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ROMANTIC REALISM IN CHARLOTTE BRONTÉ

By

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CHAPTER I

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES AFFECTING CHARLOTTE BRONTÉ

It is a singularly difficult task to analyze the motives and influences affecting another; and, when the subject has the delicate genius of Charlotte Brontë, accompanied by the sad limitations of her actual experience, it is still more difficult to maintain a judicial attitude in the analysis of the motives and attitudes.

There is so much of sadness and so little of joy in the brief years of Miss Brontë's life that the serious student is tried by the requirement of impartial judgment. A rigidity of purpose takes discipline, for natural sympathies with a life narrowed by circumstance and harassed by a lack of opportunity to expand as fully as possible are inevitably aroused.

Since the connotation of terms imposes further problems upon one presuming to discuss the "romantic realism" of Miss Brontë, it is expedient here to eliminate confusion by a definition of terms. It is of particular importance to note that personal expression Miss Brontë voiced in her letter written on April 2, 1849, to Mr. William Smith Williams, her publisher's reader, when she definitely upholds her realistic purpose in the face of criticism:

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1 Mr. William Smith Williams occupied for many years the post of "reader" in the firm of Smith and Elder.
... You both of you dwell too much on what you regard as the artistic treatment of a subject. Say what you will, gentlemen—say it as ably as you will—truth is better than art. Burns' Songs are better than Bulwer's Epics. Thackeray's rude, careless sketches are preferable to thousands of carefully finished paintings. Ignorant as I am, I dare to uphold and maintain that doctrine.

The obvious evidence which attests to the fact that Miss Brontë's novels are constructed out of the events actually experienced by herself plus the personal expression above quoted justifies the assumption that "realism" and "truth"—that is, truth in the sense of being true-to-life—were synonymous in her artistic purpose.

Regarding the romantic element in Miss Brontë's realism no doubt can arise. Certainly there can be no argument to shake the fact that she was a romanticist—a reassertor of the imagination and sentiment. The furor occasioned by the publication of her decidedly different Jane Eyre is ample testimony of the fact that Miss Brontë's individualism in thought and

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3 Miss Brontë's novels are discussed in Chapter III of this paper.
expression was not unrecognized by the Victorian reading-
4 public.

Her own defense of the importance of the play which
imagination must make upon realism to make truth better and
more desirable Miss Brontë records in a letter written November
6, 1847, to George Henry Lewes when she wrote:

. . . You advise me, too, not to
stray far from the ground of experi-
ence, as I become weak when I en-
ter the region of fiction; and you
say 'real experience is perennially
interesting, and to all men,'

I feel that this also is true;
but, dear sir, is not the real ex-
perience of each individual very
limited? And, if a writer dwells
upon that solely or principally, is
he not in danger of repeating him-
sel£, and also of becoming an ego-
tist? Then, too, imagination is a
strong, restless faculty, which
claims to be heard and exercised;
are we to be quite deaf to her cry,
and insensible to her struggles?
When she shows us bright pictures,
are we never to look at them, and

4 David Cecil, Early Victorian Novelists (New York:
Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1955), p. 121, states:

With her [Charlotte Brontë] the hero or heroine for the first time steps
forward and takes a dominating position on the
stage; and the story is presented, not through
the eyes of impersonal truth, but openly through
her own.

5 Lewes was one of the earliest of Miss Brontë's
critics.
try to reproduce them? And when she is eloquent, and speaks rapidly and urgently in our ear, are we not to write to her dictation? 6

Substantially, then, Miss Brontë's artistic purpose included true-to-life realism upon which she played the color of an imagination candidly rich in its effect. How much more effectively her work might have been developed and how much further the uplifting influence of her imagination upon her realism might have deepened had her artistic purpose flowered fully in a sympathetically broad environment can only be conjectured. Conjecturing of this sort is wholly beyond the scope of this study, for its primary purpose is to show that Charlotte Brontë's works bear constant testimony to the lack of harmony between her artistic purpose and the means which her experience gave her of carrying out this purpose successfully.

Certainly the study of the facts of Miss Brontë's life at once arouses pity that it fell to her fortune, as an artist and moralist, to deal--despite all her efforts to the contrary--with the petty or the unreal. Pity, however, is tempered by awe of and appreciation for the intrepid and independent spirit which a frail body habited a spirit which evoked the sincere tribute recognizable in these words:

As for me, whenever a purple sunset streaks the West, whenever the moon rises "in an element deep and splendid," whenever the soul swells with killing pains on silent moon-filled nights, I think of Charlotte Brontë. I think of the pang of all the world, the unutterable cries, the howls, the stifled sobs, which well up into the pitying skies, and shine there on the stricken earth. Whenever I lie awake in the night watching listening to the wind, I think of a pure uplifted face at a parsonage lattice in a Yorkshire wilderness: God and the awful stars above, the graves of buried loves beneath, and all about the ineffable haunting witchery of the long-whispering moors.

Charlotte Brontë's immediate paternal ancestry amply provided the possibility that her intrepid spirit was an honest legacy. Patrick Brontë, her Irish father, was born in County Down, Ireland, into a family of ten children. Ambition seemed a natural part of him, for he displayed schoolmaster ability at the age of sixteen and at twenty-five left his native Ireland.


8 Shorter, Life and Letters, Vol. 1, pp. 23-24, states:

In the register of baptisms his name is entered, as are those of his brothers and sisters, as "Brunty" and "Bruntee"; and it can scarcely be doubted that . . . the original name was O'Prunty, Lord Nelson's dukedom of Bronte . . . probably suggested the more ornamental surname.
to enroll in St. John's College, Cambridge, from which he entered upon a curacy at Wethersfield in Essex after taking orders in 1806.

Opposition of the uncle of Mary Burder, whom Patrick Brontë courted during this first curacy, prevented their marriage; and it is probable that this opposition rankled the young Irish curate. Nevertheless, in 1809 he left Wethersfield for Dewsbury and two years later obtained a third curacy at Hartshead, near Huddersfield, where he met and courted Maria Branwell from Penzance. At this time Miss Branwell was visiting in the home of her Yorkshire uncle, Mr. John Fennell. Following their marriage in 1812 the Brontës lived for five years at Hartshead.


10 Ibid., p. 25, states that Mr. Brontë met Mary Burder when he lodged at the house of her aunt, Miss Mildred Davy, and an obdurate uncle spirited her out of the neighborhood so that they never met again. However, it is possible that in 1821 he asked her to become step-mother to his six motherless children and that she refused.

11 Dewsbury and Hartshead are in Yorkshire; Penzance is in Cornwall.

12 Fennell was appointed the first Governor of Woolhouse Grove School, which was opened in 1812. He was the only layman who ever had that post.
The Hartshead years brought to the Brontës their oldest daughters, Maria and Elizabeth; but it was not until the family removed to Thornton, near Bradford, that the third daughter, Charlotte, was born on April 21, 1816. Subsequently, the family increased to include one son, Branwell--born in 1817--and two younger daughters, Emily and Anne--born in 1818 and 1820 respectively. In 1820, too, the family moved again to the parsonage of Haworth, which was destined to be their permanent residence.

Haworth's importance as an environmental factor of Charlotte Brontë is justification for a description of its physical aspects. A steep, narrow, rough road led through the village, past the church, and to the parsonage itself. Surrounded by majestically wonderful moors the house appeared comfortable and roomy although the outlook from the front was desolate and the proximity of the tombstones in the adjacent churchyard did not minimise the desolation.

In 1821 the first sorrow came to Charlotte with the loss of her mother. She was but five years old, and it does not require much imagination to visualize the sadness of the

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13 Thornton is situated near Bradford.

14 Mr. Bronte received the perpetual curacy of Haworth, six miles from Thornton.

Brentë home where six young children were left motherless and the curate-father, never rich in worldly goods, was faced with housekeeping as well as curate duties. In desperation he asked his late wife's sister, Miss Elizabeth Branwell, to leave her home in Penzance to act as housekeeper and foster mother to his family. It is more than probable that parish worries and personal sorrow combined to make the curate-father unaware of all the requirements of children's sensitive souls.

Furthermore, Miss Branwell—doubtless seriously assuming the responsibility in the Haworth parsonage—was inclined to rigidity in dealing with the children. She was zealous in caring for the physical welfare of her motherless nieces and nephew, but her father undemonstrative nature was calculated to deepen the void created by the loss of a mother's affection.

In view of the circumstances affecting her early life it is easy to understand the desolation Charlotte's sensitive soul must have known during these early years. A quotation from a letter written by Charlotte to Ellen Nussey on February

16 Shorter, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 68, states further that Miss Branwell had paid an earlier visit to her brother-in-law's home in Thornton and that, while she missed her sunny Cornish home, she remained until death at Haworth because she felt it was her duty.

17 Shorter, The Brontës and Their Circle, p. 50.

16, 1850, awakens in the reader a sensibility of her lifelong longing to have known her mother:

A few days since, a little incident happened which curiously touched me. Papa put into my hands a little packet of letters and papers, telling me that they were mama's, and that I might read them. I did read them, in a frame of mind I cannot describe. The papers were yellow with time, all having been written before I was born. It was strange now to peruse, for the first time, the records of a mind whence my own sprang; and most strange, and at once sad and sweet, to find that mind of a truly fine, pure, and elevated order. They were written to papa before they were married. There is a rectitude, a modesty, a sense, a gentleness about them indescribable. I wish she had lived, and that I had known her. — 19

Considerable was the discipline imposed upon the young Brontës, but it must be remembered that strict discipline was fashionable in the early nineteenth century. Servants intimated later that the Brontë children were unusually quiet, caused little trouble to their busy father, and were obedient to their aunt and servants. Thrown upon their own resources, they spent much time alone in the dining-room, which was also used as a family sitting-room, turning their pent-up energies toward the construction of numerous lengthy, highly imaginative stories. The bent toward literary expression was not unnatural, for both

19 Shorter, The Brontës and Their Circle, pp. 44-45.
parents contributed to the heritage.

It is in Charlotte's early literary efforts that the magnificence of the prolific imagination that was to color her later work may be noted in its unaffectedly childish form. Her stories apparently cover a period of approximately ten years—from her thirteenth to her twenty-third year—and show a remarkable abundance of childish fancies. Written microscopically and on cheap paper they unconsciously lend proof that economy was a necessary rule of the Haworth parsonage.

The subject-matter of these early literary efforts is also most interesting. Mr. Brontë's habit of discussing seriously with the children daily current events bore fruit in one respect. One can imagine the interest with which Charlotte followed the career of the Duke of Wellington, reading avidly every

21 Shorter, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 29, states:

With the letters [Maria Branwell's letters to Patrick Brontë during his courtship] I find a little manuscript, which is also of pathetic interest. It is entitled 'The Advantages of Poverty in Religious Concerns' . . . It abounds in the obvious. At the same time, one notes that from both father and mother . . . was inherited some measure of the literary faculty.

Ibid., p. 30, states: Mr. Brontë . . . published, in all, four books, three pamphlets, and two sermons. . . .

22 Ibid., p. 71.
available scrap of information concerning him and his family and making him the hero of childish dreams. Until her eighteenth year he and his children were the absorbing heroes of her fairy tales and modern stories, and it is a source of never-ending wonder that several of these stories exceed twenty thousand words in length.

Besides the regular lessons which she said to her father and the learning of household arts under her aunt's supervision, Charlotte was able to acquire a great deal of miscellaneous information for herself. Until her eighth year, however, Charlotte's environment centered about the home at Haworth. Then came her first formal school experience at Cowan Bridge School, to which she and Emily were brought in August and September, respectively, of 1824.

Cowan Bridge School figured so largely in Miss Brontë's life that it will bear comment and study. Its founder was a wealthy clergyman living near Kirby Lonsdale—the Reverend William Carus Wilson—whose enormous energies were altruistically

23 Shorter, The Brontës and Their Circle, pp. 56-57.

24 White, op. cit., p. 46.

Chapter III of this paper discusses the effects of this early work on Miss Brontë's later work.

25 Gaskell, op. cit., p. 49, states further that Cowan Bridge was on the coach-road between Leeds and Kendal, easily reached from Haworth.
motivated—although often misdirected through his thirst for au-
26
thority. He purposed to found a school for the education of
poor clergymen's children and spared no sacrifice in the estab-
ishment of Gowan Bridge. Unfortunately, the school site was
chosen for its easy accessibility rather than for its healthful
and sanitary atmosphere, and a former bobbin-mill housed damp
classrooms and dormitories.

Since the parents of students were required to make only
very small payments, which covered but meagerly the cost of food
and lodging, the school's administration was largely dependent
upon subscriptions. Untried schemes are seldom well-underwritten,
and Gowan Bridge School was no exception. Responsibility
for the administration of the school weighed heavily upon the
shoulders of the Reverend Mr. Wilson, and he felt the necessity
of strict economy. This he enforced by frequent, personal in-
27
spection. This is on Bridge School Lane and witnesses had been
seen.

From the dietary available in manuscript form it appears
that wholesome, but plain, meals were planned. However, al-
though the food ordered personally by Mr. Wilson was good, the
wasteful, careless, and dirty cook set such disagreeable meals

26 Friends of Mr. Wilson were indignant at Miss Brontë's
characterization of him as the Mr. Brocklehurst of Jane Eyre,
and an attempt was made to vindicate him. See the note on
pp. 49-50 of Gaskell, pp. 313.

27 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
before them that the children's appetites were destroyed and their bodies suffered malnutrition.

It is probable that Mr. Wilson's egotistic authority successfully masked whatever kindliness he might have shown on his tours of personal inspection, and this fact—coupled with the fact that the cook had slyly gained his confidence—effectively silenced any protests that might have been made by children or by teachers. Had Mr. Wilson known the true state of affairs and been cognizant of their detrimental effects on health, he very likely would not have tolerated the condition. Excease may be found for his lack of investigation in the fact that sanitation and health were not emphasized during these early nineteenth century years, and he did not realize the cumulative effect on children's bodies of daily loathing for and rejection of food placed before them.

To this Cowan Bridge School Maria and Elizabeth had been brought in July, 1824; and in their steps followed Charlotte in August and Emily in September. The experiences which came to Charlotte here must have burned deeply into her soul, for she translated practically every one of them with heart-rending pa-

28 Gaskell, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

29 Ibid., p. 57, states that:

... he [Mr. Wilson] lectured them the students on the sin of caring ever-much for carnal things.
thos into Jane Eyre. Lack of sufficient good food, long and
cold walks to and from services on Sundays, unsympathetic treat-
ment of physically ill and soul-impoverished girls were thorns
in the flesh of the sensitive, independent Charlotte. Acquas-
tomed to the tender motherliness of her eldest sister, Maria,
it was almost more than she could bear to see the beloved 'lit-
tle mother' subjected to abuse.

Spring, 1825, found Maria's physical condition alarming
enough that Mr. Brontë was summoned. Since he had been kept
unaware of her increasing physical weakness, his shock at see-
ing her can only be imagined. Within a few days after she was
taken home Maria died of consumption. Elizabeth's symptoms
likewise became alarming enough that she, too, was sent home
where she died also of consumption just a few months after
Maria.

