Angria and Gondal: An Indispensable Background to the Study of the Brontë Novels

Received on October 22, 1994
Accepted for Publication on July 31, 1996

Adel Elyas
King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Herbert Read says of the Brontës that they are "the least influenced and the most original geniuses in the whole history of the English novel."¹ This is in any case more true of Emily than of Charlotte or Anne, but one rather fancy it as over-stated. No genius and, what is more, no romantic genius, however essentially original he or she is, is ever completely, original or completely uninfluenced.

The influence on a writer takes degrees and comes in various shapes as one has to consider the influence of objects or the environment or the influence of other writers or that of reading.

In her chronicles Charlotte Bronte pens down some of the sources of the Brontes' early writings as children. In addition to newspapers and magazines, Charlotte also points out some other sources as she refers to their 'plays' and the origin of those 'plays' to the wood soldiers that their father brought once to Branwell, their brother. Each has chosen a soldier and gave it a name. It was out of this 'play' centering round the toy soldiers that the so-called 'Angria' and 'Gondal' literature emerged and developed. Though, 'Angria' that imaginary kingdom in
Africa, did not emerge at the very beginning, 'Glass Town', later called 'Verdopolis', was the first invention, and out of that began endless games in which, each child ruled over an imaginary island inhabited by heroes.

The conventional picture of the children is often given of them as four little wretches ever threatened by sickness and the grave, living a life of bleak solitude. It is much nearer the truth to picture them inventing with ever-fresh enthusiasm their play and poems, their kings and warriors, islands and empires, their "Glass Town", 'Angria' and 'Gondal'.

This paper is an attempt to trace the improvement in composition and the increase of imaginative power as the Brontës plied their almost ceaseless pens and put their creative power to work inventing great stories and masterpieces that enriched English literature, later. The paper also tends to show that 'Angria' and 'Gondal' form an indispensable background to the study of the Bronte novels.

Many critics tend to consider the Bronte sisters as typical Victorian novelists, while many others daringly put them among the great classicists whose works will grow with the times and never be forgotten or left on the shelves as some ancient relics representing a particular age. However, the fact that they spent all their working years, short as they were, in the early Victorian era will not give, we hope, a sound reason for saying that they were typical Victorians. They were born in a time of transition, Fanny Burney and Jane Austen were both living when Charlotte made her first appearance at Thornton, but nearly everything they stood for - the dignified restraint, the brilliant wit, the minute observation, of the eighteenth century - had all gone down before the rush of the Romantic revival, then in its second Byronic stage. "Sense" was giving way to "Sensibility"; the industrial revolution was in full swing and England, after the privations and the glories of the Napoleonic Wars, was entering upon the period of mingled splendour and misery which followed the Congress of Vienna. So, figuratively speaking, one might say that by birth The Brontës were not Victorians at all; their early literary education, too, was hardly Victorian, for they were allowed to browse at will amongst the Elizabethans, the Classicists and the Romantics, the Essayists and the Reviewers, and it was only as
they grew to maturity that they came within the influence of the social school we now call Victorian.

In view of the rigidity of Victorian moral conventions, it seems rather a problem to say how the young men and women then contrived to pass their time or get any enjoyment out of life at all; yet they did for one thing, because the conventions were traditional and had been imbibed from school days as a matter of course, they seemed less troublesome to the youth of that age than they would to us today. Furthermore, while religious traditions were practically universal, it was rather the various taboos of mere custom that made life seem difficult, especially when to them was added the domestic tyranny of patriarchy.

In the average home of the Victorian age, children were very strictly - in many cases too strictly - brought up. Obedience and politeness towards all in authority, parental or otherwise, were exacted. They were subordinated to certain minor privations, such as plain fare, early rising and early bed-time. Toys were few, and were made to last; one was taught to take care of them as of one's clothes, to go without many things that parents could not afford, and not to expect that every passing whim or fancy should be gratified.

In the ordinary routine of family life, contact between children and parents was not very intimate, though the mother naturally saw more of them than the father who usually returns home in the evening to find the children in bed or about to go there. For the most part they were relegated to the nursery, in the charge of a nurse, or an ill-paid governess, when they were educated at home. Their friends were comparatively few and mainly within the family circle or met on the occasion of a children's party. When they were not educated at home, it meant the unsympathetic routine and severe discipline of a boarding-school, in the country or in some outlying suburb, where as it was the case with most educational establishments, under-feeding and over-beating were generally exacted; and, save in respect of physical punishment, some of the girls' schools were hardly any better.
The life of most young men and women in the Victorian age depended after all, much as it does today, on the social position of their parents, the particular set in which they moved and on the particular period into which they were born. And the life of most girls was on conventional line, broken only by the incident of a permitted courtship and, presently, of a marriage more or less arranged. But decade by decade, the emancipation of Britain's young womanhood was approaching until by the close of the century there was little or nothing in any field of activity that an English girl would not dare or could not do. Such were the characteristics of the Victorian age to which the Brontë sisters belonged.

