

must inevitably wait upon all those complex problems that attend any moral question. While Casey does not, himself, side with the 'absolutist' as against the 'consequentialist' he does give the former a great deal of very valuable and damaging ammunition. My only regret is that he does not develop his objection to calling the 'absolutist' position *conservative*.

It has been argued in this journal, not least by the distinguished editor, that some kinds of 'absolutist' position are revolutionary rather than conservative, and that it is the consequentialist, especially the situationist, who is the true conservative. But that is an argument that these academic academics do not venture into.

BRIAN WICKER

**TWENTIETH CENTURY VIEWS: The Brontës; ed. Ian Gregor; Prentice-Hall Inc. (price not given).**

As reach-me-down literary criticism goes, the 'Twentieth Century Views' series has been fairly impressive. It glints with the lust of a quick commercial kill, and exploits student inexperience, anxiety and overhastiness in objectionable ways; but only a relatively small percentage of its titles are critically risible; most have the minimal merit of reprinting at least one or two valuable pieces, and the best volumes are lively as well as trendy, densely-packed as well as suavely packaged.

All such anthology-making has its flaws, and Ian Gregor's welcome contribution on the Brontës is no exception. It begins with a dismally stodgy piece by C. P. Sanger on legal and genealogical aspects of *Wuthering Heights*, written with all the verve and dash of a gynaecological text-book; the piece is helpful as a reader's guide to the sheerly factual complexities of the novel, and one can dimly see the editorial point behind its inclusion; but some other way of supplying this information (perhaps cutting everything but Sanger's useful family-tree of characters?) was surely possible. One or two of the chapters have a thinnish feel about them, and even the valuable ones by Robert C. McKibben on 'The Image of the Book in *Wuthering Heights*' and David Lodge on 'Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements' suffer from a narrowly imagistic critical focus. Lodge's article, examining the imagery of fire in *Jane Eyre*, is superbly detailed and sensitive; but—like all criticism of its kind—it is remarkable how little it actually says: how little its subtle stylistic probings elicit any correspondingly subtle moral insights.

In a sense, the book's title is misleading. This reads like a book about *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, not like a study of the Brontës: there is almost nothing about Anne Brontë and little about the rest of Charlotte's fiction. Some attempt to sketch in a wider context would also have helped. We have got beyond the point of viewing the Brontës' novels as some weirdly marooned phenomenon, wholly contextless and *sui generis*, but not yet to the point

of anchoring their achievement more firmly within the complex structures of feeling of their time. Throttled and repressed creativity, imaginative strivings both protected and furthered by a cannily prudential hard-headedness, human relationship as possessive power-struggle, the victimized, modestly subservient 'social' self at odds with an 'authentic', forcefully assertive identity which lurks beneath: these may be 'universal' concerns, but there seem good reasons why they break to the surface so astonishingly in English society in the disturbed 1840s.

What is there, however, is for the most part interesting, acute, and well worth having. Philip Drew writes excellently on, among other things, Heathcliff, that thoroughly villainous figure so readily falsifiable in the fine mesh of a Jamesian critical sensibility, and John Hagan adds a persuasive, soundly sensible piece on Catherine. Mark Kinkead-Weekes, in a chapter which manages to be balanced but not vacillating, holds in admirable tension the 'Grange' and 'Heights' views of Emily's novel, although he is surely mistaken in holding that Charlotte saw social convention as merely vacuous. On the contrary, she was concerned with the wary, calculative negotiation of an absolute, passionate commitment in terms of the conventions, and so, by an aesthetic sleight-of-hand, with securing both Romantic fulfilment and social acceptance at the same time. The political ambivalences of *Shirley* or the emotional ambiguities of *The Professor* surely indicate this, as does *Jane Eyre's* (or *Lucy Snow's*) schizoid commitments to 'inner' and 'outer' worlds simultaneously. (Something of this view is conveyed in this volume in a convincing piece by Andrew Hook.) The value of Professor Gregor's symposium, however, is that it stimulates precisely this kind of critical debate, steering as it does a middle course between monolithic unity and sheer eclecticism. Finally, it is good to see an original chapter by Denis Donoghue on Emily's poetry, which appears here for the first time. TERRY EAGLETON