sir William, but his proposal is that Elizabeth should become his mistress. Elizabeth has a strong moral conscience, as does her successor Jane Eyre. This moral conscience hinges more on self-respect than social repute. Elizabeth is afraid of nothing but herself. She acknowledges that the world's scorn would be dreadful, but the miseries of self-hatred would be a worse torment if she became Sir William's mistress. Although Elizabeth is tempted by Sir William's proposal, her self-respect wins, and she must say good-bye to Sir William forever. Similarly, Jane Eyre is also faced with the proposal of becoming a mistress for the man she loves and was going to marry. Jane decides that she, too, must follow her moral conscience and her inner strength and do what is best for her. She leaves Rochester and does

not return until the situation no longer calls for Jane to compromise her moral conscience.

The characters Charlotte Brontë develops in her mature writings did not come already formed directly from the characters of her juvenilia, but they did begin to evolve with Charlotte's very first characters. As Charlotte's ideas began to expand and mature, so did her characterizations. Although she did not know it at the time she penned her juvenilia, Charlotte was fashioning precursors for some of the characters of what would become her masterpiece, *Jane Eyre*. Her work with the characters of the juvenilia laid the foundation on which she would build the more fully developed characters of her mature work.

III

In her mature works, Charlotte Brontë repeated, in some fashion, many of the incidents originally used in the plots of her juvenilia. As is evidenced by the lasting and wide-spread admiration of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte's writing improved and matured from the time of her first writings, her little-known juvenilia. As she matured, Charlotte moved from a world of fairy-tale fantasy to a more realistic world which included incidents reflecting her own life experiences. However, several incidents on which Charlotte based her novel, *Jane Eyre*, are also found in her juvenilia. Once again, this demonstrates that precursors of Charlotte's mature work can be found in her juvenile works. The incidents which Charlotte carries into her mature fiction are modified in some ways in order to fit into the more mature

plot structure of the novel, but they are still reminiscent of Charlotte's juvenilia.

One such incident involves the use of an illegitimate child and her guardian. In "Caroline Vernon," Caroline is the illegitimate daughter of Northangerland and his French mistress, Louisa Vernon. Caroline lives with her mother, Louisa, and her guardian is the Byronic Zamorna. Charlotte Brontë carried the idea of an illegitimate child and a guardian with her into the writing of *Jane Eyre*. In fact, Charlotte used the illegitimate child in the plot of *Jane Eyre* to bring the two main characters, Jane and Rochester, together. In *Jane Eyre*, Adèle Varens is the illegitimate daughter of Rochester and his French mistress, Céline Varens. The Byronic Rochester is unwilling to admit his paternity, but he does play the role of guardian for the child. Charlotte's more mature writing in *Jane Eyre* allowed her to make the use of an illegitimate child an even greater significance. The illegitimate child, Adèle, came to represent the abandoned child who, along with the heroine, also needed to find all-encompassing love.

Although Charlotte's novel *Jane Eyre* is more realistic than her juvenilia, it still contains some of the romantic aspects of her juvenile fiction. One such aspect is her frequent inclusion of incidents involving the supernatural. "The Secret," one of the early stories in Charlotte's juvenilia, contains a description of a supernatural incident. In this story, the heroine, Marian, had believed for quite some time that the husband of her youth had drowned in a shipwreck. Nonetheless, a letter arrives stating that Marian's husband Henry is alive and well. Marian calls off her engagement to her new love, Douro, and begins mourning his loss. One night when Marian is