Now again was Charlotte's life saddened by death. Just
nine years old, the sudden responsibilities of eldest sister in
a motherless family must have startled her. It must have been
difficult for her to realize any justification for the sacri-

30 Chapter III of this paper contains a discussion of
Jane Eyre.

31 Gaskell, op. cit., p. 57.

32 Ibid., p. 58, tells the story of Miss Scatcherd's
physical cruelty inflicted upon the seriously ill Maria Brontë,
who did not feel well enough to arise one morning.
office of her sisters' lives, and many tears were probably occasioned by the remembrance of "... how anxiously her dear sister Maria had striven, in her grave, earnest way, to be a tender helper and a counsellor to them all..." The duties of eldest sister must have seemed to Charlotte "almost like a legacy from the gentle sufferer so lately dead."

It must have cost Charlotte dearly to return to the scene of her sisters' illness, but she was schooled in the necessity for keeping her feelings controlled and stoically accepted the fact that she and Emily were to return to Cowan Bridge after the midsummer holidays of 1825. Probably she was already aware of the necessity of education if she were to fulfil her role of eldest sister effectively. The fact remains that she did return to school. It was not for long, however, because the dampness of the school's situation seemed to the new young school authorities unhealthy for the young Brento girls, and they were advisedly returned home before the end of the year.

Until January, 1831, Charlotte remained at home. Proficient in Housekeeping matters, she strove to live up to the

33 Gaskell, op. cit., p. 33.
34 loc. cit.
35 Ibid., p. 63, states:
... the damp situation of the house at Cowan Bridge did not suit their health.
tender responsibility she felt for her brother and sisters. Emily and Anne were companionable playmates; Branwell was her dear, precocious brother; Charlotte held them all together with close ties of love. Many were the hours they spent together writing and reading their efforts to each other. Gentle approval Charlotte must have given to all these literary struggles, at the same time finding vent for her own intense spirit in the composition of her first literary efforts.

The six years immediately following the Gowan Bridge interlude were not entirely devoid of happiness. True, the current of underlying sorrow ran deep, but there were happy aspects. There is evidence that the children loved and admired their father. Charlotte in particular was devoted to him and has recorded his pride in his children's successes. The servants, Martha Brown—who remained with Mr. Brontë until his death—and Nancy Garrs, spoke of him as a kindly man and a good father. He did not oppose his children's spending much time in literary pursuits considered absurd by highly talented and widely read

37 See footnote 24 of this chapter.
38 White, op. cit., pp. 44-45.
pursuits, rather—she encouraged worthwhile activity and was in
the habit of discussing interesting public news with them.

Miss Branwell, too, did not demand too much of the
children. They were allowed considerable freedom and were left
an abundance of time alone to follow their own inclinations.
The home was well kept, the girls were trained in household du-
ties, and whatever discipline she imposed upon her young charges
Miss Branwell imposed from the kindest intentions. Evidence
points to the fact that the children were particularly dear to
her.

A third person made these years happier at Haworth par-
sonage. This was the elderly woman of the village who came to
the parsonage as a servant. Tabby—as she was affectionately
called—was a member of the household for thirty years. Typi-
cally Yorkshire, she was practical, shrewd, and kindly. Al-
though her discipline of the children was sharp, she tempered
it with small treats which she never considered a trouble. Hum-
bly she considered herself a family friend and was treated as

40 Besides providing the money for Charlotte’s and
Emily’s Brussels trip, Miss Branwell remembered her nieces in
her will. For an interesting discussion of the will see
such.

Tabby's Yorkshire heritage had acquainted her with the legendary "fairy" lore of the country, and many were the yarns she detailed to the eager young Brontë ears. She censored nothing in the telling—family tragedies, superstitious dooms, bygone days of the country-side—all tales were fervidly related and probably still more fervidly enhanced by lively young imaginations. It is scarcely to be wondered that Charlotte's imagination received considerable impetus from the absorption of these tales, and Tabby's graphic Yorkshire dialect must frequently have made the drab Haworth home and the sombre moors surrounding it take on a magic unreality.

January, 1831, when Charlotte was fifteen years of age, she was again sent to school. This time she became a pupil of the Misses Wooler at Roe Head, a distance of about twenty miles

41 Gaskell, pp. 64-65, relates an interesting comment of Charlotte's:

... Miss Brontë told me that she found it somewhat difficult to manage, as Tabby expected to be informed of all the family concerns, and yet had grown so deaf that what was repeated to her became known to whoever might be in or about the house. To obviate this publication... Miss Brontë used to take her out for a walk on the solitary moors; where, when both were seated on a tuft of heather, in some high lonely place, she could acquaint the old woman, at leisure, with all she wanted to hear.

42 Ibid., p. 65.
from Haworth. The quiet and thoughtful Charlotte—small for her age and not especially arresting in appearance except for beautiful hair and intelligently expressive eyes—must have marveled at the pleasant cheerfulness of the country surrounding Roe Head in comparison with her own sombre Haworth home.

At Roe Head Charlotte was unaffectedly happy. The Misses Wooler were sympathetic teachers; the number of pupils was small—thus eliminating a necessity for rigid discipline of hours and classes. Charlotte's personality bloomed, and—despite her lack of social grace—she became a favorite among the students. Short-sightedness prevented her from becoming proficient in outdoor games, but she was good sport enough to try. In the classroom she studied with fierce concentration and made great progress scholastically. Her classmates regarded her

43 Miss Margaret and Miss C. Wooler were both very kind to Charlotte. Roe Head was a cheerful, roomy country house situated on the right side of the road going from Leeds to Huddersfield.

44 Shorter, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 89, quotes from Miss Tussey's personal narrative as follows:

A black ribbon, worn in the style of the Order of the Garter, which the pupils passed from one to the other for any breach of rules, unladylike manners, or incorrect grammar [was one of Miss Wooler's two badges of conduct]. . . . I never remember her [Charlotte] having it. The silver medal, which was the badge for fulfilment of duties, she won the right to in her first half-year. This she never afterwards forfeited, and it was presented to her on leaving school.
with respect for her accomplishments and with appreciation for
the entertaining narratives with which she harrowed their souls
at night.

Non-social habits were but the result of Charlotte's
narrow life; they were not inherent in her nature. She had a
natural faculty for making and keeping friends; originality and
sincerity made her a favorite; her keen intelligence commanded
respect. At Bee Head she developed both in mind and in person-
ality. Here, too, Charlotte formed friendships with Ellen Mus-
sey and Mary Taylor--friendships which lasted a lifetime and
which have immeasurably added to the student's appreciation of
Miss Brontë.

Through the correspondence Miss Brontë carried on with
Ellen Nussey--letters generously shared by Miss Nussey--insight
into the character of the writer is afforded that could never
be as unaffectedly granted through a less personal medium.

While it is unfortunate in the interest of the delineation of
Miss Brontë's character that Miss Taylor unceremoniously de-
stroyed correspondence from her friend and she student is indig-


46 Ellen Nussey was Miss Brontë's correspondent through-
out the latter's entire life.

It was the friendships of Mary Taylor and her sister
Martha which eased the loneliness of Charlotte and Emily during
time in Brussels.
nant with her wasteful destruction, one cannot help but admire the motive of reticence Miss Taylor displayed.

In 1832 Charlotte left Bee Head to instruct her younger sisters at home. This she did willingly, meanwhile continuing a correspondence with her friend Ellen Mussey. It is the earliest of these letters sent to Miss Mussey that affords an insight into the heart-breaking legacy of hopelessness with which Charlotte's early life had endowed her. So early and vivid a schooling by death, so much responsibility—these were the combination which bred in the sensitive soul a recognition of the transient quality in human affection and which found expression in these words written to her friend on January 13, 1832:

The receipt of your letter gave me an agreeable surprise, for, notwithstanding your faithful promise, you must excuse me if I say that I had little confidence in their fulness, knowing that when schoolgirls once get home they willingly abandon every recollection which tends to remind them of school, and indeed they find such an infinite variety of circumstances to engage their attention, and employ their leisure hours, that they are easily persuaded that they have no time to fulfil promises made at school. It gave me great pleasure, however, to find that you and Miss Taylor are exceptions to the general rule. . . .

48 Ibid., p. 93.
The following few years found Miss Brontë occupied with reading, writing, instructing, and domestic duties. The monotony of the days was pleasant—for that Charlotte's own word may be taken. The correspondence carried on with Miss Hassey and with Miss Taylor undoubtedly did much to develop her literary expression, for she was forced to find fresh subject-matter outside the confines of her daily activities. Accordingly, she did considerable reading and commented upon the books in her letters. Apparently Miss Hassey shared Charlotte's zest for reading, for references in the latter's letters indicate an interchange of critical opinions. Occasional visits at each other's homes whetted the girls' appetites for further and frequent correspondence.

In 1835 Miss Brontë returned to Roe Head in the role of governess. Little is known of this year, but Mary Taylor has intimated that Miss Brontë kept the position only from a sense of duty. When in 1836 the school was moved to Dewsbury Moor,

49 See Sharer, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 94, for a letter to Ellen Hassey on this subject. In it Miss Brontë says, "Thus, in one delightful, though somewhat monotonous course, my life is passed..."

50 Ibid., pp. 99, 111.

51 Ibid., p. 117, quotes Mary Taylor's narrative as follows: "... She seemed to have no interest or pleasure beyond the feeling of duty."
children of Mr. John Benson Sidgwick at Stonegappe. While it was an unsuccessful experience in some ways—that is, judging from her correspondence of the time—it did afford her an opportunity to be at Swarcliffe and to hear the story of the mad woman who was associated with the mansion. This story she used advantageously in *Jane Eyre*.

In March of 1841 Miss Brontë entered upon her most enjoyable governess experience in the family of a Mr. John White. The kind-hearted atmosphere of the home appealed much to Charlotte, and she found herself happier in this position than she had been in any she held thus far. However, concern over Anne’s ill health brought to a head Charlotte’s dream of establishing a school. It seemed to her that this was the most satisfactory way of assuring independence for the family.

Over the lives of all the Brontë girls was the constant shadow of poor health. The bodily frailty inherited from their mother, the unfortunate circumstances of Cowan Bridge days, and the damp English climate each contributed to their early and un-

54 Stonegappe was about four miles from Skipton. The house was situated on the side of a hill overlooking the valley of a stream called Lothersdale Beck.


timely death. That Charlotte's awareness of the increasing debility of her dearly-beloved sisters brought particular suffering to her is shown in her correspondence and by her efforts to lessen the tax on their bodies.

Another cloud appeared on the horizon of Haworth parsonage. Mr. Brontë's eyesight began to fail, and it was necessary that he have help properly to fulfil his rapidly growing parish duties. The several curates who lived with the Brontë family at the parsonage for this purpose were generally disliked by Charlotte. However, the cloud had a silver lining, and their characters provided Charlotte with stimulus for her fictional characterizations. Also, surprisingly enough, she eventually married the last of them, the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, on June 29, 1854.

57 See later pages of this chapter for excerpts from this correspondence.

58 Shorter, *The Brontës and Their Circle*, p. 259, lists the curates as follows: Mr. Hodgson, Mr. William Weightman, Mr. James Smith, and Mr. Arthur Nicholls. Mr. De Renzi, who succeeded Mr. Nicholls when the latter's interest in Charlotte had displeased Mr. Brontë, was never liked by Mr. Brontë and was finally transferred in favor of Mr. Nicholls's return to Haworth.

59 See Chapter III of this paper.

60 Shorter, *The Brontës and Their Circle*, p. 475, states that the marriage terminated with Charlotte's death, due to an illness incidental to childbirth, on March 31, 1855. Mr. Nicholls remained at Haworth for the six remaining years of Mr. Brontë's life. Subsequently he returned to Ireland and later married again.
They wanted learning. They came for learning. They would learn. Where they had a distinct purpose to be achieved in intercourse with their fellows, they forgot themselves; at all other times they were miserably shy. 63

However, since Charlotte’s friend, Mary Taylor, and her sister Martha were staying just outside of Brussels and their cousins were residents in the town, social life was pleasant too.

Three months after her arrival in Brussels Charlotte made the acquaintance of the Wheelwrights. There were five sisters, daughters of a doctor in Lower Phillimore Place, Kensington. The doctor had come to Brussels for his health, and the girls were day boarders at the Héger Pensionnat. The English manners of Léa-titia, then about fourteen years of age, made an instant appeal to Charlotte, and the friendship proved mutually worthwhile.

The original plan was for Charlotte and Emily to spend six months in Brussels. However, the Hégers were pleased with the studious progress made by the English girls and made an offer to them to stay longer in the role of teachers as well as students. Although no salary was offered, it was considered an

63 Gaskell, Ed. Lit., p. 199.
64 Ibid., p. 215.
advantageous arrangement. Unfortunately, this further Brussels stay was interrupted by the fatal illness of Miss Branwell, and the girls hastily departed for Haworth. Monsieur Héger wrote a letter of condolence to Mr. Brontë in which he mentioned appreciation for the characters of both girls and a wish that they might continue their instruction and teaching in Brussels.

Mr. Brontë's pleasure at the educational progress of his daughters, together with the evident advantage of further instruction, influenced the family's decision; and January of 1843 saw Charlotte on her way to Brussels alone. Since Anne had been offered a suitable governess position at this time and Emily—never wholly comfortable in Brussels—was glad to remain at home as housekeeper, this was thought to be the most expedient arrangement. However, Emily's absence from Brussels left Charlotte lonely indeed.

So many things contrived to make Charlotte aware of her loneliness. She was alienated from those dear to her and from familiar country. She was the product of militant Protestantism amid Romanism from which her soul recoiled. There was, however, friendship with M. Héger, especially, and the Brussels sojourn bore fruit in Miss Brontë's most perfected novel, Villette. Her eager mind stored persons and events, mixed them imagina-

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67 See Chapter III of this paper.
tively, and set them down forever to be relished by thoughtful readers.

Opinion concerning Miss Brontë's feeling for M. Héger has occasioned much comment. It is certain that, in the person of the professor, Charlotte for the first time out of her home circle met a man whose intellectual attainments inspired her admiration. Correspondence which has been brought to light indicates that her feeling for him was deep. Nevertheless, her unwitting arousal of the jealous Madame Héger's suspicions and the obvious necessity for an abrupt termination in December of 1843 of her Brussels stay undoubtedly occasioned much distress to Charlotte's puritanical heart. For justification of this additional sadness in Charlotte Brontë's life one is inclined to agree with the words which link Charlotte and Emily together:

Thus, from the romantic viewpoint, for Charlotte and Emily the Brussels period ended sadly, but from the aspect of their work, it had given insight into their capabilities without which it is extremely doubtful that they would have reached the heights and produced their works which were to live for all time.

It has been previously mentioned that Charlotte took

68 White, op. cit., pp. 146-150, quotes excerpts from four letters written to M. Héger by Charlotte after her return to England the second time.

