



Mina Laury

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The quintessential romantic heroine -- and the prototype of Jane Eyre.

Set in the imaginary kingdom of Angria, Charlotte Brontë's early story of the Duke of Zamorna and his loyal mistress, Mina Laury, demonstrates the birth of her lifelong obsession with the degrees and forms of human passion. 'Mina Laury' is taken from *The Juvenilia of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë*, which is published in Penguin Classics.

The cover shows a detail from *Portrait of Henrietta Sontag*, 1831, by Paul Delaroche, in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg (photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY)

Mina Laury Details

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Joanna says

This short story was super weird, while the premise was actually quite intriguing it was too short to be of any value. Had Bronte developed it into a 150-200 word story it would have more potential

Beth says

Basically I was going to love this book anyway because it's Charlotte Bronte. I know, though, that it's not the best thing she did. By a long shot. The characters are kind of vapid and there's no real plot. The ending is also...not. But doesn't the last paragraph just get you though?

Katie says

It is very clear from reading this book that Charlotte Bronte's skills and sensibilities developed a lot in between the time that this was written and the time when Jane Eyre emerged. Although her style remains similar, in her novels the language is less florid, the characters more individual, the heroines more mature and the plot much tighter. It was interesting to read Mina Laury from this perspective, but I personally don't think that it has much to recommend it in and of itself.

Confusingly, both the eponymous Mina Laury (mistress of the Duke of Zamorna) and Mary (wife of the Duke of Zamorna) speak with indistinguishable voices. Both are young, attractive, and entirely without backbone, something Charlotte Bronte thankfully amends by the time she creates the wonderful Jane Eyre. They are also both hopelessly in love with the Duke, in spite of the fact that he has the incredibly unheroic, unromantic name of Adrian (I think Sue Townsend has coloured this name for me somewhat). The Duke seems to respond passionately to both women in the same way at different times, so I was thoroughly confused as to with whom he was supposedly in love.

Not only are the characters rather lacking, the story is convoluted and confused. When an author ends their work saying, 'I have done my best to please you, and though I know that through feebleness, dullness, and iteration my work terminates in failure rather than triumph, yet you are bound to forgive it, for I have done my best,' it is apparent that this isn't exactly their best work. However, in this case I don't think it was helped by the edition which abridges the story considerably, including large summaries in parentheses before switching to a completely unconnected scene. It made the story feel very disjointed and I can't help wondering if some of the character problems weren't smoothed over a bit in the gaps. I would recommend that anyone interested in Charlott Bronte's early work avoids this volume in favour of a more complete edition.

Craig says

This is a bit of exciting dashery-do and mistress-meets-mistress action. Only Charlotte could create such a

Victorian "bodice ripper!"

Catie says

Although the story is a mere 55 pages, Mina Laury reveals much about Charlotte Brontë's early talent for writing. This fragment is an Angrian Tale (Angria being the imaginary land that Charlotte invented with her brother Branwell), which could be confusing for those who are expecting a short story along the vein of Jane Eyre or Vilette. Even though this story is a great find for Brontë buffs everywhere, the plot itself is mild and the conclusion somewhat ambiguous.

Isabel (kittiwake) says

A mini-book containing Charlotte Brontë juvenilia. A short story about the Duke of Zamorna's mistress, set in the imaginary land of Angria.

Phil Syphe says

Charlotte Brontë was in her early twenties when she wrote this, so it's not juvenilia as some readers may label it, though it has the same feel as her childhood writing whilst bearing no resemblance to her famous works.

"Mina Laury" has hardly any plot to speak of. Essentially, the story revolves around a love-triangle, but to add to the mix one of the two women involved has a lovesick admirer.

It's hardly fair to criticize a work of this nature, considering the author was not writing for the public. At the height of her success Charlotte Brontë would doubtless never have dreamed of "Mina Laury" being published.

In short, if you're a Brontë fan wanting to read everything the famous sisters ever wrote, check this out with no high expectations.

Katie Lumsden says

(Continuing with my Brontë binge) - an interesting and engaging short work from Charlotte's youth, exploring some interesting themes of power and gender relations, of adultery and marriage.

K' Lati says

The king's favorite mistress goes on and on about how she's been corrupted and likes it. The king's wife shows

up in the end but theres no real drama going on I like how descriptive this book was.

Leslie says

A brief sampling from her voluminous juvenilia, featuring the dashing and decadent Duke of Zamorna, his passionately clinging wife, and his obsessively, even creepily, devoted mistress Mina. Elements of illicit sexuality and masochism that one might not expect from its very young author.

Quirkyreader says

This story is part of the Bronte's Angrian Saga.