Herbert Read says of the Brontë's that they are "the least influenced and the most original geniuses in the whole history of the English novel." This is in any case more true of Emily than of Charlotte or Anne, but we rather fancy it as over-stated. No genius and, what is more, no romantic genius, however essentially original he or she, is ever completely original or completely uninfluenced. Behind "The Ancient Mariner", which once looked like a new kind of pure crystal, lies the whole of Coleridge's vast and confused reading; behind Blake, lay, amid such else, Swedenborg, Ossian and Cabbala. Yet, "The Ancient Mariner" and "Jerusalem" are in certain respects totally original, and so too are Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. For originality, the new experience and the response to it, is almost a definition of genius. However, it has occurred to me that to say something of the early background of the Brontë's - and by the Brontë's here I mean Charlotte and Emily in particular for Anne shows but slight traces of the family genius - that they have added to the English novel something new when, as it was the cardinal theme of all their novels, they analyzed the inner side of human nature, and struck the note of passion with a depth and clearness that has seldom been equalled, and still more seldom, if ever, surpassed. As for their brother, as Margaret Lane has pointed out:

Nothing of Branwell's that survives has the smallest spark of life, and
the gradual realization of his own ineptitude undoubtedly played its part in the decline, through brandy and laudanum, into a sorry death. Yet his presence is still perceptible in the work of his three surviving sisters.3

The reception accorded to Jane Eyre, by both critics and public, was more than flattering. Even in these modern days of carefully organized publicity and advanced advertising, it is not usual for the first novel of an author to take the town by storm. A generation that revered Thackeray and worshipped Dickens was enthusiastic in its welcome of Jane and Rochester, and, as Thackeray reminded Charlotte Brontë at a later date, she achieved in a moment the success which had taken him years to accomplish. Small wonder, then, that critics and public alike fell to speculating as to the personality, the surroundings, the background and even the sex of the mysterious name Currer Bell, under which Charlotte published her novel, and that, in such speculation, the Lowood Chapters of Jane Eyre played an important part. The second and third parts of the novel might be - probably were, pure creations of the imagination, but the first part was undoubted and obvious autobiography; only one who had suffered as Jane had done, and had watched and loved a Helen Burns in life and death, could have written it. In a literary sense, it had all the features of the new art of photography. Therefore, the curious had to trace the originals of the places described in order to identify the characters who peopled them; and by having accomplished that, it was but a short step to the discovery of the author through a process of deduction or elimination. The same thing happened in the case of Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey, though in a lesser degree; for there, the photography was less obvious and the books, then, aroused less interest.

Thus, at the very beginning of their careers as authors, it became the fate of the Brontës to be identified with their environment. The assumption that, in all their work, they "drew from life" received encouragement from Charlotte's preface to her sisters' works where she said:
Neither Emily nor Anne was learned; they had no thought of filling their pitchers at the well-spring of other minds; they always wrote from the impulse of nature, the dictates of intuition, and from such stores of observation as their limited experience had enabled them to amass.⁴

Mrs. Gaskell also emphasized the influence of their home and Haworth moors (and where she so splendidly led, others sedulously followed) that it speedily became impossible to think of them apart from Yorkshire, and the fashion grew of attributing all that was best (and also all that could be understood) in their works to the influence of the wild, grey and desolate countryside in which they spent their lives. Mrs. Gaskell beautifully emphasized that influence when she said:

It is well that the thoughtless critics, who spoke of the sad and gloomy views of life presented by the Brontës in their tales, should know how such words were wrung out of them by the living recollection of the long agony they suffered. It is well, too, that they who have objected to the representation of coarseness and shrunk from it with repugnance, as if such conceptions arose out of the writers, should learn that, not from the imagination - not from internal conception, but from the hard cruel facts, pressed down, by external life, upon their very senses, for long months and years together, did they write out what they saw, obeying the stern dictates of their consciences.⁵

Strange must have been those circumstances in which the Brontës lived and hard must have been the rules that directed their lives. As the Victorian age advanced, men began seriously to study psychology, to take a consuming interest in origins and evolution and to realize the power, for good or evil, of heredity. The Brontës were a fruitful field for the advocates of the new theories; and towards the end of the nineteenth century, in the rising tide of Celtic self-consciousness that swept over Ireland, the most amazing claims were made for the influence of their Celtic Irish ancestry on their lives and works. Their fire, their melancholy beauty, their power,
their passion - all that was finest in them was traced to their peasant forbears in County Down in Ireland; only their gloom, their uncouthness and their hardness were allowed to spring from Haworth in Yorkshire. But still that union of heredity and environment does not entirely explain the Brontës; they cannot be really understood unless we remember the age in which they lived to see whether the spirit of that age had its influence on them as it had on almost all their contemporaries.

The Victorian age was really a strange age in all its aspects. Generally speaking every period of history may be interpreted in different ways, and the richer it is in event or thought the more numerous will be the interpretations. The Victorian age has usually been divided into three phases. However, no matter how separate though they may seem to be, we can safely say that they are closely interdependent. The qualities of each one arise, whether by evolution or by reaction, from the qualities of the preceding epoch.