69 Ibid., p. 152.
her "eldest sister responsibility" very seriously. Seldomly a
more closely united family exists in literary history than the
three Brontë sisters and the one brother. All were united in
the wish that Branwell should be instructed in art and all hoped
that he would enjoy outstanding success in this field. The only
son and brother was given lavish attention, and the pain he oc-
casioned the devoted sisters and father by his willful and weak
waste of precious talents is expressed poignantly after his
death in Charlotte's letter to Mr. Williams on October 2, 1848:

. . . The removal of our only brother
must necessarily be regarded by us ra-
ther in the light of a mercy than a
chastisement. Branwell was his father's
and his sisters' pride and hope in boy-
hood, but since manhood the case has been
otherwise. It has been our lot to see
him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect,
await his return to the right path; to
know the sickness of hope deferred; the
dismay of prayer baffled; to experience
despair at last—and now to behold the
sudden early obscure close of what might
have been a noble career.

I do not weep from a sense of bereave-
ment—there is no prey withdrawn, no con-
solation torn away, no dear companion
lost—but for the wreck of talent, the
ruin of promise, the untimely dreary ex-
tinction of what might have been a burn-
ing and shining light. My brother was a
year my junior. I had aspirations and
ambitions for him once, long age—they
have perished mournfully. Nothing remains
of him but a memory of errors and suffer-

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70 Shorter, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 452. The
girls, too, had a limited amount of artistic ability.
ings. There is such a bitterness
of pity for his life and death, such
a yearning for the emptiness of his
whole existence as I cannot describe.
I trust time will allay these feel-
ings. 71

The events which followed Branwell's untimely death
brought additional sorrow to Charlotte Brontë. Deeply she
loved Emily, the staid. In spite of the fact that they had at-
tended school in Brussels together, the elder sister had never
come very near to Emily in thought or sympathy. There was a re-
 mote quality in Emily—perhaps it might be termed diffident shy-
ness—which never quite responded to Charlotte as it did to the
gentle nature of Anne, and there was an aloofness in Emily's
affection for the Haworth moors that was never quite understood
by Charlotte. Taciturn, but with a well of kind strength, Emily
was as beloved by her elder sister as by her younger although
she was closer to the latter.

Charlotte's alarm at Emily's growing physical weakness,
her horror at the realisation of the recurring imminence of
death—these are revealed in her correspondence of 1848. Ex-
cerpts paint the pitiful picture powerfully in Miss Brontë's
own words:

... I told you Emily was ill, in

my last letter. She has not rallied yet. She is very ill. I believe, if you were to see her, your impression would be that there is no hope. A more hollow, wasted, pallid aspect I have not beheld. The deep, tight-cough continues; the breathing after the least exertion is a rapid pant; and these symptoms are accompanied by pains in the chest and side. Her pulse, the only time she allowed it to be felt, was found to be 115 per minute. In this state she resolutions refuses to see a doctor; she will not give an explanation of her feelings; she will scarcely allow her illness to be alluded to. Our position is, and has been for some weeks, exquisitely painful. God only knows how all this is to terminate. More than once, I have been forced boldly to regard the terrible event of her loss as possible and even probable. But nature shrinks from such thoughts. I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in this world. 73

Again she writes:

... I can give no favourable report of Emily's state. My father is very despondent about her. Anne and I cherish hope as well as we can, but her appearance and her symptoms tend to crush that feeling. Yet I argue that the present emaciation, cough, weakness, shortness of breath are the results of inflammation, new, I trust, subsided, and that with time these ailments will gradually leave her. But my father shakes his head and speaks of others of our family once similarly afflicted, for whom he likewise persisted in hoping against hope,

and who are now removed where hope and fear fluctuate no more. There were, however, differences between their case and hers--important differences, I think, I must cling to the expectation of her recovery, I cannot renounce it.

Finally the resigned acceptance of Emily's death is penned:

Emily suffers no more from pain or weakness now. She will never suffer more in this world. She is gone, after a hard, short conflict... Yes; there is no Emily in time or on earth now. Yesterday we put her poor, wasted, mortal frame quietly under the church pavement. We are very calm at present. Why should we be otherwise? The anguish of seeing her suffer is ever; the spectacle of the pains of death is gone by; the funeral day is past. We feel that she is at peace. No need now to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them. She died in a time of promise. We saw her taken from life in its prime. But it is God's will, and the place where she is gone is better than she has left.

It is in this same letter that Charlotte goes on with somewhat of a premonition regarding still another sorrow she must bear--the death of her youngest sister. She continues:

... God has sustained me, in a way that I marvel at, through such agony as I had not conceived. I now look to Anne, and wish she were well and strong; but she is neither; nor is papa...

75 Ibid., p. 15.
76 Ibid. cit.
In spite of the best medical aid obtainable and a willingness on the patient's part to do all required to regain strength, she grew weaker steadily. The following words, penned in January of 1849, are proof that Charlotte recognized that she must again be resigned to the death of a loved one:

... When we lost Emily I thought we had drained the very dregs of our cup of trial, but now when I hear Anne cough as Emily coughed, I tremble lest there should be exquisite bitterness yet to taste. However, I must not look forwards, nor must I look backwards. Too often I feel like one crossing an abyss on a narrow plank—a glance round might quite unnerve. ... Anne is very patient in her illness, as patient as Emily was unflinching. I recall one sister and look at the other with a sort of reverence as well as affection—under the test of suffering neither has faltered.

Anne died shortly after this letter was written.

Sombre Haworth moors, searing Cowan Bridge, four bereavements by unrelenting death—these could scarcely be balanced by happy, all-too-brief comradeship at home, delightful memories and friends of Roe Head days, and the not-unalloyed pleasure of the Brussels sojourns. Out of these environmental influences—predominately sad in tone, and pitifully limited in scope—Charlotte Brontë's genius was to struggle unsuccessfully to harmonise her artistic purpose of romantic realism with the limited means her life's experience afforded.

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCES OF LITERARY STUDIES PURSUED BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Many things enter into the environmental picture which produces an author at a given time. Not the least of these are the opportunities provided by circumstance for literary appreciation and evaluation. For this reason evidence showing what authors were read and studied by Charlotte Brontë during the days of her literary apprenticeship is a valuable aid in pointing the way in which her own genius developed.

That the Haworth parsonage atmosphere provided a peculiarly well-adapted background for the Brontë children's study of literature is shown in the following words regarding Mr. Brontë's provision for Branwell's education: "... Branwell worked hard in his father's study, and acquired a sound knowledge of the Classics as well as an enormous amount of valuable miscellaneous information. ..." Although only Branwell's name is mentioned, it may logically be inferred that the Brontë girls also had opportunities to read and study the Classics. Far from disapproving of his children's reading habits, Mr. Brontë presumably encouraged them, for "there is a copy of the Imitation of Christ extant, given to Charlotte in 1826, and there is evidence of other books having been read by the chil-

1 White, op. cit., p. 43.
Perhaps the most interesting of all the available evidence regarding the early literary interests of the Brontës is Charlotte's own account written when she was thirteen years old. It shows a remarkable appreciation and perception of the advantages of the excellent reading materials provided by Mr. Brontë.

The History of the Year 1829

Once papa lent my sister Maria a book. It was an old geography book; she wrote on its blank leaf, 'Papa lent me this book.' This book is a hundred and twenty years old; it is at this moment lying before me. . . . Papa and Branwell are gone to Keighley. . . . for the newspaper, the Leeds Intelligencer, a most excellent Tory newspaper, edited by Mr. Wood and the proprietor, Mr. Henneman. We take two and see three newspapers a week. We take the Leeds Intelligencer, Tory, and the Leeds Mercury, Whig, edited by Mr. Baines and his brother, son-in-law and his two sons, Edward and Talbot. We see the John Bull, it is a high Tory, very violent, Mr. Driver lends us it, as likewise Blackwood's Magazine, the most able periodical there is. The editor is Mr. Christopher North, an old man seventy-four years of age. . . .

Besides the personal library of their father the children had access to the library in Keighley, the broader horizon of which continued the development of their intelligent young


minds. Thus, although the Brontës lived in a tiny village, they were far from indifferent to world affairs. Politics, adventures, or literature provided basis of argument for the young Brontës, and

... as a result of their liberal reading they obtained a breadth of knowledge and became more than ordinarily acquainted with the works of Shakespeare, Swift, Johnson, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, and Byron; their knowledge of the Bible, too, was extensive and thorough. 4

The accessibility of reading materials was further enhanced by Mr. Brontë's ideas for his children's education. "He allowed them to browse among their books as they liked, he encouraged free discussions, and only interfered in arguments when invited to do so." 5

That these early opportunities for reading and discussion were valuable to Charlotte cannot be denied, and special evidence of this may well be noted in the words of both Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor, her Bee Head friends. The latter expressed herself on the matter in this way:

... we thought her very ignorant, for she had never learnt grammar at all, and very little geography.

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4 White, op. cit., p. 44.

5 Lee, cit.
She would confound us by knowing things that were out of our range altogether. She was acquainted with most of the short pieces of poetry that we had to learn by heart: would tell us the authors, the poems they were taken from, and sometimes repeat a page or two, and tell us the plot. . . .

Someone at school said she 'was always talking about clever people—Johnson, Sheridan, ' etc. She said, 'Now you don't know the meaning of clever. Sheridan might be clever; yes, Sheridan was clever—scamps often are—but Johnson hadn't a spark of cleverness in him.' No one appreciated the opinion; they made some trivial remark about 'cleverness', and she said no more. 6

The picture is further enlarged by Miss Mussey's comments:

. . . Miss Mussey's system of education required that a good deal of her pupils' work should be done in classes, and to effect this, new pupils had generally a season of solitary study; but Charlotte's fervent application made this period a very short one to her—she was quickly up to the needful standard, and ready for the daily routine and arrangement of studies, and as quickly did she outstrip her companions, rising from the bottom of the classes to the top, a position which, when she had once gained, she never had to regain, . . . She never exulted in her successes or seemed conscious of them; her mind was so wholly set on attaining knowledge that she apparently forgot all else.
Some of the elder girls, who had been years at school, thought her ignorant. This was true in one sense; ignorant she was indeed in the elementary education which is given in schools, but she far surpassed her most advanced schoolfellows in knowledge of what was passing in the world at large, and in the literature of her country. She knew a thousand things unknown to them.

... ... ... ... ... ... ...

I must not forget to state that no girl in the school was equal to Charlotte in Sunday lessons. Her acquaintance with Holy Writ surpassed others in this as in everything else. She was very familiar with all the sublimest passages, especially those in Isaiah, in which she took great delight. Her confirmation took place while she was at school, and in her preparation for that, as in all other studies, she distinguished herself by application and proficiency...

... ... ... ... ... ... ...

She was only three half-years at school. In this time she went through all the elementary teaching contained in our school-books. She was in the habit of committing long pieces of poetry to memory, and seemed to do so with real enjoyment and hardly any effort.

As has been mentioned in Chapter I her correspondence with Ellen Bussey provided an excellent medium through which to

note the developing personality of Charlotte Brontë. Thrown upon the resources of her mind in order to provide herself with material for letters Charlotte began discussing and commenting upon her current reading. Thus it is that one of her earliest criticisms appears in the letter written January 1, 1833, to Miss Russey:

... I am glad you like Kenilworth; it is certainly a splendid production, more resembling a Romance than a Novel, and in my opinion one of the most interesting works that ever emanated from the great Sir Walter's pen. I was exceedingly amused at the characteristic and naive manner in which you expressed your detestation of Varney's character, so much so, indeed, that I could not forbear laughing aloud when I perused that part of your letter; he is certainly the personification of consummate villainy, and in the delineation of his dark and profoundly artful mind, Scott exhibits a wonderful knowledge of human nature, as well as surprising skill in embodying his perceptions so as to enable others to become participators in that knowledge. 8

That her friend appreciated Charlotte's commentaries is evidenced by the fact that she requested a recommendation of reading material. Accordingly, a little more than a year later, Charlotte wrote a letter to Ellen in which the keenness of her personal literary evaluations is most obvious. On July 4, 1834, she wrote as follows:

... You ask me to recommend some books for your perusal. I will do so in as few words as I can. If you like poetry let it be first-rate; Milton, Shakespeare, Thomson, Goldsmith, Pope (if you will, though I don't admire him), Scott, Byron, Campbell, Wordsworth, and Southey. Now don't be startled at the names of Shakespeare and Byron. Both these were great men, and their works are like themselves. You know how to choose the good and avoid the evil; the finest passages are always the purest, the bad are invariably revolting; you will never wish to read them over twice. Omit the comedies of Shakespeare and the Don Juan, perhaps the Cain of Byron, though the latter is a magnificent poem, and read the rest fearlessly; that must indeed be a depraved mind which can garner evil from Henry VIII, Richard III, from Macbeth, and Hamlet, and Julius Caesar. Scott's sweet, wild, romantic poetry can do you no harm. Nor can Wordsworth's, nor Campbell's, nor Southey's—his greatest part at least of his—seems certainly objectionable. For history, read Hume, Boling, and the Universal History, if you can; I never did. For fiction, read Scott alone; all novels after his are worthless. For biography, read Johnson's Lives of the Poets, Boswell's Life of Johnson, Southey's Life of Nelson, Lachart's Life of Burns, Moore's Life of Byron, Wolfe's Remains. For natural history, read Bewick, and Audubon, and Goldsmith, and White's History of Selborne. For divinity your brother Henry will advise you there. I can only say adhere to standard authors, and avoid novelty. 9

Although there is probably no complete list of Miss Brontë's reading available, the preceding letter shows clearly that her reading was extensive as well as intensive. The judgments made and the advice given by an eighteen-year-old girl show that she was strong-minded. She had the courage of conviction, and it is significant that "she had reached maturity in part at least. She showed already a knowledge of the world's good and evil, and was not afraid to look at the facts of life squarely."

The five years following the Cefn Bridge interlude filled Charlotte's tenth through fifteenth years with memories of a "golden age." The leisure-time occupations of these years are most important in this study because it was during these years that the greatest influence of her reading may be noted in her own literary expression, and her future novels are partially based upon these early literary efforts. Of the hundred-odd little books recording the earliest Brontë literary expressions—these dramas, stories, poems, and romances—Charlotte's and Branwell's work form the greater part.

10 White, op. cit., p. 67.
11 Ibid., p. 42.
12 See Chapter III of this paper.
Literary games, plays, and stories were made vivid by the imaginations of the Brontë children, especially by Charlotte's and Branwell's. Branwell was the originator of the little periodical which was undoubtedly modelled after Blackwood's Magazine, a parsonage favorite, and which was called simply "Magazine." It was not long, however, before Charlotte realized the potential opportunity for expression afforded by this project, and she, too, contributed to it. Eventually she brought out several numbers herself, calling it "Young Men's Magazine." That Charlotte must have been particularly interested in the "Magazine" is evidenced in the words of Mary Taylor:

"... She [Charlotte] had a habit of writing in italics (printing characters), and said she had learnt it by writing in their magazine. They brought out a 'magazine' once a month, and wished it to look as like print as possible. She told us a tale out of it. No one wrote in it, and no one read it, but herself, her brother, and two sisters. She promised to show me some of these magazines, but retracted it afterwards, and would never be persuaded to do so. ..."