in the park, the figure of a young man startles her. He glides toward Marian and tells her he is Henry. This ghost of Henry has come back to tell Marian that he is drowned and lying at the bottom of the sea. The grotesque vision of the ghost of Henry tells Marian to move on with her life and be happy, which she eventually does.²¹ Supernatural figures and voices also appear to Jane Eyre before she must make changes or decisions in her life. When Jane's guardian, Mrs. Reed, punishes Jane by locking her in the red-room, Jane sees a gleam of light on the wall. Jane says that she thought "the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. . . . a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings" ²² At a later point in the novel, Jane discovers that the man she is about to marry, Rochester, is still married to another woman. Rochester proposes that Jane be his mistress, and Jane must refuse this offer. When Jane retires to her room, she falls asleep and dreams of the red-room of her childhood. Once again the light comes to her, but this time the light becomes Jane's mother. Jane says that "it spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart -- 'My daughter, flee temptation.' " ²³ At what is perhaps the most critical moment of decision in Jane's life, another supernatural incident occurs. As Jane is debating whether or not to accept St. John Rivers' proposal of marriage, she gets a strange, startling feeling that "acted on my [Jane's] senses as if their utmost activity hitherto had been but torpor, from which they were now summoned and forced to wake. . . . I heard a voice somewhere cry -- 'Jane! Jane! Jane!' -- nothing more." ²⁴ Jane recognizes the voice as that of Edward Rochester and feels that he is in pain. Jane calls out to Rochester that she is coming to him, and later Rochester

tells the story of hearing Jane's voice cry out to him foretelling her return. Charlotte thus repeats her use of supernatural visitations proceeding major decisions in both the juvenilia of her youth and her mature novel.

Yet another incident which gives a sense of the long preparation out of which *Jane Eyre* grew is that of the mysterious stranger in distress and the ministering Good Samaritan. In the juvenilia story "Lily Hart," Mr. Seymour is found wounded on the doorstep of the Hart home. Lily Hart and her mother take the stranger into their home and minister to his needs out of the goodness of their hearts. The stranger gives the Harts his name, but later one learns that this is not his true identity but an alias he has adopted to protect himself. During the time that Mr. Seymour is recovering in the Hart home, a friendship and relationship develops between Mr. Seymour and Lily Hart. In a replication, Charlotte repeats the incident found in the juvenilia in *Jane Eyre*, only this time the situation is reversed. St. John Rivers, whose juvenilia prototype was Mr. Seymour/John of Fidenia, is the Good Samaritan, and the female, Jane Eyre, is the suffering stranger. As was the case in the juvenilia, the mysterious stranger would like to keep her true identity a secret, so she offers the Rivers family an assumed name, Jane Elliott. Over time, the Rivers family helps Jane recover and get back on her feet. While this is taking place, she is also developing relationships with St. John Rivers and his sisters. The relationship between Jane and St. John does not develop as far as Lily Hart and Mr. Seymour's relationship develops, however. Although St. John proposes to Jane, they do not truly love each other as the fairy-tale couple Lily Hart and Mr. Seymour do. Thus, courtship and marriage are not the result of this assumption of a false identity.

In addition to the incidents mentioned previously, Charlotte Brontë focused some of the conflict in *Jane Eyre* upon a dilemma Charlotte had touched on many times in her juvenilia writings: adultery. During the period in which Charlotte was writing her juvenilia, she focused on aspects of relationships, especially the many infidelities of Zamorna. Zamorna had several mistresses and was known for tossing women to the side when he tired of them. At the time Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre*, she decided to develop this issue again in her novel. Rochester is tricked into marrying an insane wife and then having to live with this "marriage." He is very bitter about this situation and travels around the world trying to fulfill his needs in meaningless relationships. Rochester eventually admits to Jane that he has had three mistresses and abandoned all of them in despair. Rochester proposes that Jane be his mistress because he truly loves her and she is his "genius for good or evil."²⁵ Jane must wrestle with this proposal just as an earlier heroine in Charlotte Brontë juvenilia had to wrestle with the idea of being a mistress for the man she loved. Elizabeth Hastings in "Captain Henry Hastings" was wooed by Sir William, but her moral conscience and self-respect did not allow her to follow the passion of her heart. Similarly, Jane Eyre must deny her love for Rochester and leave him until the situation of a life with him is feasible for both her heart and her conscience.

Charlotte Brontë's masterpiece *Jane Eyre* progressed in many ways from Charlotte's apprenticeship writing. Understandably, some of this progress was the result of her maturation and the ensuing development of her ability to create more complex plot structures. At the same time, Charlotte was able to work into her mature plots some incidents which she

had previously used in her juvenilia, the early juvenile works which gave Charlotte an opportunity to explore ideas and discover situations she would like to explore further. In the next section, we will take a closer look at some of the themes to which these repetitions point.