It was an age which witnessed the birth of a new genre, namely, the novel which became the form of expression most suited to the people's need and tendencies. Actually, the decline of the drama assisted the rise of the novel and in such a way the novel became what the epic and the drama had been in the previous ages. It is probable that some of the novelists in that age, notably Dickens, would have enjoyed being a dramatist had the conditions of the theatre, financial and otherwise, been more favourable.

One important difference between the reading public of the early Victorian age and that of today is the much less obvious gaps separating different grades of novel-readers. The situation today is indicated in a remark from a recent survey of the novel since 1939. Henry Read declares that: "I have written as an intellectual addressing other intellectuals; one trace of fiction I have therefore omitted: the best-sellers." Such a remark could not have been made in the Victorian age, when almost all the great novels were best-sellers, either at once or within a few years, and
have remained so. Writing in 1985, Mrs. Oliphant was to note that Hawthorne made the mistake of addressing an intellectual audience, when, as she emphasized, the novelist's true audience should be the common people - the people of ordinary comprehension and everyday sympathies, whatever their rank might be; in other words, what Dr. Johnson once called "The Common Reader". It was to this public that Dickens addressed himself, one might think, with no principle in mind except the traditional advice of the old actor to make them laugh and cry and wait; and it was concerning that public that Trollope gave his advice to the novelists: "The novelist may not be dull ... The writer of stories must please, or he will be nothing."

To go back to the influences, point one is inclined to say that certain literary influences are discernible in the case of the Brontës, and it may perhaps be worthwhile to see if we can put our finger on any such influences and weigh up their possible effects on the works of Emily and Charlotte. This is easier in the case of Charlotte, who has told us a good deal about herself. Emily is a shyer and a rarer winged creature, and the passage of her flight is less easy to trace through the upper air. Yet one of the earliest relevant facts concerns her. Mr. Brontë, whose own literary productions were of small merit, had, we are told, the habit of telling lurid tales to the children at breakfast - to Emily's especial relish; and these tales came from the store of his father, Hugh Brunt, the Irish peasant, who had been in his time a famous story-teller. Here are such fascinating speculations for those who are interested in heredity. But we must, of course, also allow for the influence of environment and the stories of strange doings in those distant regions which were known in the neighbourhood. Throughout the biography of Charlotte Brontë one can detect Charlotte wild tales to Mrs. Gaskell of the ungovernable families who had once lived in lonely houses on the moors. We may, perhaps, remember that the old servant, at the Parsonage, Tabitha Ackroyed knew and told the children something of that aspect of the country-side in which she lived all her life.

However, as for the literary influences, Mr. Read's essay on the Brontës is
brilliant, although we think that in it he underrated the merit of Jane Austen. He is not accurate when he says of the children's reading that it was "confined to a diet of newspapers, sermons and the Bible." On the contrary, they had the poems and the novels of Scott, parts of Shakespeare, Addison, some ancient and contemporary history, Aesop's Fables, "The Pilgrim's Progress", and the "Arabian Nights". They had at least some of the poetry of Wordsworth, Southey and Cowper. As to Scott, there exists a copy of the "Tales of Grandfather", in three volumes with one inscription from Aunt Branwell which reads: "A New Year's Gift by Miss E.B. to her dear little nephew and nieces, Patrick, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, 1828".

The Influences of Byronism, certainly discernible in the figure of Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, and probably Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, came later. The children also read "Blackwood's Magazine", then edited by Christopher North, as Charlotte tells us in one of her chronicles; it was a magazine of literary importance.

The children had, too, that superb work, Bewick's "History of British Birds", and copied some of the drawings. "Bewick" is referred to early in *Jane Eyre*, where Jane relates the effect upon her in childhood of the passages describing the haunt of the sea-fowl, with a quotation added from Thompson's "Seasons", the descriptions of the Arctic Zone, and the weird and powerful vignettes, in which all Bewick's strange magic is displayed. Who can doubt that Charlotte is here recounting the effect of Bewick on her own mind? Bessie, too, is surely reminiscence of Tabby - Bessie who sometimes narrated tales on winter evenings when she had chanced to be in good humour; who fed Jane's eager attention with passage of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and other ballads.

When Charlotte went to Roe Head in 1832, Mary Taylor thought her "very ignorant" because she knew no grammar and only "very little geography". But she knew all the "Classical" English poems that the girls were studying, and talked familiarly of their authors. She once made a true and profound remark on Dr.
Johnson that made all the girls regarded her more reverently. She showed a great aptitude as a story-teller, and her stories were often terrifying. On one occasion she frightened one of her classmates so much that the girl's screams brought one of the mistresses hurrying to see what the matter was. The genius that sometimes strikes the note of the "Terror - School" in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* was already at work.