The reading material to which Charlotte had been exposed quite naturally colored her own literary work; for, as has been mentioned earlier, the events of her childhood were most unpre-


tentious. Since they could not provide her active imagination with enough 'real' experiences to stimulate it sufficiently, she was forced back upon the world of literature with which she had become acquainted.

Among the most pervasive of these influences was that of Byron. In 1829 Charlotte read her brother's copy of Byron's *Childe Harold*, and

though but dimly understanding the hero's character, she immediately grafted his salient qualities upon Arthur Wellesley, Marquis of Douro, elder son of the Duke of Wellington, thus creating a personality that dominated her imagination for the rest of her life. 16

As mentioned before in Chapter I the Duke of Wellington and his family were particularly interesting to Charlotte, and her imagination found release in her recording of the character of the Marchioness Marian continued as she was conceived--"a childish ideal conceived as a perfect companion for a high-minded and gifted youth, such as Charlotte's innocence at that time pictured Arthur Wellesley, the youthful Byron." 18

16 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 28.
17 Ibid., p. 74.
18 Loc. cit.
Herein Charlotte failed in her conception, for Marian was no suitable mate for the obnoxious—though glorious Devoe—of later days.

At the time when all the Brontë children began to invent stories, the Angrian cycle of tales was started by Charlotte and Branwell. From 1830 to 1835 all their manuscripts—some poetry excepted—related to the mythical Angria, the tales of which they started with the landing of the "twelve adventurers" on the 19 west coast of Africa.

Since the Brontës were well-versed in current history and many explorers were active during the nineteenth century, it was not strange that the young imaginations should be "fired with the desire to narrate exploits which centred in those parts of the world where exploration had been carried on," Africa, therefore, became the home of their patiently constructed stories.

Four specific illustrations of Byronic influence can be traced in Charlotte's Angrian tales. The first of these is found in a narrative depicting the Earl of Northangerland wherein the Earl analyzes his own character aloud "in terms intended to emphasize his Lucifer-like ambition, pride, and bit-

19 White, op. cit., p. 48.
20 Id. cit.
21 From The Angrian Adventurer.
terness, for Charlotte and Branwell, since reading Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Byron's *Cain*, were re-drawing Percy after their common hero."

The second illustration is found in *High Life in Newspaper*, a "delightful orgy of Byronism." The text begins by a paraphrase of a familiar passage from *Childe Harold*:

A golden day usurped the place of night,
For Africa's capital had gathered then,
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men.

The third illustration appears in a volume entitled *Corner Dishes*. Being a Small Collection of Mixed and Unsubstantial Trifles in Prose and Verse in which the "Stanzas on the Fate of Henry Percy" appear in the style of the *Childe Harold* verses. These stanzas mark the awakening of Charlotte "to a new conception of romantic love."

The fourth—and probably the most revealing illustration of Byronic influence is found in an example of *Don Juan* stanzas, which Charlotte wrote during the summer vacation of 1836. In these stanzas she "wove her brother's recent Angrian developments into a long untitled poem ... which measures her emo-

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22 Ratchford, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
23 Ibid., p. 84.
24 Ibid., p. 88.
tional growth through her year of exile. In some respects the most finished production of the Angrian cycle, this poem, with a later novel called Caroline Vernon, marks the culmination of the Byronic influence which had dominated her work since she first read Childe Harold in the latter part of 1829.

The admiration which Charlotte had for Scott was probably an influence of which she was more conscious. In her novel The Green Dwarf, a Tale of the Perfect Tense, Charlotte continued an innovation of Branwell's concerning his character 'Rogue' and made her story lend plausibility to Rogue's sudden appearance in the role of pirate by assigning him a romantic family background. . . . To this end she takes as her model for his reshaping Varney, the villain of Scott's Kenilworth, though she borrows most of the characters of her story and its plot incidents from Ivanhoe.

The influences of three poets—Byron, Wordsworth, and Keats—appear in The Violet, A Poem with Several Smaller Pieces by the Marquis of Deuro . . . Verses such as the following taken from the title poem of these selections echo Byron:

Greece, thy fair skies have flung their light On mightiest of this sunlit world;

25 Ratchford, op. cit., p. 88.
26 Ibid., p. 60.
Genius, enthroned in glory bright,
O'er thee her banner hath unfurled.

Now desolate, by time decayed,
Thy solemn temples mouldering lie:
While black groves throw Gimmerian shade
Beneath a still transparent sky.

Degenerate are thy sons, and slaves;
Athens and Sparta are no more;
Unswept by swans, Eurphidas laves
As yet its laurel-shaded shore. 27

One of the remaining four poems—"Lines on Seeing the Portrait of  ____ Painted by De Lisle"—was probably suggested by Wordsworth's "She Was a Phantom of Delight". Note the similarity:

Are thou then of spirit birth
And not a denizen of earth?
No! thou'ret but a child of clay,
Simply robed in white array;
Not a gem is gleaming there;
All is spotless snow so fair;
Symbol of thy angel-mind—
Meek, benevolent, and kind;
Sprightly as the beauteous fawn
Springing up at the break of dawn,
Graceful, bounding o'er the hills
To the music of the rills; 28

The companion pieces, 'Vesper' and 'Matin', strike a note somewhat new in Charlotte's poetry. The first echoes faintly of Keats, and were of Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence'.

27 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 47.
28 Ibid. cit.
29 Ibid. cit.
As a matter of interest in the development of Charlotte Brontë's literary background, it should be noted that "The Tragedy and the Essay"—from Arthuriana, or Odds and Ends—shows a remarkable knowledge of the drama and stage history of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries hardly understandable in the daughter of a rural clergyman. Undoubtedly her material was drawn from the library of Ponden House. Particularly, this story "illustrates the ease with which Charlotte assimilated her diverse reading, as contrasted to her brother's awkward borrowings."

During the Christmas holidays at Haworth in 1836 the Brontës discussed their future careers. Because of the important part literature played in the lives of all the children, it was only natural that the possibility of literary careers be discussed. Charlotte and Branwell determined to ask authoritative opinion on their writing, and proof of Charlotte's admiration for Southey is obvious in the fact that she wrote to him for advice on December 29, 1836, sending him some of her poetry for his critical study.

Not until the following March, when he returned to Kes-

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30 The sale catalog of Ponden House lists an exciting dramatic collection.

31 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 71.

32 White, op. cit., p. 79.
wick, did Southey answer her letter. The following excerpts exemplify the general friendly tone of his letter and are noteworthy for the advice he gave to the shy girl who awaited in trepidation his answer:

... You evidently possess, and in no inconsiderable degree, what Wordsworth calls the 'faculty of verse.' I am not depreciating it when I say that in these times it is not rare. Many volumes of poems are now published every year without attracting public attention, any one of which, if it had appeared half a century ago, would have obtained a high reputation for its author. Whoever, therefore, is ambitious of distinction in this way ought to be prepared for disappointment.

Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity. You will not seek in imagination for excitement, of which the vicissitudes of this life, and the anxieties from which you must not hope to be exempted, be your state, what it may, will bring with them but too much.

Write poetry for its own sake; not in a spirit of emulation, and not with a view to celebrity; the less you aim at that the more likely you will be to deserve and finally to obtain it. So written, it is wholesome both for the
heart and soul; it may be made the
surest means, next to religion, of
soothing the mind, and elevating it.
You may embody in it your best thoughts
and your wisest feelings, and in so do-
ing discipline and strengthen them. 33

While Charlotte was considerably crushed in spirit by
the advice she received from Southey, it was nevertheless in
keeping with her fineness of character that she wrote again to
him thanking him for the advice which must have pained her and
giving him to understand that her life was far from being wasted
in idle imaginings. One must admire a young girl who protects
the integrity of her personality against any onslaught—even
though it be made by none other than England's Poet Laureate.
The following excerpt from her letter establishes her integrity
beyond all doubt:

... My father is a clergyman of
limited though competent income,
and I am the eldest of his chil-
dren. He expended quite as much
in my education as he could afford
in justice to the rest. I thought
it was my duty, when I left school,
to become a governess. In that ca-
pacity I find enough to occupy my
thoughts all day long, and my head
and hands, too, without having a mo-
ment's time for one dream of the im-
agination. In the evenings, I con-
fess, I do think, but I never trou-
ble any one else with my thoughts.
I carefully avoid any appearance of

preoccupation and eccentricity, which might lead those I live amongst to suspect the nature of my pursuits. Following my father's advice--who from my childhood has counselled me just in the wise and friendly tone of your letter--I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I'm teaching or sewing I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself; and my father's approbation amply rewarded me for the privation. Once more allow me to thank you with sincere gratitude; I trust I shall never more feel ambition to see my name in print; if the wish should rise, I'll look at Southey's letter, and suppress it. It is honour enough for me that I have written to him, and received an answer. The signature which you suspected of being fictitious is my real name. Again, therefore, I must sign myself C. Brontë.

In answer to this letter Southey wrote a most gracious reply inviting Charlotte to visit him and giving her the following additional advice:

... It is, by God's mercy, in our power to attain a degree of self-government, which is essential to our own happiness, and contributes greatly to that of those around us. Take care of ever-excitement, and endeavour to keep a quiet mind (even for your health it is the best advice that can be given you); your moral and spiritual improvement will then

Following the well-meant advice of Southey, Charlotte wrote no more poetry, but she could not bear to be active with her desire to write. In the winter of 1839 she began a story which she submitted to Wordsworth for criticism. Although his letter to her apparently was not preserved, the fact that his comments were discouraging may be deduced from her reply to him; and— in addition— the reader is treated to a bit of Charlotte's rarely-expressed humor:

Authors are generally very tenacious of their productions, but I am not so much attached to this but that I can give it up without much distress. You say the affair is begun on the scale of a three-volume novel. I assure you, sir, you calculate very modestly, for I had materials in my head for half-a-dozen, No doubt, if I had gone on, I should have made quite a Richardsonian concern of it. Of course it is with considerable regret I relinquish any scheme so charming as the one I have sketched. It is very edifying and profitable to create a world out of your own brains, and people it with inhabitants, who are so many Melchisedecses, and have no father nor mother, but your own imagination.... I am sorry I did not exist fifty or sixty years ago, when the 'Ladies' Magazine' was flourishing like a great poplar tree. In that case, I make no doubt, my aspirations after literary fame would have met with due encouragement, and I should have had the pleasure of introducing Messrs.

Percy and Nest into the very best society, and recording all their sayings and doings in double-columned, close-printed pages. . . . I recollect, when I was a child, getting hold of some antiquated volumes, and reading them by stealth with the most exquisite pleasure. You give a correct description of the patient Grisels of those days. My aunt was one of them; and to this day she thinks the tales of the 'Ladies' Magazine' infinitely superior to any trash of modern literature. So do I; for I read them in childhood, and childhood has a very strong faculty of admiration, but a very weak one of criticism. . . . I am pleased that you cannot quite decide whether I am an attorney's clerk or a novel-reading dressmaker. I will not help you at all in the discovery; and as to my handwriting, or the lady-like touches in my style and imagery, you must not draw any conclusion from that. Several young gentlemen curl their hair and wear corsets, and several young ladies are excellent whips and by no means despicable jockeys. Besides I may employ an amanuensis. Seriously, sir, I am very much obliged to you for your kind and candid letter. I almost wonder you took the trouble to read and notice the novellette of an anonymous scribe, who had not even the manners to tell you whether he was a man or a woman, or whether his 'S. T.' means Charles Timms or Charlotte Tomkins.

As a Victorian novelist Charlotte Brontë belonged to the

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group of writers predominantly individualistic who were the product of that most individualistic of periods—the nineteenth century. Although her particular genius was deemed from the very start to flourish amid the commonplace and the limitations of circumstances of environment and opportunity caused her creative imagination to take refuge in fancy, her genius was individual and her opinions were decisively personal. She felt her right to disagree with prevailing literary opinion and—as in the cases of Wordsworth and Southey—protected the integrity of her personality. The following excerpts from her correspondence variously illustrate the force and vigor of her personal evaluations.

In letters to Mr. Williams, for example, Miss Brontë showed a variety of reactions, each of which was penned with undoubted sincerity. In the face of literary success she wrote humbly and with appreciation:

... Still I am persuaded every nameless writer should 'rejoice with trembling' over the first doubtful dawn of popular good will; and that he should hold himself prepared for change and disappointment; critics are capricious, and the public is fickle; besides one work gives so slight a claim to favour. 38

37 Cecil, op. cit., p. 16.
... You do very rightly and very kindly to tell me the objections made against 'Jane Eyre'--they are more essential than the praises... 39

However, though she was humble, she also defended herself against what she felt was unjust criticism. Particularly is this shown when she justified as follows her conception of the true-to-life characterization of Rochester's wife as depicted in Jane Eyre:

There is a phase of insanity which may be called moral madness, in which all that is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind and a fiend-nature replaces it. The sole aim and desire of the being thus possessed is to exasperate, to molest, to destroy, and a pretternatural ingenuity and energy are often exercised to that dreadful end. The aspect in such cases assimilates with the disposition; all seems demonized. 40

Again she took a firm defensive stand in these words:

... It would take a great deal to crush me, because I know, in the first place, that my own intentions were correct; that I feel in my heart a deep reverence for religion, that impiety is very abhorrent to me, and in the second, I place firm reliance on the judgment of some [Williams and Lewes] who have encouraged me... 40 None but

40 Ibid., p. 173.
a coward would let the detraction
of an enemy outweigh the encourage-
ment of a friend. 41

Just as uncompromising were Charlotte's comments on her
contemporaries' foibles. Of Thackeray, whom she greatly ad-
mired and to whom she dedicated the second edition of Jane Eyre,
she wrote:

... He seems terribly in earnest
in his war against the falsehood
and follies of 'the world'. I often
wonder what the 'world' thinks of
him. I should think the faults of
such a man would be distrust of any-
thing good in human nature--galling
suspicion of bad motives lurking be-
hind good actions. Are these his
feelings? ... Does he not too much
confound benevolence with weakness
and wisdom with mere craft? 42

Mr. Lewes, too,--he who had encouraged Charlotte to read
and to emulate Jane Austen's work--received these pointed re-
marks in answer to his suggestions:

If I ever do write another book,
I think I will have nothing of what
you call 'melodrama,' I think so, but
I am not sure. I think, too, I will
endeavour to follow the counsel which
shines out of Miss Austen's 'wild eyes',
'to finish more and be subdued' but
neither am I sure of that. When authors
write best, or, at least, when they
write most finently, and influence seems
to waken in them, which becomes their

42 Ibid., p. 160.
master—which will have its own
way—putting out of view all be-
hears but its own, dictating cer-
tain words, and insisting on their
being used, whether vehement or
measured in their nature, new-
moulding characters, giving un-
thought-of turns to incidents, re-
jecting carefully elaborated old
ideas, and suddenly creating and
adopting new ones. 43

Certainly, whatever the reader's judgment regarding the
worth of her novels, he cannot but realize in Miss Brontë's sin-
cerity the high plane of her literary standards. The basis for
these is evident in her comment to her publishers regarding the
slow progress of one of her novels:

Have you not two classes of writer--
Is it not because authors aim at a
style of living better suited to mer-
chants, professed gainseekers, that
they are often compelled to degenerate
to mere bookmakers, and to find the
great stimulus of their pen in the ne-
cessity of earning money? If they were
not ashamed to be frugal, might they
not be more independent? 44

Charlotte Brontë did indeed hold her literary profession
in high regard, and she never consciously betrayed it. Environ-
ment early taught her the lesson of resignation, and this be-
came her message to the world. Her resignation is not peaceful,

44 Ibid., p. 189.
however, for it "represents the pathetic side of receptivity."
Receptive she was—to the high romance of Scott, to the wild extravagance of Byron, and yet to the moral assurance of the Bible. Her mind was provincially bound on the one hand by circumstances and imaginatively aroused on the other by literature. For her literature represented escape and stimulated imagination. Unfortunately, lack of varied experience precluded the possibility that she should ever be able to evaluate romance and realism in the proportionate fusion demanded by her artistic purpose.