IV

Although the characters, plot, and settings may change, Charlotte Brontë carries some of the same themes throughout her body of literary work. Several of the themes upon which Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* revolves first appear in her juvenilia. This demonstrates once again that the precursors for *Jane Eyre* can be traced back to the apprenticeship writing known as Charlotte Brontë's juvenilia. Charlotte's work with her juvenilia in the topics of love, passion, and morality was a training exercise for her further work in these topics in her novel, *Jane Eyre*.

One major thematic concern of Charlotte Brontë was the ability to find true love without compromising one's integrity. Clearly, this theme plays a great role in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë's bildungsroman. *Jane Eyre* presents a girl emerging into womanhood with a need to love and a need to be loved. The problem which arises is where to find that love and still retain her own person and integrity. Jane believes she has found that love in Edward Rochester, but his love will require her to forfeit her integrity and become Rochester's mistress, a kept woman. Jane refuses to commit adultery not only because of the moral obligations she feels, but because she will not compromise her ability to be somebody in her own right, a woman of achievement and integrity, not someone's mistress.

This theme appears in Charlotte's earlier works as well. For example, in "The Secret" Marian is devastated to learn that she may have been committing bigamy for years because her first husband is not dead as she believed. Marian makes the painful decision that she will have to leave her current husband, Douro, and forego true love for the sake of her integrity and Douro's. However, Marian's first husband is indeed dead, and Marian does not have to compromise her integrity or give up true love. Much like the character Jane Eyre, Marian's reward of happiness comes without the heroine compromising her integrity. The juvenilia stories "Mina Laury" and "Caroline Vernon" also contain a similar theme. The heroines in these stories strive toward true love without compromising their integrity, but, unfortunately, they are unable to achieve this happiness. Mina and Caroline have decided to be the dependent mistresses of their loves and in the process they have had to give up their individual status and integrity. Another juvenilia heroine whom Charlotte uses to demonstrate her theme of passion and suffering is Elizabeth Hastings in "Captain Henry Hastings." Elizabeth is wooed by Sir William and then taken aback when he proposes that she be his mistress. Elizabeth's moral conscience and self-respect force her to refuse Sir William's offer. Elizabeth is tempted and torn by her passion and the desire for love, but she would suffer the miseries of self-hatred if she compromised her integrity.

Another position which Charlotte explores both in *Jane Eyre* and in stories of the juvenilia is the issue of what is morally right versus what is convenient or desirable. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester is tricked into marrying an insane woman. He must then live with the consequences of that action, but

Rochester feels that he should be allowed to find happiness and love. It is convenient for Rochester to travel away from home and his insane wife, pretend she does not exist and have mistresses to attempt to find love. When Jane comes into Rochester's life, he finds the love for which he was looking, but he deceives Jane because it is the way to get what he desires. This action only leads to disaster because it is not the decent or morally correct action to take. Inevitably, Jane cannot bring herself to do the desired, convenient thing but instead makes the moral choice. Jane flees and Rochester is severely punished by losing his love, his home, and his eyesight.

Not only is the theme of moral righteousness versus convenience important in *Jane Eyre*, but it is also important in Charlotte's juvenile work. The problems that arise in "The Secret" are a result of characters choosing the path of convenience rather than the path of moral rectitude. Marian would not have suffered through the heartache of believing she would have to leave Douro if she had confided in him and not been deceitful. In "Mina Laury," Mina is exploited and Zamorna's wife is mistreated because Zamorna has decided that he will live his life as he desires rather than living a righteous life. Zamorna deceives, uses, and mistreats these women in his life because the arrangement gives him all that he desires. Charlotte's stories "Caroline Vernon" and "Captain Henry Hastings" also focus on this dilemma. Sir William does not want to marry Elizabeth Hastings. Instead, he proposes an arrangement of adultery and forces Elizabeth to make a choice that requires her to leave her love. Caroline Vernon seems to desire autonomy, but she becomes the mistress of Zamorna because it is what she believes she wants and it is what is convenient for Zamorna.