Ernest Dimnet in his book *The Brontë Sisters*, finds in one of Charlotte's letters to Ellen Nussey, influences of the style of Dr. Johnson. In 1834, when Charlotte was eighteen, she wrote Ellen a formidable letter with a list of books recommended for reading. It is long, and it includes Milton, Shakespeare, Thompson, Goldsmith, Campbell, Wordsworth, Southy, Scott and Byron. Pope (If you will though I don't admire him¹⁶), she said. She accepts "Cain" and "Don Juan", and Shakespeare's comedies, which may mark a touch of the Puritan here. She remarks that: "Only a depraved mind can gather evil from Hamlet, Macbeth and Julius Cæsar".¹⁷ The prose works include Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Southy's *Nelson*, Moor's *Life of Sheridan* and *Life of Byron*, and in natural history, White's *Selborne*, Bewick and Audubon. "For fiction", said Charlotte, "read Scott alone; and novels after his are worthless".¹⁸ For a girl of eighteen who had an irregular education it is a remarkable list, for presumably she had read most of it.

In 1837 there is a fascinating glimpse of Emily making bread in the kitchen with an open German book standing against the edge of the kneading trough. We do not know what book it was; but Emily certainly and Charlotte probably knew the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis and Maturin, whose influence is satirized in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Yet both Emily and Charlotte had something in common with these hair-raising writers. But probably Byron's "Corsair" and "Manfred", that have terroristic aspects, supply the link.

In 1840 the Taylors sent to Haworth from Belgium a parcel containing more than forty French novels. It is generally supposed that these were not by authors of the first rank. Then came the Brussels episode, and Charlotte and Emily were
exposed to contact with French civilization and literature. M. Heger, the origin of
Paul Emanuel in Villette, was a conscientious and scholarly teacher, and gave Charlotte,
at least, a good grounding in the French classics. Less is known of how Emily
profited, though when they first arrived, M. Heger thought Emily the mentally superior
of the two. We know that Charlotte and Emily read some of Bossnet and Guizot:
Victor Hugo, de Vigney, Lamartine, Chenier and Racine are mentioned. Charlotte
disliked Racine, and, indeed, her description of Rachel (Vashti) playing in Racine in
Villette though finely terrifying, does not imply a very subtle view of the greatest
French tragic writers. In one of her letters to M. Heger she mentions Bernardin de
St. Pierre and the "Pensees" of Pascal as being in her possession. At Brussels, also,
Charlotte read George Sand, and liked and admired her work to a great extent. It has
been suggested that George Sand may have had a formative influence, especially on
Jane Eyre. Charlotte almost worshipped Fielding. Fielding was a very masculine
writer, and Charlotte, genius as she was, had some of the defects, as most of the
virtues, of Victorian womanhood. But certainly no one can accuse the author of
Tom Jones of an excess of delicacy, or absolve him of a certain brutality in many of
his references to women.

In dealing with the literary background of the Brontës, one inevitably finds
oneself mainly concerned with Charlotte whose abundant letters provide her biographer
with as much knowledge of the details of her life as he or she needs. One cannot
ignore Emily's poetry for although it does not look obviously autobiographical, it
may provide implicit knowledge of some parts of her life, especially that part which
concerns the Gondal period. It may also shed some light on some aspects of Emily's
life such as her feeling of loneliness, her seclusion, her frustration and disappointment
in life, and consequently, her constant wish to die.

One of Charlotte's first chronicles, "The History of the Year 1829", is quoted by
Mrs. Gaskell to give some idea of the sources of the children's opinions. It starts as
children's writings so often do when the desire to write, is strong, with an exact
setting down of what is going on round them at the moment. (This childish habit persists in Emily's and Anne's later chronicles). In her chronicles Charlotte pens down some of the sources of their early writings as children. In addition to the newspapers they get, such as the 'Leeds Intelligencer', "a most excellent Tory newspaper", 'Tory', the "Leeds Mercury", and the 'Whig', they also borrow 'John Bull', "a very violent paper", and 'Blackwood's Magazine', "The most able periodical there is", to see. Besides papers and magazines Charlotte also points out some other sources as she refers their 'plays' and the origin of these 'plays' to the wood soldiers that their father brought once to Branwell, their brother:

Our plays were established; 'Young Men', June 1826; 'Our Fellows', July 1827; 'Islanders', December 1827. These are our three great plays that are not kept secret. Emily's and my bed plays were established the 1st of December 1827; the others March 1828. Bed plays mean secret plays; they are very nice ones. All our plays are very strange ones. Their nature I need not write on paper, for I think I shall always remember them. 'The Young Men's' play took its rise from some wooden soldiers Branwell had: 'Our Fellows' from 'Aesop's Fables'; and the 'Islanders' from several events which happened. I will sketch out the origin of our plays more explicitly if I can ...

Seeing the wooden soldiers, each of the sisters and Branwell chose one and gave it a name. About her soldier, the 'Duke of Wellington', Charlotte states that:

Mine was the prettiest of the whole, and the tallest, and the most perfect in every part. Emily's was a grave-looking fellow, and we called him 'Gravery'. Anne's was a queer little thing, much like herself, and we called him 'Waiting boy'. Branwell chose his and called him Bounaparte.