45 Bonnell, op. cit., p. 121.
CHAPTER III

ROMANTIC REALISM IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S LITERARY WORKS

In the autumn of 1845 Charlotte inadvertently discovered a volume of manuscript verse in Emily's script. Although Charlotte had known that her sister had written poetry, she was completely unprepared for the excellence of the verse. She found the poems "terse, vigorous, genuine, with a peculiar music--wild, melancholy, and elevating." Charlotte's keen, critical mind at once sensed that their universal appeal qualified them for publication.

There followed many hours of persuasion on Charlotte's part, for Emily resented intrusion into her private affairs and was furious at the discovery. Feeling that her eldest sister's interest in Emily's poetry extended to interest in hers, Anne generously offered Charlotte an opportunity to read her poetry also. After a period of much discussion and reasoning it was finally decided that they should jointly publish their poems under pseudonyms of Currer Bell, Ellis Bell, and Acton Bell, which would preserve their own initials and yet give no definite clue to their sex.

Since no publisher willing to assume publication risk

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1 Batchford, op. cit., p. 168.
2 Loc. cit.
could be found, the Brontës decided to publish "Poems, by Cur-rer, Ellis, and Acton Bell" themselves and paid Aylott and Jones, London publishers, thirty-one pounds ten shillings for the pub-

lication.

In May, 1846, the book was published, and methods of ad-

vertising were discussed by the authors. Eventually review
copies were sent to various magazines, and Charlotte's business
sense showed itself remarkably in words she wrote to the pub-

lishers requesting them to send her copies of papers in which
appeared reviews:

Should the poems be remarked upon
favourably it is my intention to
appropriate a further sum to ad-

vertisements. If, on the other
hand they should pass unnoticed or
be condemned, I consider it will
be quite useless to advertise as
there is nothing either to the
title of the work or the names of
the authors to attract attention
from a single individual.

3 Ratchford, op. cit., p. 169.

4 White, op. cit., p. 195, lists the following papers
which received copies and advertisements—Colburn's New Monthly
(Athensaeum), Bentley's Miscellany (Literary Gazette), Hood's
Magazine (Critic), Jerrold's Shilling Magazine (Times), Black-
wood's Magazine, The Dublin University Magazine, Daily News and
the Britannia Magazine, Fraser's Magazine, Chambers's Edinburgh
Journal, the Globe, and the Examiner.

5 White, op. cit., p. 196.
Favorable reviews being given by the *Athenaeum* and the *Critic*, Charlotte decided more should be spent on advertising; and, beneath each second advertisement, the following comment from a review was placed:

They in whose hearts are chords strung by Nature to sympathize with the beautiful and true, will recognize in these compositions the presence of more genius than it was supposed this utilitarian age had devoted to the loftier exercises of the intellect. 6

This comment was an heraldic announcement of the Bronte genius which was to reach later fruition.

In spite of Charlotte’s tremendous efforts and the praise of critics the only return to the authors of the production which had cost them a total of forty-six pounds was from the sale of two copies. Since poetry written by well-known authors does not always sell well, it was not surprising that more copies were not sold when the authors were wholly unknown.

The intrepid spirit of Charlotte was not to be discouraged, however, and she determined to bring the first of the younger Brontes’ publications to the attention of prominent authors among whom it is known were De Quincey, Tennyson, and Lockhart. Evidence shows that the following letter was probably

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6 White, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 198, states that the letter quoted has been found in biographies of De Quincey, Tennyson, and Lockhart.
sent to all of them:

Sir:

My relatives, Ellis and Acton Bell, and myself, heedless of the repeated warnings of various respectable publishers, have committed the rash act of printing a volume of poems.

The consequences predicted have, of course, overtaken us; our book is found to be a drug; no man needs it or heeds it. In the space of a year our publisher has disposed but of two copies, and by what painful efforts he succeeded in getting rid of these two, himself only knows.

Before transferring the edition to the trunk makers, we have decided on distributing as presents a few copies of what we cannot sell—we beg to offer you one in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works. I am, sir, your very respectfully,

Currer Bell

The above letter again allows the reader a glimpse of Charlotte Brontë's subtle humor, and her courage must be admired.

General acknowledgment is now given to the worth of the neglected little volume of Brontë poems. Emily has been described as "the finest woman poet who has ever lived"; Anne's verse primarily expressed personal religious doubts; Charlotte's poems show that she "wrote good verse easily, . . . . achieved ex-

8 White, op. cit., p. 199.
9 Lee, cit.
cellent effect with her movement and secured a harmonious 10 whole." However, it was unfortunate that what was probably the best of Charlotte's verse—that of the imaginary Angrian cycle—was omitted in favor of lesser examples of her poetry.

A search for the reasons behind Charlotte's lack of success as a poet leaves room for considerable conjecture. One observation may in truth be made—there is nothing but invariable romance in her poetry; the combination of realism, as she conceived it, and of romanticism is lacking. Her poetry was of the earlier periods of her writing; she had not yet found her true medium for expression. Above all, emotional pressure which "forces itself into rhythmic pattern of expression" is lacking, and the imaginative experience is incomplete. Her poetry "not only does not move...it does not give...the pleasure that comes of witnessing expert accomplishment."

Nevertheless, although Charlotte was not herself a first-class poet, her zeal was responsible for the publication of her sister Emily's poems. Furthermore, her shrewd comment in the biographical preface she later wrote to accompany posthumous publication of Emily's poems established her ability for critical evaluation. Her evaluation has since been confirmed by

10 White, op. cit., p. 201.

later critics. These are her own words:

The book was printed; it is
scarcely known, and all of it
that merits to be known are the
poems of Ellis Bell. The fixed
conviction I held, and held of
the worth of these poems has not,
indeed, received the confirmation
of much favourable criticism; but
I must retain it notwithstanding. 12

Compensation for the lack of a true poetic gift was
given to Charlotte Brontë, however, for though "it was denied
her to write poetry in verse, . . . out of her great desire to
write poetry, it was given her to write poetry in prose." 13

Charlotte's literary appetite was now whetted to the
point where she proposed to her sisters that they each write a
novel for publication. This proposal brought forth The Pro-
fessor by Charlotte, Wuthering Heights by Emily, and Agnes Grey
by Anne. Filled with enthusiasm for the joint project, Charlotte
wrote as follows to the publishers of her poems:

April 6, 1846

Gentlemen:

G. K. and A. Bell are now prepar-
ing for the Press a work of fiction,
consisting of three distinct and un-
connected tales which may be pub-
lished either together as a work of
3 volumes of the ordinary novel size,
or separately, as single volumes, as


13 Cornelius Weygandt, "Spectacle of the Brontës," A
Century of the English Novel (New York: The Century Company,
1925), p. 121.
shall be deemed most advisable.

It is not their intention to publish these tales on their own account.

They direct me to ask you whether you would be disposed to undertake—after having of course by due inspection of MSS. ascertained that its contents are such as to warrant an expectation of success.

An early answer will oblige as in case of your negativing the proposal inquiry must be made of other Publishers. I am, Gentlemen, Yours truly,

C. Brontë

Aylott and Jones, with evident remembrance of the lack of success the Poems had suffered, refused the novel publication. There followed a period of repeated refusals of the manuscript of The Professor—a period which would have given Charlotte great discouragement had her mind not been ripe for creative writing.

About August 20 of 1846 Charlotte accompanied her father to Manchester where his eyes were to undergo an operation for the removal of cataracts. The trip was rewarding in more ways than one; for, besides the successful operation which allowed them to return to Haworth the last of September, Charlotte returned with the work well along on her second novel, Jane Eyre.

Perhaps as has been said,

She was now in a position to know success was bound to come, she was aware of her powers, and so in the bewilder-

ment of a strange house, the distress of her father's operation, the coming and going of doctors and nurses, she brought into being that magnificent work of her genius, Jane Eyre. 15

When, upon submitting The Professor once again to a publisher and receiving—along with a courteous refusal of the manuscript—encouragement from the publishers Smith, Elder and Company that a work in three volumes would meet with careful attention, Charlotte submitted to them Jane Eyre on August 24, 1847. It was accepted on September 24 and was ready for sale on October 2. October 16, 1847, Jane Eyre astonished the world with immediate success. "Charlotte Brontë had arrived, not quietly, nor slowly, but in a blaze of publicity."

Charlotte's success was enhanced by the fact that Emily's and Anne's novels, too, were accepted by the publisher, Thomas C. Newby. Thus, although Newby required the authors to pay a part of the publication cost, "the astounding fact remains, and as long as this world lasts it will be astounding, that these three sisters had succeeded in producing three books accepted for publication, two at least of which [Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights] were marked afterwards as works of genius."

15 White, op. cit., p. 207.
16 Ibid., p. 208.
17 Ibid., pp. 208-209.
Time has given credence to the assertion of the Westminster Review that Jane Eyre could be considered the "best novel of the season" in 1847. The book holds well its position among the classics of the world because of its timelessness. No matter when it is read one "feels that time cannot wither it nor custom stifle its infinite variety." It has . . . defects, but over them all strides Charlotte's genius, and the passionate love story of the plain little governess and her Rochester constantly enthralls."

Realism and romanticism were strangely combined in this epoch-making novel. An analysis reveals that, while the characters, the events, the situations, and the places may have been to some extent--transactions of Charlotte's own personal experiences, there was a definite connection between the highly imaginative romances of her early writing and her later work. The tracing of this connection is enlightening, to say the least.

Tiny booklets which bear dates prior to Charlotte's entrance at Roe Head in January, 1831, have counterparts of the Reed family, of Rochester, and of Rochester's mad wife as they appear in Jane Eyre. Also, the novel's essential parts were complete before Charlotte relinquished Angria in 1839 or 1840, although "as a plot entity it is a product of the year between

late summer 1846 and 1847."

Specifically, in "The Silver Cup", published in the Bronte children's "Young Men's Magazine" for October, 1829, the Dunally family appears. Comparison of individual members of this family with those of the Reed family establishes similarities. Note first the resemblances between Mrs. Reed and Lady Dunally:

Lady Dunally was a comely woman of thirty "a person of great management and discretion," weakly indulgent to her children, who defied her, violent in temper when angered, and quite capable of lying when it suited her purpose. Mrs. Reed "might be . . . six or seven and thirty . . .; she was an exact, clever manager, her household and tenantry were thoroughly under her control; her children, only, at times defied her authority, and laughed it to scorn; she dressed well, and had a presence and port calculated to set off handsome attire." She was vindictive and cruel to Jane, and lied about the child's character to the Reverend Mr. Brocklehurst. And when Jane's rich uncle came to claim her, she told him that Jane was dead.

There are family scenes similar in tone:

The picture of Lady Dunally in her parlor, reading to Augusta, who busied herself with sewing while Gina was kept quiet by a bribe, is developed by a mature hand into the opening scene of Jane Eyre: "The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their
mama in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fireside, and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarreling nor crying) looked perfectly happy."

Eliza Reed resembles Augusta Dunally:

Augusta Dunally, "given to being rather mystical among others," sewing while her mother read to her, becomes Eliza Reed, always busy at her own little work, affecting an air of mysterious superiority to her brother and sister, carefully gathering and saving her money while they waste theirs, and, in her grown-up years, fanatically ritualistic.

Henry Dunally lends himself to the characterization of John Reed:

Henry Fearnothing Dunally, named for his uncle, and much like him, is an equally clear forecast of John Reed. Henry is indifferent to his mother's feelings and enjoys seeing her brother hanged, thus bringing distress and disgrace upon his family. John Reed is heavy of body and dull of mind, with "not much affection for his mother and sisters," cruel to helpless things. In the end his selfish dissipation brings his mother in sorrow to the grave. Mrs. Reed, in her last delirium, declares, "John is like me and my brothers—he is quite a Gibson."

Georgiana Reed has a counterpart in Gina Dunally:

Gina Dunally, "a pet" and her mother's favorite, is easily elaborated into Mrs. Reed's darling Georgiana, fair as wax-work, whose pink cheeks, languishing blue eyes, and golden curls purchased indemnity for every fault, though she had "a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite, and a captious and insolent carriage."

Lastly, Captain Dunally forecasts Mr. Reed:
ton is the character of Bertha, who appeared in Charlotte's "The Green Dwarf", which she wrote in 1833 as an adaptation of Scott's Ivanhoe.

Problems of proportion and emphasis arose in connection with the adaptation of her early work which Miss Bronté had to make in Jane Eyre. This adaptation required ingenuity, and displayed

her success in reducing stars to minor roles, even to foils for other stars... Rochester's ward Adele and Adele's mother, Celine Varens, his former mistress, who in Angrian days enjoyed the monopoly of one entire novel and numerous pages in other stories, here serve as mere plot agents, yet without the slightest change in nature. 25

Although Helen Burns is not present in the Angrian stories and has been considered a portrait of Maria Bronté, Charlotte's eldest sister, "her prototype appears in the transition fragment of "The Ashworths" as Ellen Hall, the drudge of Miss Turner's fashionable school."

Plot incidents of Jane Eyre appear in Miss Bronté's earlier works in this manner:

Jane's fright in the Red Room of Mrs. Reed's home... has its


26 Loc. cit.
parallel in Lord Charles's several
ghostly adventures recorded in the
"Young Men's Magazine" . . .
Rochester's testing of Jane's love
in the garden of Thornfield . . .
comes from Charlotte's first love
story.
Jane's temptation on the night fol-
lowing the frustration of her mar-
riage to Rochester; and the call and
answer between Rochester and Jane
... belong to her later Angrian
period. 27

The subtitle of Jane Eyre, An Autobiography, seems to be
literally interpreted when one remembers some facts about Jane.
When Jane at Lowood sees Helen Burns reading Johnson's Rasselas,
she pronounces it dull to her own taste because she found in it
no mention of fairies or semi--beings alive in Charlotte's
childhood fancy and early writings: Again, Jane--during her
last days at Lowood--voiced Charlotte's complaint made at Roe
Head when she was interrupted in her Angrian drama. Charlotte
said:

I was not free to resume the inter-
rupted chain of my reflections till
bedtime: even then a teacher who oc-
cupied the same room with me kept me
from the subject to which I longed
to recur, by prolonged effusion of
small talk . . . Miss Gryce snored
at last . . . I was disemmbarrassed
of interruption; my half-effaced
thought instantly revived.