Some of the suffering that takes place in the work of Charlotte Brontë is caused by the difficult decisions which must be made. These decisions are often a battle between the individual conscience and group pressure. The character of Jane Eyre struggles through many difficult decisions and must listen to the voices of her conscience and those of society. Jane must make decisions about what she wants from life; she must decide whether she will be able to survive as an autonomous woman without submitting to the pressures of society, pressures driving her towards stability and possibly subservience. When Rochester proposes that she be his mistress, one of the battles Jane fights is reconciling what her heart says with what her conscience says with what group pressure dictates. Another decision involving Jane's individual conscience and group pressure is generated by the loveless but rational marriage proposal she receives from St. John Rivers. Jane knows that the marriage would make sense in the eyes of society and religion, but she cannot live without the love she once knew.

The stories of Charlotte's juvenilia contained this theme of individual conscience versus group pressure long before *Jane Eyre* existed. The heroine Marian in "The Secret" has her problems develop because she listens too intently to the voices of those around her and does not trust her own instinct. Elizabeth Hastings listens both to her individual conscience and what she believes society would think when she decides that she must refuse Sir William's adulterous proposal. In "Captain Henry Hastings" Charlotte explores this struggle as she depicts Elizabeth's decision. Charlotte also explores this theme again in "Caroline Vernon." Caroline is young and has lacked the proper guidance in her upbringing when she is faced with the

decision to be Zamorna's mistress. The pressure that she perceives is the pressure to be exciting and worldly like her guardian about whom all of her friends gossip. Caroline's individual conscience is not developed enough to provide much of a struggle and she becomes Zamorna's mistress.

The themes which Charlotte Brontë first began to develop in her juvenilia writings are another group of threads later woven into Charlotte's classic *Jane Eyre*. Not surprisingly, Charlotte transplanted the themes on which most of her juvenile work focused to the longer and more in-depth format of the novel. As Charlotte wove these threads together, she added the experience of years of maturation and a new, more personable and realistic aspect that would make the novel lasting and memorable even if the precursors, her juvenilia writings, were largely overlooked by the reading public.

V

As Charlotte Brontë matured and became more experienced, her ideas and attitude toward writing began to change. Charlotte began to think more about the process of writing itself. As Charlotte grew older and her writings became less and less a children's fantasy game, she developed conflicting feelings toward her choice to write. Charlotte's mother had died when Charlotte was very young, and as the oldest living daughter Charlotte had many responsibilities. These familial duties of a Victorian woman were in conflict with Charlotte's emotional need to express herself. If she persisted in writing, she might be neglecting her duty to her father and family. According to Christine Alexander, Charlotte suspected her impassioned

dreams were unhealthy and now the very act of committing them to paper was to be associated in her mind with guilt.²⁶ The elements of conflict which complicated Charlotte's attitude towards her writing affected both her subject matter and the style of her narration. The ambiguity of Charlotte's feelings about her writing had its roots in the fact that she delighted in stories of love and sexual passion, yet she felt a moral discomfort over the nature of her material. As a woman and a Christian she seems to have felt considerable unease about her favorite subject matter. Additionally, Charlotte was afraid that in writing she was tending to neglect the duties proper to a woman in her situation. There was also Charlotte's intellectual conviction which Christine Alexander addresses in her writings on Charlotte's juvenilia. Charlotte's belief was that the head and not the heart should rule, a conviction which many of her juvenile stories seem designed to overturn.²⁷ It would be several years before Charlotte could begin to accept her position in society and develop a more critical attitude towards her writing. It was after this maturation and acceptance that Charlotte began to develop *Jane Eyre*.

When Charlotte Brontë began to weave together the many threads that would become her novel *Jane Eyre*, she made several choices about what to echo from her early writing and what to change. Charlotte had matured and experienced more life since the writing of her juvenile fantasies. This new fund of experience is apparent in the more realistic approach which Charlotte combines with the romanticism of her earlier writing. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte finds a successful compromise between the utterly romantic and the realistic.

Charlotte also decided to make a few stylistic changes in her writing when she created *Jane Eyre*. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte tries to work within a smaller framework with a tight interrelationship of characters and plot. This marks a departure from the sprawling framework of the Angrian juvenilia. Charlotte also dispenses with the male narrator she had used throughout her juvenilia. This distant, cynical male voice had protected Charlotte from her attachment to the passionate world of Angria. Using a male narrator was one of the factors which allowed Charlotte to distance herself and, we might conjecture, feel less guilty about her passionate creations. By taking on the female voice as narrator, Charlotte seemed to make a greater emotional commitment to *Jane Eyre*. The female narrator allowed Charlotte's writing to become more autobiographical and more realistic. By this point in her life, Charlotte had learned that her narrator and heroine might share the same experiences.