It was out of this play centering round the toy soldiers that the so-called 'Angrian' literature developed, though 'Angria', that imaginary kingdom in Africa, did not emerge at the very beginning. 'Glass Town', later called 'Verdopolis', was the first invention; and out of that began endless games in which, by and by, each child ruled
Angria and Gondal: An Indispensable Background to the Study of the Brontë Novels

over an imaginary island inhabited by heroes. As Margaret Stony K. puts it:

The paired sagas of Angria and Gondal absorbed the children's energies so that their formal education and the later business of earning a living became tedious interruptions. Angria, shared by Charlotte and Branwell, and Gondal, managed by Emily and Anne, were radically different; in Angria, strength of feeling legitimized action, whereas in Gondal the only certain good was social endurance in the face of certain doom. Angria was dominated by its Byronic heroes for whom the heroines compete; the Gondal epic unfolds the career of one superbly amoral heroine, a 'glorious child', 'too blithe, too loving', who ruins her lovers, murders her infant, and suffers agonies of alienation during her long reign.22

A time came when it was not enough to act stories with wooden soldiers. The stories were put down in prose and verse. How the children took to writing is now one of the best-known curiosities of literature. The small booklets which they filled in with very tiny handwriting became their absorbing occupation, through the sixteen years between 1829 and 1845. Margaret Lane indicates that:

The extraordinary feature about their sagas was that they were turned into literary material as fast as they were invented. The things they wrote even had a look like books, while the secrecy of their contents was preserved by their tiny size. I know of no more extraordinary apprenticeship to the literary life than this vast childhood production.23

The picture of the children often given is of four little wretches ever threatened by sickness and the death, living a life of bleak solitude. It is much nearer the truth to picture them inventing with ever-fresh enthusiasm their plays and poems, their kings and warriors, islands and empires, their "Glass Town", "Angria" and "Gondal". They must have been at least as happy as other ordinary children kicking footballs on open grounds. If they were shut off from neighbours, it was not in a solitude, but in a mental world of their own, where they lived in a creative ecstasy. Many children are similarly inventive, but it is rare to find childish creations persisting through
adolescence and continuing well into the twenties, as happened with the Brontës. It is of the utmost interest to trace the improvement in composition and the increase of ceaseless output. They lived in their romances. Miss Ratchford, in her wonderful book *The Brontës: Web of Childhood*,\(^{24}\) hardly exaggerates when she terms them slaves of the drug-like Brontë dream. Margaret Lane seconds this view saying that:

> All four of them, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne, were involved in a profound turning away from, or refusal of ordinary life; that they spun their separate, and quite different substitutes for it, out of their own imaginations, and that they became addicted to their day-dream world as completely as an addict to his drug.\(^{25}\)

Probably no other family ever spent so much time in years of childhood and adolescence in ceaseless literary ambition. No monks or nuns ever devoted themselves to their religious life with more fervency and consistency of purpose than these children gave to the practice of authorship.

Miss Ratchford is obviously justified in claiming that all the children's writing, which would have been impossible in almost any other home, provided a wonderful apprenticeship for novelists and poets. In going beyond this and claiming that the "Juvenilia" explains the genius that the Brontës were to display to the world, she comes into debatable territory. She asserts that much in the published novels was pre-figured in the play-room writings. Thus, to take *Jane Eyre* as a test subject, Miss Ratchford has it that the novel is drawn largely from Angrian experience, and that the Reed family, Rochester, and Rochester's mad wife, together with the call and answer between Rochester and Jane, came from the days of the wooden soldiers appearing in the Tiny booklets that Charlotte wrote before she was fifteen. Admittedly, Miss Ratchford is on safe ground in relating Rochester to every Byronic figure that had dominated Charlotte's girlish imagination. As was perhaps inevitable in her day, Charlotte's characters and poems were influenced for years by the most romantic poet-hero of her age and the pageant of his bleeding heart. But, on the other hand, we must much on the principle that the child is father to the man. Nor must we
exaggerate the amount of treasure to be unlocked by such keys as those hidden in the "Juvenilia". Even if the characters delineated by the grown-up novelists bear resemblance to the creations of the adolescent Charlotte and Emily, we must not make so much of these resemblances as to obscure where their genius lay, in revelations of the hearts beyond the comprehension of children. The Brontë's early writings are interesting because they expose the children's complete absorption of ideas in their imaginary world.

Nevertheless 'Angria' and 'Gondal' will always remain indispensable, an active impetus that led to the emergence of the Brontës genius, and, in this sense, will help any scholar understand and respond to the emotion expressed in the Brontë novels.

The first person outside the Brontë's family to see all the manuscripts of the Brontë "Juvenilia" was Elizabeth Gaskell, who, while gathering material for a biography just after Charlotte's death, visited the Reverend Patrick Brontë, Charlotte's father, at the Parsonage, and examined some of those early works. She chose to reproduce the first page of one of the tales in those manuscripts entitled "The Secret", to illustrate that phase of Charlotte's early work. Since Mrs. Gaskell's publication of Charlotte's "Life" in 1857, this page has been all that was known of the manuscript containing "The Secret". Presumably it travelled in Ireland with Charlotte's husband, the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, and returned to England among the rove of "Juvenilia" purchased from Nicholls by Mr. Clement Shorter in 1895, which passed to T.J. Wise.