27 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 211.
Jane's words, too, at one time indicate that Charlotte's thoughts were with the Angrians of her imagination:

Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story . . . and allow my mind's eye to dwell on whatever bright vision rose before it . . . Best of all to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended— a tale that my imagination created and narrated continuously, quickened with all the incident, life, fire and feeling that I desired and had not in actual existence. 28

In the midst of this romantic adaptation of childhood works, Jane Eyre abounds in the superficial realism lent by the easily-recognizable places. The more important ones include the following: Gateshead Hall, the Reed residence, was Stonegappe, near Skipton, Yorkshire; Lowood School was the Cowan Bridge School; Brocklebridge Church was Turnstale Church, which was about three miles from Cowan Bridge; the nearest town to Lowood School, Lewton, was probably the market town of Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmoreland; Millcote was probably Leeds; Thornfield Hall, Rochester's residence, was very likely suggested by two entirely different houses in West Riding of Yorkshire—one, Rydings at Birstall, and two, Norton Conyers, near Ripon; Ferndean Manor, Rochester's retiring-place after his wife's death, was evidently Wycoller Hall, near Colne.

Noteworthy parallels between characters and actual persons have been drawn, too. These include the following more important ones: Jane is the autobiographical Charlotte herself; Mr. Brocklehurst caricatured Mr. Carus Wilson of Cowan Bridge; Helen Burns was really Maria Brontë; Sir John Rivers was modelled after Reverend Henry Nussey; Miss Scatcherd, upper teacher at Lowood, was an adaptation of Miss Andrews, a teacher at Cowan Bridge School and noted for cruel harshness; Maria Temple, headmistress and superintendent of Lowood, was adapted from Miss Evans, Superintendent of Cowan Bridge School.

Following the publication of Jane Eyre, sorrow came to Charlotte Brontë. Branwell and Emily died; Anne was unwell; Jane Eyre was receiving unjustly severe criticism. In the midst of all her discouragement Charlotte had the fortitude to work on her next novel, finally to be called Shirley. Realizing that Anne was fighting a losing battle, Charlotte gave all her attention to waiting on her patient sister and tried to philosophize about her own troubles.

In the meantime Jane Eyre was far from being forgotten, and Charlotte’s publishers were eager for her next novel. Fin-
ally she sent them the first volume of *Shirley* and requested their opinions so that she might benefit by the criticism when she was able to complete the novel.

After Anne’s death Charlotte again began work on *Shirley*. Upon its completion at the end of August, 1849, she sent it to Mr. Williams with an accompanying letter in which she expressed a high-minded regard for her literary talent:

> The faculty of imagination lifted me when I was sinking three months ago: its active exercise has kept my head above water since: its results cheer me now, for I feel they have enabled me to give pleasure to others. I am thankful to God who gave me the faculty, and it is for me a part of my religion to defend this gift and to profit by its possession. 31

On October 26, 1849, *Shirley* was published in three volumes.

In *Shirley* is found the best illustration of the lack of success Miss Brontë suffered in accomplishing her artistic purpose. This novel “represents a compromise between conscience urging her toward outward realism, and her inner visions crying out for expression.” It was, also, even more than *Jane Eyre*, an amalgamation of Charlotte’s earlier Angrian stories, for its leading characters were truly conceived in the imagination.

31 White, *op. cit.*., p. 281.

32 Batchford, *op. cit.*., p. 214.
They save the novel from actual failure; Shirley Keelday, the Moore brothers, Hiram Yorke—all are, in spirit and in origin, Angrians. The retracing of Miss Brontë’s steps in formulating these leading characters is worthy of considerable attention.

Compare Charlotte’s earlier Percys with the character of Robert Moore:

Robert Moore spoke for the group when he said, “I am learning to be a naturalized Englishman; my foreign habits are leaving me one by one.” Yet in a certain respect the Moores are unique, for of all Charlotte’s naturalized Angrians they are the only ones to suffer essential change of nature in the process. Basically they are Edward and William Percy, the one elevated, the other dulled by interchange of qualities. Robert Moore is Edward Percy with his coarseness refined and his spirit enlivened by a liberal dash of Sir William Percy... From Edward he takes his handsome face and athletic body, his ambition, energy, and business acumen, his devotion to his own interest and his ruthlessness toward others, and his experience with mills, strikes, and riots—Edward Percy had faced many an Angrian mob. From Sir William he inherits his refined tastes, his quick wit, his capacity for dreaming, and the element of kindness in his nature—all those qualities that made Caroline Helstone love him. From Sir William, too, comes his tenacity and his energy in tracking lawbreakers. 33

Louis Moore resembles William Percy:

Louis Moore . . . is, fundamentally, William Percy, clerk, also enlivened by a few characteristics of his later self, Sir William . . . Louis's irritating, tantalizing slowness that gave him the victory over Mr. Simpson, comes directly from Sir William, whose most effective weapon it was in diplomacy, employed with particular malice against Lord Hartford. Louis Moore boasts, "I never was in a hurry in my whole life." and gives thanks that he is blessed with the power to conceal "inward ebullition with outward calm," quite after the manner of Sir William, whose calm face alone told his intimates that he was burning with venom against his enemies or seething with conflicting emotions.

Again, just as Louis Moore's reserve occasionally broke under the charm of Shirley's sweetest mood, so William Percy's pride relaxed and his spirits expanded in the presence of Cecelia Seymour.

Identification of Shirley Keeldar with the Angrian Jane Moore is possible through resemblances of physical and characteristic attributes, of actions, and of situations. The following analysis establishes this identification:

Shirley Keeldar, whose Angrian prototype is Jane Moore, is the orphan heiress of the first family of the Yorkshire neighborhood in which her estate lies, passes across the pages of this novel a tall, lithe girl, proud and graceful in her carriage, beautiful of features and brilliant in dress, rich, gifted, youthful, and

lovely, the personification of exuberant life and perfect health . . . She is proud, impetuous, self-willed, and impatient of restraint, but she is generous, magnanimous, and hospitable. Though indolent at times, she can be energetic when the welfare of others is involved. She is no angel, but she is beloved of everybody and courted of all men.

All this was originally written of "Jane Moore, the beautiful Angrian, the Rose of Zamorna," who first appeared as "one of the transcendently fair and inaccessibly sacred beings" who thronged Charlotte's vision in her Roe Head days . . . Jane Moore, the epitome of Angrian [Yorkshire] womanhood as contrasted with the super-refined, highly romantic Senegambian [Irish] women, typified by Mary Percy and Nina Launy.

Jane's picture, summarized from the few fragments that have survived, agrees in almost every detail with Shirley's. Jane, like Shirley, was "tall, well and roundly formed" with white neck and shoulders as a gleaming background for profuse curls as fine as silk and pearls which were her favorite ornament, as they are Shirley's.

Jane Moore, like all Angrian women, was ultra-patriotic--just so Shirley. As Jane exclaims, "Angria is such a glorious land!" Shirley rejoins, "Our England is a bonny island, and Yorkshire is one of her bonniest nooks," and when the curate Donne speaks slightly of her country, she turns him out of her garden, saying, "How dare the lispine cockney revile Yorkshire!"

The Reverend Mr. Helstone early in Shirley's residence in Fieldhead dubbed her Captain Keeldar and charged Mrs. Pryor to "take care of this magistrate, this church warden in perspective, this captain of yeomanry, this young squire of Briarfield," and thereafter he took great pleasure in addressing her as Captain Keeldar and assigning duties
to her in keeping with the title. Robert Moore took up the sobriquet and used it frequently in addressing her. . . . But the joke is older than Helstone. It originated in Jane Moore's bantering with Lord Hartford, when she dubbed herself "Captain Arthur Fitz-Arthur, Commander of the Formidable."

Another stamp of Jane Moore on Shirley Keeldar is her friendship with Hiram Yorke, for Yorke is General Thornton of the Angrian stories, with whom Jane Moore was a great favorite. 35

It has been stated, even on Charlotte's authority, that Shirley Keeldar represented Emily Brontë as she "would have been had she been placed in health and prosperity." The distinct cleavage between the parts of the novel, due to the illness and deaths of Emily and Anne, is logical explanation for this statement. It is true that the Angrian heroine, Jane Moore, "does not account for Shirley's great glowing, throbbing, prophetic soul which makes the book live in spite of its loose construction and frequent false drawing," and it is the last chapters of Charlotte's novel which develop this greater Shirley. It is probable that grief and love made Charlotte susceptible to the effect of Emily's spirit, which "breathed itself into these

36 Gaskell, op. cit., p. 365.
37 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 220.
last chapters, and gave life to this novel.  

Often Hiram Yorke has been considered Charlotte's most faithfully drawn portrait from life—that of Mr. Taylor, father of her Roe Head friends, Mary and Martha Taylor. However, there is also evidence that he is her least changed Angrian, for

as Wilson Thornton, his Yorkshire character and Doric speech fixed upon him forever, he was one of her most familiar figures—an able general in Zamorna's army, Lord Charles's guardian, and Jane Moore's good friend. His most marked characteristics were the tenacity with which he clung to his native speech and customs, though he could lay both aside and appear the polished gentleman of taste that he was; his unswerving moral rectitude; and a certain impatience of temper and frankness of speech amounting at times to rudeness, which did not, however, hide his kind heart. In one of Charlotte's transition fragments he was called Mr. De Cappel and given a daughter and several sons.  

Mrs. Yorke and her children, however, were quite evidently derived directly from the actual Taylor family.

Sir Philip Nunnely, poet and suitor of Shirley, is remin.

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38 Ratchford, op. cit., p. 221.
40 Ratchford, op. cit., p. 221.
41 Wroot, op. cit., p. 138.
iscen of Young Scool, who was probably Branwell. Family his-
tory is subtly hinted in Shirley's desire for more accuracy in
Sir Philip's rhymes and in her suggestion that she knew the dif-
ference between rhyme and poetry even if he was not aware of it.
Very likely Charlotte—if Emily was in her mind as she drew the
character of Shirley Keeldar—"must have recalled her sister's
suffering under Branwell's crude rhymes."

Again in this novel there is exhibited Charlotte's pro-
pensity for using familiar places in her novels. Thus, Briar-
field, the center of action in the story, may be identified as
Birstall, a manufacturing center; Fieldhead, the home of Shirley,
is reminiscent of Oakwell Hall near Birstall; Briarfield:Church
and Reetory were probably taken from the like establishments of
Birstall; Briarmains, the home of Mr. Yorke, became a replica of
the actual home of Mr. Joshua Taylor, frequently considered the
original of Hiram Yorke; Hollows Mill, as an artistic adaptation
of Fieldhead Hollow and Mill; Whinbury, a thinly-disguised Dewas-
bury; and Nunnely, with Hartshead characteristics, complete the
picture. This place-identification is carried still deeper in
this novel because of the picture Miss Bronte painted of the
conditions of the industrial classes, both manufacturers and
workers, at the end of the lengthy, disastrous war with France.

The story—historically accurate—is probably "the best account of the times, drawn from the high Tory point of view, which exists."

Another interesting element in this novel is the possible symbolism of the names Miss Brontë employed. For example,

there was the family which typified the young Brontës (though ostensibly referring to the Taylors) and which was called Yorke (Yorkshire). Mrs. Yorke showed intimate glimpses of Aunt Branwell; Mr. Yorke of Mr. Brontë, although Mr. Brontë appeared more fully as old Helstone, the uncle of Caroline. Years before, Charlotte discovered that in Greek the word "Brontë" meant "Thunder-stone."

Charles Thunder was the name Charlotte signed to a poem which she sent to William Wordsworth. "Helstone", it will be seen, signified "Brontë".

The two heroes, Robert and Louis Moore, were the moors. 44

While Shirley does not move with the passionate swiftness characteristic of Jane Eyre and is not as great an accomplishment, it does contain "the promise of higher things... and it leads inevitably to her wonderful masterpiece, Villette."

Since the life of an author directly influences his works, the reason for some commonplace parts and certain extravagances in


45 White, op. cit., p. 285.
Shirley is obvious. The exceptional conditions under which Miss Brontë wrote this novel arouse wonder "not that it was not better but that it was as fine as it was, that the genius of this sorely tried woman struggled past all difficulties and was supreme eventually."

Literary success resulted in recognition that Charlotte could not avoid. Trips to London interfered with her work on her last full-length novel, but at last Vilette was published on January 28, 1853. In spite of the author's apprehension regarding it, it was received enthusiastically by the public and critics alike. Now it is recognized as her finest accomplishment. However, the success of this, her last novel, resulted in distress for Miss Brontë, for it

crystallized for decades to come a complete misunderstanding of her art, confirming, as it apparently did, local gossip and critical surmise. The public, ignorant of all that came before Jane Eyre and unable to see how a novel of such fire and passion could come from the pen of an inexperienced Yorkshire girl, promised a great emotional upheaval in her own life; an unhappy love affair which awakened latent genius to expression. Such an experience... could belong to only one period of

46 White, op. cit., p. 285.

her life, the two years on the Conti-
tinent. Villette seemed to change
surmise to certainty, for it por-
drays the love of Lucy Snowe, an
English girl teaching in a Belgian
school—Villette was at once iden-
tified as Brussels—for Paul Emanuel,
teacher of literature in the same
school and kinsman of the proprie-
tress. Lucy Snowe, the public as-
sumed, was Charlotte Bronte, and
Paul Emanuel, M. Héger; therefore
Charlotte was in love with M. Héger.
Villette was read as a personal con-
fession; the most flaming autobiog-
raphy in the language, it has been
called, 48

To these charges Charlotte attempted no rebuttal. In
the light of late research, it would seem that she could not
without exposing the years of her inner imaginative life. This
would be incompatible with her natural reserve, and therefore
she allowed the matter to rest.

Again, reference must be made to the earlier periods of
Miss Brontë's writing to show its connection with Villette.
That Paul Emanuel represented in growth more than half of her
lifetime is clearly shown in these documents. Constantin Héger
could hardly have contributed more than a perfected outward sem-
blance for the personality which had been living in Charlotte's
imagination a decade before she first met M. Héger and two dec-
ades before she wrote Villette. These documents also show the

48 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 222.
original bases for the characters of John Graham Bretton, Paulina Mary Home, and her father, the Count de Bassompierre, several minor characters, and plot incidents pivotal in the story.

The character evolvement of Villette is not less interesting than that of her earlier novels, Jane Eyre and Shirley.