Clearly, at the age of thirty-one when Charlotte wrote her novel *Jane Eyre*, she was not the same innocent young girl who had begun writing stories at the age of thirteen. Many incidents and crises occurred in her life in the intervening years. Charlotte became the care-giver of the Brontë family, nurturing, nursing, and worrying about the family's members. She also spent time as a frustrated and exhausted governess/teacher in Roe Head School. Charlotte developed relationships with several men, most notably the Belgian director of a school, Heger, a married man. It was during Charlotte's experience as a teacher in Brussels that she fell in love with Heger and had to reject her feelings because any sort of relationship between the two was made impossible by his marriage. All of these incidents, as

well as Charlotte's general maturation over the years, contributed to the creation of the Charlotte Brontë who would pen *Jane Eyre*. However, it is clear that many of the characters, incidents, and themes which Charlotte concentrated on in *Jane Eyre* grew out of the juvenilia she wrote during her process of maturation.

Although the mature Charlotte Brontë's experiences were replacing the childhood fantasies of Angria, occasionally the characters, incidents, and themes would smack of the old imaginary world. This is quite understandable considering the vast portion of Charlotte's life spent creating this imaginary world of Angria. Even though the immense body of works that makes up Charlotte's juvenilia has been largely forgotten or overlooked by most readers, this by no means negates its value. The writings themselves lacked a true emotional connectivity with the reader mostly because of the distanced narrator. The works also were too romanticized, too neatly packaged, and too idealized, but they provided Charlotte Brontë a chance to develop many of the skills which would help make her mature writings a success.

As I have demonstrated, many of the characters, incidents, and themes of Charlotte's juvenilia foreshadowed what was to come in her later work, specifically in *Jane Eyre*. While the juvenilia itself might not have been truly great literature, its end result was the production of a masterful writer.

Notes

- ¹Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), 1.
- ²Barbara and Gareth Lloyd Evans, *The Scribner Companion to the Brontës* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1982), 156.
- ³*Ibid.* 164
- ⁴Winifred Gérin, "Introduction," *Five Novelettes* (London: Folio, 1971), 15.
- ⁵Christine Alexander, *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 2.
- ⁶Charlotte Brontë, "Lily Hart," in William Holtz, ed. *The Secret and Lily Hart: Two Tales by Charlotte Brontë* (Columbia: U of Missouri Press, 1979), 68.
- ⁷Charlotte Brontë, "Mina Laury," in Gérin, ed. *Five Novelletes*, 160.
- ⁸*Ibid.* 165
- ⁹*Ibid.* 160
- ¹⁰Gérin, "Introduction," 11.
- ¹¹"Lily Hart" 67
- ¹²Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 371.
- ¹³Alexander 243.
- ¹⁴Charlotte Brontë, "A Peep Into a Picture Book," in T.J. Wise and J.A. Symington, eds. *The Miscellaneous and Unpublished Writings of Charlotte and Patrick Branwell Brontë*, Vol. 8 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938), 358-59.
- ¹⁵*Jane Eyre* 151.
- ¹⁶Gérin, "Introduction," 15.
- ¹⁷Alexander 216.
- ¹⁸Charlotte Brontë, "Caroline Vernon" in Gérin, ed. *Five Noveletes*, 364.
- ¹⁹Charlotte Brontë, "Captain Henry Hastings" in Gérin, ed. *Five Novelettes*, 208-09.
- ²⁰*Jane Eyre* 162.

²¹Charlotte Brontë, "The Secret" in Holtz, ed. *The Secret and Lily Hart: Two Tales by Charlotte Brontë*, 59-60.

²²*Jane Eyre* 49.

²³*Ibid.* 346.

²⁴*Ibid.* 444

²⁵*Ibid.* 339.

²⁶Alexander 228.

²⁷*Ibid.* 228.

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