At this point it probably received its present leather binding, as T.J. Wise dispersed many of the individual manuscripts on the marketplace as literary curiosities. The provenance is conjectural, however, the only recorded appearances since the Gaskell biography are Shorter's listing and a note of its sale in New York in 1915. At the same time after this date it came into the possession of Mrs. Symington.

The appropriate places for the insertion of these tales (in manuscripts) into the Brontë canon have for a long time been marked. Half a century after Mrs. Gaskell
had given the world notice of the juvenile writings and reproduced a single page, Clement Shorter prepared a chronology of the works that had come to his hand; and with the publication of the Shakespeare Head edition of the Brontës' "Works", the position of the tales in the sequence of the Charlotte's early writing was prepared in the hope that they would eventually be recovered. Like minor stars plucked out from a constellation, their loss diminished but did not obscure our knowledge of the elaborate epic narrative that claimed Charlotte's imagination in her youth. Now, after more than one hundred and forty years, the first of the "Jvenilia" to reach the public eye becomes the latest to be incorporated into our knowledge of the Brontë work.

A research work of this nature may lead us into one of the most fascinating childhood enterprises recorded in English Literature. We have seen that the gift of wooden soldiers, originally brought for Patrick Branwell Brontë, was hailed and shared by his three sisters: Charlotte, Emily and Anne. These figures, thus born into fictive existence, were nourished in an atmosphere rich in literary, artistic and political interests: the children - we have seen - read avidly in "Blackwood's Magazine", the weekly press, and their father's library; and the father himself the author of five volumes, treated them as equals in wide ranging discussions of contemporary affairs, particularly at the breakfast-table when and where he used to see them regularly. The immediate result of the arrival of the wooden soldiers was the establishment of a series of "plays", as Charlotte called them: interconnected stories of the Twelve Adventures, their founding of a Kingdom in Africa, and the subsequent exploits of their descendants and followers that soon populated the various provinces of this imaginary land. A vivid picture is given by Charlotte in this respect showing the four children, sitting round the kitchen fire one stormy winter's night, being forbidden a candle by their economical servant Tabby, and beginning a play which they call "The Islanders" in which each chose an island and peopled it with his or her favourite celebrities.
This imaginary world which they first called the "Great Glass Town Confederacy" remained the chief Employment of their agile brains. Early in 1829 a magazine was invented by Branwell which he called "The Young Men's Magazine", and to which Charlotte, in particular, contributed and soon took over. Into this magazine the children poured essays, histories and songs, all dealing with "Glass Town". Two years after the invention of the magazine, the children changed the name of their imaginary land from "Glass Town" to "Verdopolis".

During the early years of this extra-ordinary creation, the main figure shifted from the imaginary Duke of Wellington, reflecting Charlotte's enthusiasm for England's national hero to his imaginary son, Arthur August Adrian Wellesley, Marquis of Duoro. One of the early tales about Wellesley is entitled "Albion and Marina", in which Wellesley is portrayed as Albion. Then Charlotte and Branwell decided to invent a new kingdom for Duoro to be his own. This was soon done and the new kingdom was named "Angria"; Arthur then became Duke of Zamorna and King of Angria. Duoro, as Charlotte called him in the earlier tales, grew largely out of her adolescent reading of Byron: nobly handsome and fatally attractive to almost every woman. He united in one frame all the talents of poet, warrior and statesman. From her thirteenth to her twenty-third years, she chronicled his many loves and political vicissitudes. Eventually, he re-emerges as the "Edward Fairfax Rochester of Jane Eyre." "who has something of the Byronic (Angrian) hero with his rough, charm, mysterious background, his wild life, brusque, often cruel manner, but tragic and strong emotions." Winifred Gérin clarifies this point by stating that:

With the figure of the Master / Lover, Edward Rochester, Charlotte, reached the parting of the ways between the early obsessive dream-creation of her Arigrian chronicles, and the experience of real life. Rochester is invested with the conflicting attributes of the real-life Belgain professor, Constantin Heger, Whom charlotte had loved, and much of the Byronic swagger of the imaginary Zamorna. With
Rochester, Zamorna makes his last appearance in Charlotte Brontë's writing, and it is a notable one. The romantic ideal of Zamorna, conceived in girlhood and evolved for over ten years throughout a voluminous literary output, died hard with its author just because of her unrealized love for her Belgian professor. Zamorna was there, ever present, in her mind, in compensation for the deprivation of her lot.