The main character, Lucy Snowe, should be analyzed first:

Lucy Snowe is two distinct personalities under one name. Introduced as a mere impersonal narrator, she suddenly develops a turn of character that raises her to the role of heroine. The first Lucy Snowe, cold and disagreeable, ... in Lord Charles Wellesley or Charles Townshend, an impersonal, cynical, scathing creature, employed for like purposes in the Angrian stories. The second, a highly impassioned Lucy telling her own story, follows very closely the pattern of Charlotte's latest Angrian heroine, Elizabeth Hastings. The strain of Lord Charles, or Townshend, in the first Lucy's inheritance, more quickly recognized than pointed out, betrays itself in one characteristic passage: her cryptic statement of a sudden and mysterious change in her fortune, which recalls Lord Charles's equally cryptic explanation of his break with family and station in life. "It will be conjectured," says Lucy, "that I was, of course, glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted ... There remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look." Reminders of Elizabeth Hastings

49 Batchford, op. cit., p. 222.
run through Lucy’s relation to Paul Emanuel. 50

Paul Emanuel was a composite type. A review of the character of the home secretary of Charlotte’s Angrian kingdom—Warner Howard Warner—indicates that Warner was the predecessor of Paul Emanuel in a “larger and more heroic world” than the professor dominated in Villette. Spontaneous recognition of Warner in Paul Emanuel is possible when descriptive phrases building up each character are listed for comparison. First consider those descriptive of Warner:

Charlotte characterizes Warner as follows: “little man,” “pale, provoking, undersized man,” “busy, interfering little fellow,” “slight figure in black,” “imperious, all-controlling little Bonaparte.” Warner is disposed to assume a very dictatorial tone tonight. He did not seem vexed: he can be imperturbable when he likes, “vigilant eye,” “getting irritated.” Mr. Warner was now fully excited. He turned like a wild cat on Lord A.,” he has a tongue that would outvote a woman’s,” “usual querulous tone, well-known silver voice,” “imperious but still dulcet in tone,” “severe and ambitious eye.” “Mr. Warner . . . was in a ruinous temper,” “the little man’s cursedly peevish today,” “he went off with a twang.” [Zamorna accuses:] “O Howard, but you’re jealous—jealous! . . . You also love

50 Batchford, op. cit., pp. 222-223.

51 Ibid., p. 226.
to control," [Warner replies:] "Your grace is privileged to insult me with impunity . . . Then all my labors in your Majesty's cause turn on the point of jealousy, do they? And from that motive I am wearing out life and health—sacrificing time and happiness in the service of a sovereign who rewards me with taunts."

[Warner speaking of Northangerland who has sneered at his gift of second sight:]

"Vile skeptic! that he should dare to doubt what I have now three times proved, even in my short span of life."

Then compare the following description of Paul Emanuel with it:

Of these same phrases and sentences Lucy Snowe builds her famous portrait of Paul Emanuel: "Fiery little man", "most irritable nature," "choleric and arbitrary," "vivacious, kind, sociable," "crisis of irritability was covering his human visage with the mask of an intelligent tiger," "able, fiery, and grasping little man," "strong relish for public representation," "spite and jealousy, melted out of his face," "a religious little man in his way," "so energetic, so intent, above all, so absolute," "his love of display and authority," "not tall, but active and alive with energy and movement of three tall men," "deep, intense, keenness of eye," "M. Emanuel was never reasonable," "little wicked venomous man, little monster of malice," "strange, evanescent anger," "all-willing to forgive and forgive," "jealous side-long glance," "vigilant, piercing, and often malicious eyes," "dear little man, a stainless hero," "stern, dogmatic, hasty, imperious," "magnificent-minded, grand-hearted, dear, faulty man."

In love of power, in an eager grasp after supremacy, M. Emanuel was like Bonaparte, "He would always have his own way." "I liked to see M. Emanuel jealous, it lit up his nature."

M. Paul to Lucy: "I know you! I know
you! Other people in this house see you pass, and think that a colorless shadow has gone by. As for me, I scrutinized your face once, and it sufficed." . . . "When overwrought, he became acutely irritable, and besides, his veins were dark with vivid belladonna tincture, the essence of jealousy," . . . "He was born honest, not false," 52

Besides the characteristics common to Warner, Paul Emanuel embodies an "odd blending of Sir William Percy with Charles Townshend in the last years of the Angrian cycle." Touches of Sir William Percy appear significantly thus in the character of Paul Emanuel:

Charlotte once related that Elizabeth Hastings, coming unexpectedly upon Sir William Percy in the course of an evening's walk, heard her approach announced by a "sharp bark, not very furious" of a spaniel "standing guard over his master's gentlemanly looking hat and pair of gloves." Lucy Snowe writes that about Madame Beck's house was a small spaniel that "virtually owned" M. Paul as master. "A delicate, silky, loving, and lovable little doggie she was, trotting at his side, looking with expressive, attached eyes into his face: and whenever he dropped his bonnet ove or his handkerchief, which he occasionally did in play, crouching beside it with the air of a miniature lion guarding a kingdom's flag." 54

53 Ibid., p. 227.
54 Ibid., p. 229.
M. Héger of Brussels contributed to the making of Paul Emanuel his Catholicism and his occupation. Apparently he was observed by Charlotte when she was trying to give realism to her Angrians and "offered a perfect physical semblance for the spirit than Warner Howard Warner."

In spite of Charlotte's comment that she drew the characters of Dr. John Graham Bretton and his mother from those of her publisher, Mr. George Smith, and his mother, there is too much resemblance between one phase of the "many-sided" Zamorna and the character of Bretton to allow for more than a superficial resemblance between Mr. Smith and him. However, the relations of the mother and son were undoubtedly portrayed from Charlotte's observation of the Smiths. It must be realized that all Lucy's praise of Bretton cannot remove the displeasing elements from it. Although she characterizes him as good, kind, thoughtful, and generous, the reader realizes that he is inherently selfish, inclined to fickleness, and likely to take for granted any love he was able to win even to the point of killing that love with neglect and forgetfulness. Occasionally, though, Lucy does criticize her idol in a manner reminiscent of

55 Wroot, op. cit., p. 171.
56 Batchford, op. cit., p. 229.
Lord Charles’s abuse of Zamorna--though neither she nor her prototype can be considered in earnest in their criticism.

Probably the Byronic contradictions of Bretton were too deeply imbedded in Miss Bronte’s imagination to admit much of the reforming suggestion of Mr. Smith’s life. Although, she might reconstruct him somewhat, there were reasons why she could not completely remake the character. Zamorna’s romantic vices were dear to Charlotte, and they intrigued her far more than the prosaic virtues of Mr. Smith. Zamorna’s sins made him irresistible to all women--Charlotte included. In fact,

there is no doubt that John Graham Bretton was, in Charlotte’s mind, the real hero of Villette, for Zamorna could have no rival. He must have a wife young, beautiful, and wealthy, from the same group of fortunate, happy beings as himself. Lucy Snowe, a poor little moth of a governess, ventured too close to the great luminary and fell in agony to the earth, to be comforted in time by the lesser love of one on her own plane. But her heart always turned in adoration to Graham, even after she acknowledged to herself that she loved Paul Emanuel. 58

Various explanations have been given for an alleged defect in the novel--the overlapping of Lucy’s two loves. Perhaps the most logical one lies in the fact that most probably Miss

58 Batchford, op. cit., pp. 233-234.
Brontë was completely unaware of the problem involved in such a situation because her mind conceived it as a matter of course that Zamorna should be loved by all women. Angrian wives all worshipped this divinity in the secret shrine of their hearts, and Lucy—having been so closely associated with Bretton—could hardly be expected to put the counterpart of Zamorna out of her heart completely. Lucy's situation is indeed uncomfortable and somewhat resembles that of Zenobia Ellrington, the Angrian who confessed long years after her marriage that "there is a charm, a talisman, about him [Zamorna] which wins all hearts, rivets chains . . . which cannot be undone."

Graham's wife's character—that of Paulina Mary Home—was a blend of those of Zamorna's two wives, Marian Hume and Mary Percy.

Mary Percy suited her fastidious husband, as no other woman ever suited him. He neglected and hurt her, and often forgot her superiority in lesser charms. "Still, she retained the power of awakening him at intervals to a new consideration of her price, and his Grace . . . would discover with surprise that he had a treasure always in his arms that he loved better, a great deal better, than the far-sought gems that he dived among the rocks so often to bring up." Just so Paulina and Graham suited each other perfectly. "All that was best in

59 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 234.
Graham sought Paulina; whatever in him was noble, awoke and grew in her presence. . . . Each liked the way the other talked, the voice, the diction, the expression pleased; each keenly relished the flavour of the other's wit; they met each other's meaning with a strange quickness, their thoughts often matched like carefully chosen pearls." Marian's most marked characteristics were her simple purity and sweetness; her kinship to the fairies, indicated in her "fairy form," her "light, dancing step" and her occasional gaiety of manner and love of frolic; . . . the fairy-like side of Paulina Mary is given full play in the scene on Christmas Eve in the kitchen at La Terrasse [as shown in her father's words]: "And is that a Scotch reel you are dancing, you Highland fairy?" asked her father. "Mrs. Britton, there will be a green ring growing in the middle of your kitchen shortly. I would not answer for her being quite candid; she is a strange little mortal."

An intermediate link between Marian Hume and Paulina Mary is Marian Fairburne of the transition fragments. To Marian Hume's delicacy of feature, exquisite complexion, deep blue eyes, and silky auburn curls, Marian Fairburne adds the diminutive form and financial opulence of Miss Victoria Delph, or Delphi, an heiress of Verdelopis, and passes them on to Paulina Mary. 60

A question may be raised as to why Paulina Mary Home did not die of a broken heart through her love for Graham. Certainly this would have been a logical occurrence had she consistently

60 Hatchford, op. cit., pp. 234-236.
followed the tradition of descent from Marian Hume through Marian Fairburne. Also, the carefully expounded faithlessness of Bretton in the early chapters of Villette and her own acknowledged capacity for suffering prepare the path for such an outcome. This tragedy is averted for no conceivable reason except that perhaps Miss Brontë's mind later identified Marian with Mary Percy, whose heart she could never have courage to break.

Paulina Mary's complicated derivation contrasts well with the comparatively simple evolution of her father. In Charlotte's first love story Alexander Hume, Duke of Bawdry, was described as

a Scotchman, who was physician to his Grace, and though of gentlemanly manners and demeanor, yet harsh, stern, and somewhat querulous in countenance and disposition... He was a widower and had but one child, a daughter. 62

Compare these words with the description in Villette of Mr. Heme, Count de Bassompierre, a man of science. He was

a stern-featured--perhaps I should say rather, a hard-featured man; his forehead was knotty, and his cheekbones were marked and prominent. The character of his face was quite Scotch... His northern accent in speaking harmonized with

61 Ratchford, op. cit., p. 235.
62 Ibid., p. 237.
his physiognomy. He was at once
prud-lookng and homely-looking. He, too, was a man of gentlemanly
aspect and bearing, and in the one
scene in which his disposition
came out with any degree of dis-
tinction, when Graham asked him
for his daughter's hand, he was
quite stern, and showed himself
" sorely crossed, annoyed— even bitter." 63

Of the minor characters in Villette there is little to
be said. Ginevra Fanshawe was not an Angrian, but de Hammel is
"one of the host of 'fashionable ninnies' swarming around Jane
Moore, who, Charles Townshend declared, 'one and all wanted but a
tail to make the prettiest counterfeit donkeys imaginable.'" 64

Scenes in Villette also bear the unmistakable imprint of
Miss Brontë's earliest writing. The most familiar scene of the
novel—Lucy's agonizing dream climaxing "The Long Vacation"
chapter—serves as a convincing example, especially as it has
been constantly discussed by biographers because of Charlotte's
own personal suffering in the Héger school. Here is the scene:

There was no way to keep well
under the circumstances. At last
a day and night of peculiarly agon-
izing depression were succeeded by
physical illness, I took perforce
to my bed . . . I lay in a strange
fever of the nerves and blood. Sleep
went quite away. I used to rise in
the night, look around for her, be-
seech her earnestly to return . . .

63 Ratchford, op. cit., p. 237.
64 Loc. cit.
Sleep never came!

I err. She came once, but in anger. Impatient of my impatience, she brought with her an avenging dream. By the clock of St. Jean Baptiste, that dream remained scarce fifteen minutes—a brief space, but sufficing to wring my whole frame with unknown anguish; to confer a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity. Between twelve and one that night a cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled up soothing from a bottomless and boundless sea . . . Having drunk and woke, I thought all was over; the end came and past by . . . I rose on my knees in bed, some fearful hours went over me; indescribably was I torn, racked, and oppressed in mind. Amidst the horrors of that dream I think the worst lay here. Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved me well in life, met me elsewhere alienated; galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future. Motive there was none why I should try to recover or wish to live. 

. . . When I tried to pray I could only utter these words:

"From my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind."

In view of the sorrows of Charlotte's life it is not illogical that this passage may seem to be a personal confession. However, the imaginative Charlotte, but fourteen years old, seemingly exulted in her power to evoke an atmosphere of horror.

65 Batchford, op. cit., p. 238.
Note the similarity between the following written at fourteen years of age and the scene just quoted:

I was racked by a dull torturing pain in my forehead which prevented me from sleeping. Sometimes my limbs were icy cold, sometimes burning hot. I could hear the violent throbbing of my temples; thrilling pain ran through my body from head to foot; a knot was in my throat and I felt dreadfully thirsty; my tongue was as dry as a dusty stick; and all my teeth were aching as if they were in want of the dentist's instrument and skill . . . I rose and, tottering to the washstand, seized the water and drained its contents. Then I reeled back to bed and flung myself almost fainting upon it. After midnight I fell asleep and . . . dreamt many troubled, confused dreams, all of which have faded from my memory except . . . one . . . Excruciatingly horrible is the remembrance of that frightful dream. . . . But to think of it is insupportable agony.

Five other incidents found in *Villette* have definite Angrian derivation. These are first, the Belgian court scene before which Rachel acts. This is a combination of the actual theater experiences Charlotte had in London and the story of her imaginary Angrian, Mrs. Siddons, who played in the Theatre Royal of Verdopolis before the Ashantee monarchs. This latter story appears in "Arthuriana" of 1833.


67 *loc. cit.*
Second, the Bretton parlor scene showing Graham's compelling little Polly to come to him for a colored picture she greatly desired is but the reworked scene in Miss Percy's parlor when Arthur Ripley West attempts unsuccessfully to make Paulina Mary's direct prototype, Marion Fairburne, come to his side. This story is in one of the transition fragments.

Third, Lucy Snowe describes the effect of an opiate given her by Madame Beck in very much the same way as does Macara Lofty, an opiate-addict from the Angrian cycle, describe the effect upon him.

Fourth, the description of the terrible storm at sea in which Lucy's lover is lost has a lengthy Angrian background. This "supreme culmination of Charlotte's creative imagery and lyrical expression" is echoed from Mansas on the Fate of Henry Percy and from a picture in The Green Dwarf.