For two-thirds of Jane Eyre it was Zamorna/Rochester who sustained the plot; without the strong element of Zamorna in the character, which accounts for his French liaisons and his illegitimate daughter (just as in the novelette of 1840, Caroline Vernon, where the selfsame situation exists), there could have been no attempted seduction of the innocent Jane Eyre and the tale would have lost both its drama and its moral significance which rests on her rejection of dishonour. 33

In The Professor, the Angrian tales and the Juvenilia legacy are manifested in William Crimsworth, the narrator, and his brother Edward. Gerin points out that:

William Crimsworth was in direct line of succession to Charles Townsend, alias Lord Charles Florian Wellesley, the narrator of Charlotte's adolescent Angrian tale and the pseudonym under which she pleased to disguise her own personality. William Crimsworth of The Professor is very little more evolved, civilized and sophisticated than his crude predecessors in the role, who last made their appearance in the novelettes written in 1839-40. He suffers from the affiliation to the earlier characters, who had begun as immature, half-humorous, half-irritated caricatures of the author's brother Branwell Brontë. His only usefulness was that he was a ready-made mouthpiece and at hand. In addition to William Crimsworth the plot of The Professor was burdened with a further legacy from the juvenilia, in the theme of the inimical brothers, Edward and William Crimsworth, who retain even the Christian names of their predecessors in the field, Edward and William Percy. 34

The rival brothers' theme existed in Charlotte's early writings, as Gerin states, in the form of the two sons of the Duke of Willington Arthur and Charles Wellesley who were depicted as "foils to each other". Eventually, the elder emerges later in the tales as the virtuous "Byronic Zamorna," while his brother emerges as "the brash,
mischief-making," Charles Townsend.

Charlotte went on conducting the romances of "Angria", giving Zamorna two wives and several mistresses, and her characterization of these is superb. Branwell conducted the parliaments and wars of Angria, inventing as Zamorna's adversary the wicked pirates, Rogue. Emily and Anne presently left Angria and invented a kingdom of their own, which they called "Gondal", and which was similar to Haworth in its climate. At the head of this kingdom they put a violent, wild and fierce queen.

Emily, we are told, continued the work on "Gondal" all her life. There are no prose manuscripts on "Gondal" by Emily and Anne now in existence. Most probably Charlotte destroyed them after the death of her sisters. But there are references to "Gondal's" characters occurring in birthday notes written between Emily and Anne as late as 1845. Moreover, many of Emily's poems are "Gondal" in subject. Margaret Stonyk elucidates the influence of the Gondal Saga on Emily by saying that:

The Gondal epic unfolds the career of one superbly amoral heroine, a "glorious child," 'too blithe, too loving', who ruins her lovers, murders her infant, and suffers agonies of alienation during her long reign. Poems such as "No coward soul is mine and, 'Cold in the earth, the deep snow piled above thee...,' traditioned presented (with Charlotte Brontë's editorial connivance) as Emily Brontë's own passionate outbursts, are speeches from the various women of Godal. Charlotte Brontë, who had to move in the outside world eventually felt her violent and reckless fantasies to be a danger to her religion and her sanity; Emily Brontë's universe was transmuted effortlessly into the world of Wuthering Heights.35

Heathcliff, Linton and Catherine of Wuthering Heights have already existed in the Gondal Saga in the persons of Augusta, the nice Lord Alferd and the devilish Fernando. For instance, among so many other elements of parallelism that could be found throughout Godal, the poetic work, and the novel, if we take the element of sadism into consideration, Heathcliff and Julious Brenzaida would no doubt stand as
the best examples. To this context, J.Hillis Miller points out that Heathcliff who turns sadist is like Julius Brenzaida, in the Gondal poems who:

Turns on the world in war when he has been betrayed by Augusta. Heathcliff's violence against everyone but Cathy plays the same role in *Wuthering Heights* as does the theme of war in the poems. In both cases there is an implicit recognition that war or sadism is like love because love too is destructive, since it must break down the separateness of the loved one. Augusta too is a sadist. She moves quickly from inspiring her lovers to abandon honour for her sake to betraying them and causing them to suffer.  

Meanwhile, "Heathcliff's efforts to regain Cathy through sadistic destruction fails" as Miller says "just as does Augusta's attempt to achieve through sadistic love a fusion with something outside herself, and just as Cathy's decision to will her own death..."  

So, it is well known that most of Emily's poetry belong to the Gondal saga. But "the complication of the Gondal references," Says Mary Visic:

Occasionally make Emily Brontë's poetry appear freakish and even childish; but, tempting though it is to see in her work a progressive emancipation from Gondal, it remains true that the fantasy produced some beautifully-wrought poetry, much of which, recording as it does lyric moments in the Gondal saga, can be valued for its own sake. Such are the exquisite double lyric which Charlotte called" The Two Children," the famous lament" Cold in the Earth," and " The Prisoner."  

When Charlotte became twenty-three she bade farewell to "Angria", whereas Branwell's writings about "Angria" seemed to cease in 1839 when he was twenty-two. However, a big mass of these childhood writings are still in existence. As a matter of fact, they are rather greater in wordage than the whole of the Brontës' published works.

Anyway, one important result, perhaps indeed two, came out of this vast amount of writing. When the young Brontës finally began to write of real life, they were not
amateurs, but experienced writers, thoroughly familiar with the handling of plot and characterization. But artistic creation of any kind is extremely exhausting. Do the young Brontës wear themselves out by this hard invention, this continual story-telling?