Once more mention must also be made of the identifiable places to be found in this novel. Vilette, the capital of Labassecour, is Brussels, and the school of Madame Héger in the Rue d'Isabelle is described with minute accuracy as that of Madame Beck in the Rue Fossette. Bretton is identifiable as the town of Bridlington in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The few

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68 Ratchford, op. cit., p. 238.
69 Ibid., p. 239.
70 Loc. cit.
pages given to description of London are especially charming because they are accurate accounts of incidents Miss Brontë herself knew on her trips to London, the city which had enthralled her from early childhood. The church of St. Jacques-sur-Caudenberg, situated on the heights above Brussels, was mirrored in the description of the church of St. Jean Baptiste, whose cupola was visible from the school windows. Finally, the scene of Lacy’s memorable confession may well be the Cathedral of St. God-ule, where Charlotte’s confession was made.

Analysis of the foregoing discussion makes it apparent that “despite its faithful etching of buildings and streets, gardens and parks, theaters and holiday crowds, and its sustained conviction of actuality from beginning to end, Villette is the most Angrian of Charlotte’s novels.”

The Professor, the first written but last published of Miss Brontë’s four novels, deserves brief mention because it, too, harkens back to the days of the Angrian writings. It is one of the early Angrian stories “transferred with remarkably few changes to an English setting: the oft-repeated story of the Percy brothers, first set down in writing by Branwell in "The Wool Is Rising" of 1834. The story progresses in Charlotte’s

71 Wroot, op. cit., pp. 147, 149-151, 160-161.
72 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 240.
73 Ibid., p. 190.
"The Spell" and in "Sir William Percy's diary and letters, refining its style, vivifying its characters, and motivating its action." The second half of the book, in spite of being set in Belgium, carries reminders of Angria, too.

Though it was unpublished during her lifetime, the story of the Percy brothers as found in The Professor struggled for "satisfying expression in one form after another as long as Miss Brontë lived." Many small details—i.e., Edward Percy's gig ship—recur over the twenty-year writing of the series "indicating how sharply minute details were etched upon Charlotte's inner vision."

Although it carries over old Angrian characters and scenes, The Professor is as uniquely and widely separated from its prototype as are Miss Brontë's other novels. When, after the successful publication of Shirley, Smith, Elder and Company wished to publish the once-rejected novel, Miss Brontë wrote a preface in which she at once condemns and defends this first of her later novels. She confessed that it was written

under a self-denying ordinance imposed by conscience in expiation of youthful extravagance. The result of these principles, so admirable in theory, brought, she admits, when applied to the old story of the Percy brothers,

74 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 191.
75 Ibid., p. 199.
more surprise than pleasure. The novel reached the publisher's desk finished in form, and better constructed than any of her later books; delicate and firm in drawing; virtuous in its extreme sobriety, but pulseless, a cold, colorless, lifeless exercise. The publishers refused it, and Charlotte, seeing her mistake, turned to the writing of a new novel. 76

In Charlotte Brontë's novels the limitations to the fulfillment of her artistic purpose are unmistakably recognized. Genius she had, but it was limited by a narrow range of vision—a vision which her truthfulness prohibited her extending beyond the limits of her experience. Known characters and similarity of situations Miss Brontë blended with the fanciful productions of her earliest writing to produce novels startling in their power—power "coupled with . . . bewitching daintiness." Nevertheless, defeated in her artistic purpose by conditions over which she had no control, Miss Brontë did accomplish intangible permanence in her novels, for her genius "truthfully preserves the past, while it will intimately appeal to and have a salient lesson and an inspiring message for any one so ever who shall read, be it here and now, or in the time to come." 79

76 Hatchford, op. cit., p. 200.

77 Bonnell, op. cit., p. 36.


CHAPTER IV

THE EFFECT OF THE ROMANTIC REALISM OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

One of the most individualistic of the Victorian novelists, Charlotte Brontë is very different from the great majority of them in her subject matter. The typical Victorian novelist took as subject matter "the religious, the intellectual, and the purely animal sides of life." Miss Brontë's subject-range is the inner life—the personal passions, and her genius asserted "the supreme unimportance of the externals." Her books are primarily the records of a personal vision, and—because of this—she has the distinction of being the first subjective novelist. Like her successors who sought to record the history of private consciousness, Miss Brontë's range of subject-matter is "limited to those aspects of experience which stimulate to significance and activity the private consciousness of their various heroes and heroines."

1 Cecil, op. cit., p. 120.
3 Cecil, op. cit., p. 120.
4 Ibid., p. 121.
In this study the emphasis has been placed upon the limitations of Charlotte Brontë’s experiences and the effects of these limitations upon her artistic purpose. Undoubtedly, the fact that she did not carry her subjective novels to the point of character analysis is explained by her lack of wide experience. She had no opportunity to develop an “intellectual interest in the inner life” nor to acquire the “detachment necessary to pursue if if she had.” Feeling was uppermost in her consciousness as she wrote, and the fact that her heroines feel strongly in all circumstances indicates that she did not deliberately diagnose her feeling but rather made an “involuntary self-revelation.”

Unmistakable genius Charlotte Brontë had, it is true, but—because she pictured the external world in the light of her own reactions to it—she fell short of her purpose as a romantic realist. Willingness to portray the truth with imagination she had in abundance; ability to carry out her purpose was thwarted by the dearth of varied experiences of life. Hers was a realism of the feeling in the wake of which trailed the “bright colors of romanticism.” Constantly Miss Brontë was tossed back to re-

5 Cecil, op. cit., p. 121.
6 Ibid., p. 122.
mantic invention, and the result of this was the appearance of flaws in the overall conception of her novels.

Charlotte Brontë was not a consistent artist. In this respect she exhibits the characteristic "Victorian inequality." A naive writer because of her inexperience, she lacked the art to conceal her faults of inequality. "There is not enough structure in her books to be conventional; their plots are too indeterminate to have an emphasis." Shirley exemplifies this last statement perfectly. The action has two distinctly independent parts—one concerns Caroline and one concerns Shirley. Lack of a continuous theme of interest holding the sections together as a whole and the introduction of numerous minor characters like the Yerkes and Mrs. Pryor indicate that Charlotte Brontë was unable to sustain a regular scheme throughout a novel.

Improbability is a major constituent of Miss Brontë's novels. The stories of Jane Eyre and Villette, viewed from a rational standpoint, are assuredly improbable. The plots are far from being dull, but they exhibit an unlikely confusion. For example, in Jane Eyre it is nothing short of incredible that

8 Cecil, op. cit., p. 124.
9 Loc. cit.
10 Dimnet, op. cit., p. 13.
Rochester's mad wife should be so poorly hidden that she frequently roves screaming through the house while the members of the household remain unsuspicous.

*Villette*, too, contains much coincidental improbability. It has been aptly said that in this novel Miss Brontë "stretches the long arm of coincidence till it becomes positively dislocated." It is very unlikely that Lucy Snowe's long-lost cousin, Graham Bretton, should be available to assist her when she arrives in Belgium or that he be the one near to aid her when she faints in the street several months after. Improbability of this sort is unconvincing when analyzed.

Unrestrained imagination evidently resulted in the fife improbability of Miss Brontë's plot developments. Imagination merely creates atmosphere and suggests passion in her narrative, but the occasional fogging of characters by heavy rhetoric destroys the focus of the book and inhibits the clear-cut appearance of characters.

Rarely does Miss Brontë show any of her delightful humor, but she does attempt satire in the person of the comic curate, Mr. Sweeting, and the comic dowager, Baroness Ingram. Satire—being a lightly-touched observation—is definitely not


her field; for the whole experience of her life precluded the possibility of her ever speaking lightly of anything or of her having opportunities for observation. Because of this "her satirical darts fall wide of the mark and as ponderous as lead."  

The greatest defect in Miss Brontë's work, however, lies in the depiction of character. Since characters form the most important part of a novel, this is a serious defect. Here again, though, one is struck by the recognition that her failure is due to the lack of varied experience. Because she does not understand but only feels, "she cannot penetrate to the inner structure of a character to discover its basic elements." Unequainted with characters like Lady Ingram, for instance, Miss Brontë is forced to rely on romantic invention bolstered by copied traits from the crude types found in the fictional representations of the time. Unfortunately, lack of technical skill results in a "copy even cruder than its model."

For Charlotte Brontë—reacting in accordance with her highly feminine temperament—serious male characters posed an even greater problem than for the average woman novelist. In

14 Cecil, op. cit., p. 143.
15 Ibid., p. 132.
16 Ibid., p. 133.
her ignorance of male characteristics she trusts her feeling that they must be wholly unlike women and attributes to them only characteristics which appear essentially masculine to her. These characteristics are accentuated to the point that the individual loses a part of his humanness. They become improbable because, as in the case of Rochester, "no flesh-and-blood man could be so exclusively composed of violence and virility and masculine vanity."

Faults of incoherence, mishandled satire, and inept characterization do not, however, destroy the literary genius of Charlotte Brontë. They are defects resulting from what circumstances did not allow her to overcome. They do not negate the magnificence of her powerful creative imagination— as it appears in her novels—a creative imagination whose power makes one feel in every nerve, at every step forward which the imagination is compelled to take under the guidance of another's, that thus and not otherwise, but in all things altogether even as [he is] told and shown, it was and it must have been with the human figures set before [him] in their action and their suffering; that thus and not otherwise they absolutely must and would have felt and thought and spoken under the proposed conditions. 19

18 Cecil, op. cit., p. 134.
19 Swinburne, op. cit., p. 8.
Hers was an original vision of life; she created a world from fragmentary experience. That this world is almost wholly imaginary, deriving impetus from her personal character and energy, only adds to the respect with which Miss Brontë's ability must be considered.

Because the world of Charlotte Brontë's construction is given impetus by her personal character and energy, an analysis of her essential personality clarifies her literary expression. Her simplicity is extreme, and she lives completely in the present. A brief sorrow appears eternal in her abandonment to it; joy carries to her no possibility of later bitterness; "she was incapable of seeing [things]... in proportion of any kind."

As a moralist—for she insisted upon the "moral point of view in regard to a world of which she was pathetically ignorant"—she is simple in judgment. Characters and episodes were all forces either for good or for evil; no gradations did her Puritanical moralism permit. Furthermore, this moralism extended its effect to her view of sensual satisfactions. While she may not actively disapprove of them, she shrinks from them, her novels abundantly prove that

natural beauties, the glowing sky,
the waving woods, she admired pas-

20 Cecil, op. cit., p. 136.

sionately; for, as the direct work of God, they conveyed to her heart celestial intimations. But the beauties of civilization, works of art, elegant houses, left her unresponsive and almost hostile. 22

Though Miss Brontë's moralism would seem to paint a picture of extreme bleakness, her effects are far from that. Suspicious she was of pleasure, but the passion of her personality prevented her becoming cold. Her creative imagination "sweeps the reader away with irresistible force of poetry." Prosaic though the characters and episodes of Jane Eyre, Shirley, and Villette may be, they are transfigured by the "compelling force of [her] powerful imagination."

While creative imagination lights all of Charlotte Brontë's achievement resulting from her simplicity, moralism, and passion, her originality and power lay in the fact that she made passion serve a severe moral philosophy. Her imagination felt deeply the spiritual significance which underlies the outward appearances of human experience. An unquenchable zest for life permeates all her work, but it is a zest for life as a tensely sublime battle rather than as a garden of pleasure.

22 Cecil, op. cit., p. 138.

23 Ibid., p. 139.


25 Cecil, op. cit., pp. 142-143.
The intensity of Miss Brontë's creative imagination enabled her to describe any of the extreme emotions—love, fear, despair. Her genius enabled her to take the emotions of her own unsatisfied heart and express them in a prose-poetry lyrically pure in its passion. Especially apt was she in the depiction of solitary emotions unprevented by dramatic situation. The scenes describing Jane lost for a day on the Yorkshire moors, Caroline's delirium on her sick bed, and Lucy's loneliness rising to hallucination provide Miss Brontë with the settings in which her imagination can reach its peak of achievement. It is undeniably true that

[Charlotte Brontë's] pictures of love and character, though they reveal her powers, reveal also her defects. But solitary obsession, while it offers equal scope to her intensity and more to her imaginative strangeness, makes no demands on her she cannot satisfy. No power of psychological penetration or accurate observation is needed to communicate the impressions of the senses in an abnormal nervous state; while to be dreamlike and unrestrained is characteristic of such impressions. For once Charlotte Brontë is true, not only to her imagination, but to fact. 26

It is, therefore, ONLY in her portrayal of the solitary emotions that Charlotte Brontë's artistic purpose is ever truly achieved in the judicious harmony of romance and realism.

26 Cecil, op. cit., p. 148.
Technically Miss Brontë exhibits very little skill. Her words exploit an incoherent plot, but the fiery force of her personality and a mastery of the art of arousing suspense hold the reader's continuous interest. "She was a born story-teller." Lack of a restraining hand deforms Miss Brontë's style, but again the passion of her personality has it "pulsing with her intensity, fresh with her charm."

One word alone describes the basis of Charlotte Brontë's literary achievement—genius. Her imagination made her an artist who infused her material with a strong, individual vitality. Though her artistry was hampered by her obvious lack of craftsmanship in the construction of her novels, it has been said that "no writer's work is more obviously of the stuff of which great art is made," and it must constantly be remembered that her artistic purpose was defeated by the circumstances of her life rather than by her lack of inherent ability. These circumstances keep her from acquiring a place on the plane of Shakespeare and Scott, but—there is a "unique, a thrilling, a perennial fascination" in the hot fire of her creative inspiration which demands respectful admiration from the thoughtful

27 Cecil, op. cit., p. 148.
28 Ibid., p. 150.
29 Ibid., p. 152.
Charlotte Brontë was never to realize fully her artistic purpose. Never did she consistently fuse realism and romanticism into the completely harmonious whole she instinctively felt was possible. Everything in her life "conspired to make her narrow and provincial." Good fortune passed her by; sorrow and frustration trailed her constantly; circumstances conspired to thwart her spirit—but she utilised every opportunity that came her way and fulfilled thus "the highest and finest part of her vocation as a human being."

Charlotte Brontë—realist—cared for her Haworth home, guided her younger sisters, and prepared to support the family. Charlotte Brontë—romanticist—sought to escape the dull routine of reality in her dream-world. Out of this "romantic realism" the genius of Charlotte Brontë was to secure for her a place as "the greatest writer of pure passion in the English tongue." And, to one in whom has been stimulated an appreciation of the

31 Dimnet, op. cit., p. 225.
32 Ibid., p. 228.
33 Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 278.
34 Donnell, op. cit., p. 127.
struggles that mortified her tremendous genius, it does not mat-
ter that her artistic purpose was never truly achieved. There
may be more permanent fame in what she did achieve than in being
the greatest writer of fiction. "Such intensity of genius yoked
with such intensity of loneliness, in the virgin forest of inno-
cence"—this was Charlotte Brontë, prose-poet indeed.

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35 Bonnell, op. cit., p. 128.
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**E. ESSAYS**


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Hazel O. Orton has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

January 8, 1946

Date

James J. Young

Signature of Adviser