It certainly seems extraordinary, even a little mysterious, this intense, persistent absorption on the part of such girls in an unreal world. The persistence, of course, must have been, to some extent, deliberate. The Brontës were determined not to be parted from the splendours and palaces of Angria and Gondal. It seems an unkind thing to say of the timid, shrinking little Brontës that at bottom they had too exalted an opinion of themselves. This is true particularly with Charlotte and Emily. As a matter of fact, they consciously thought themselves a bit above their neighbors; their wretched shyness arose from it, as most shyness does, and, open expression of self-importance being denied them by circumstances and precept, indirect "symbolic" expression was an inevitable result. Moreover, day-dreaming in "Angria" was almost Charlotte's only relaxation. Most young people have a variety of amusements, outdoor games and exercises, parties, etc.; Charlotte had but one game. This fact strengthened the game's hold upon her imagination, gave the doings of her Angrian notables a continuity in her mind and put them in sole possession of her leisure hours. Writing about them made them of still greater consequence. A reader can put a book down and forget about the story in it. The play ends when the curtain falls. But in the writer's mind, the curtain never falls. The story goes on; the characters live and struggle and suffer all the time. In that case they may live in the writer's mind even more insistently, clamouring to be more fully realized. Few of Charlotte's heroes were born, though they lived with her for a life-time. Although Duoro became Mr. Edward Fairfax Rochester in Jane Eyre, he still remained an unreal figure.

In the same say we can safely say that in Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is not a portrait of Branwell, Emily's brother, but might be a portrait of the "iron man"
whom, in his satiric moods, Branwell would have liked to think himself. It is true
that Emily really lived at the heart of the myths and legends that had grown rich
round her; and we cannot help speculating about her life, any more than we can
about Shakespeare's.

In an extract from Emily's second birthday letter, written in the summer of 1845,
three and half years before her death, she says:

Anne and I went on our first long journey by ourselves together,
leaving home on the 30th of June, Monday, sleeping at York, returning
to Keighly Tuesday evening, sleeping there and walking home on
Wednesday morning. Though the weather was broken, we enjoyed
ourselves very much, except during a few hours at Bradford. And
during our excursion we were: Ronald Macalgin, Henry Angora, Juliet
Angusteena, Rosabella Esmaldan, Elle and Julian Engremont, Catherine
Navarre, and Cordelia Fitzaphnold, escaping from the palaces of
instruction to join the Royalists who are hard driven at present by the
victorious Republicans. The Gondals still flourish bright as ever. I
am at present writing a work on the First Wars.³⁹

Some people think the "Gondal" poems were a kind of literary exercise making
a coherent saga based on Emily's imaginary, experience. I should like to point out,
for the benefit of such people, that very few of the names listed occur in the poems
of either Emily or Anne. The question arises: "Was Emily's prose chronicle of
"Gondal" ever completed?" I doubt it.

To sum it up, one may safely refer to the two critics, namely Margaret Lane and
J. Hillis Miller. In her book The Drug-Like Brontë Dream, Lane tackles the sagas
from three points of view, or rather she gives us three alternatives for reflection when
she says that:

We can believe, for instance, that most of the poems, and the origins
of Wuthering Heights, belong to Gondal, to a wholly imaginary world
... . Or one can equally well suppose - and Derek Standford has made
out an excellent case in his analysis of the poems - that Gondal is a
cover, a mask, a disguise, through which Emily speaks with her own voice ... . Or we can take the view, which as far as I can see is the most reasonable, that Emily's work must be taken as partly one, partly the other, and that whichever it is - this is important - we cannever know.  

I am inclined to embrace the third alternative of course because, as Lane asserts, it is no doubt the most reasonable one. On the other hand, Miller seems to go with the second choice, in a way supporting Derek Standford. In an article entitled "Themes of Isolation and Exile," in Judith O'Neill's Critics on Emily and Charlotte Brontë. Miller states that:

The Gondal saga was apparently a species of prose epic, of which we possess only the lyric poems which were interspersed here and there in the narrative. These usually pick out some moment of special poignancy or significance, and dramatize in the speech of the person who experiences it. Most often the moment chosen is not the time of joy, but the moment of sorrow, exile, or defeat. It seems as if all the elaborate machinery of the Gondal saga has been contrived as a means of expressing repeatedly, in different forms, one universal experience of absolute destitution ... . Such people are suffering the anguish of irremediable loss. Their eyes are fixed in retrospective fascination on some past moment of sovereign joy ... . Their present lives are determined by the loss of some past joy, and by the suffering caused by that loss. Such people live separated from themselves, and yearn with impotent violence to regain their lost happiness.  

But in spite of all alternatives and different views on the subject, Angria and Gondal remain indispensable and influential elements in the work of the Brontës.
Notes

[1] We have a good illustration of such relationship or contact in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre.


[6] "Early Victorian (1832); Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901)".


[10] Herbert Read, 293.


[14] Ibid., 65.
[17] Ibid., 96.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[23] Margaret Lane, 42-3.


[34] Ibid, 27.


[37] Ibid.


[40] Margaret Lane, 65.

[41] Miller, 102.
Bibliography


