

A "Lost" Emily Brontë Novel?

THE BRONTËS, CHARLOTTE AND EMILY. By Laura L. Hinkley. New York: Hastings House. 1945. 376 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JEAN C. S. WILSON

THE outward and tangible signs that remain of the intense inward life of the parsonage at Haworth during the years 1826-1849 are tantalizingly few. Branwell's crude yet powerful portrait of his sisters, Mrs. Gaskell's life of Charlotte, the records of the most fabulous of all childish kingdoms, the mythical lands of Gondal and Angria, the novels and poetry, give only brief glimpses of actual events and personalities. Yet from this slender store of material has sprung a never-ending stream of books, monographs, pamphlets, lectures, and studies. As a result no family is so familiar, nor, because of the dearth of facts, so little known, as the Reverend Patrick Brontë, his children Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne, their aunt Miss Branwell, or their faithful servant Tabby.

Miss Hinkley has only a little that is new to add to the established pattern. The chief value of her book lies in the fact that she does incorporate into one volume the work of the major Brontë scholars, with special emphasis on Mrs. Gaskell, Fannie E. Ratchford, and C. W. Hatfield. In general she reworks and retells Mrs. Gaskell's biography, with added material from "Web of Childhood," and from Mr. Hatfield's edition of Emily's poetry. Her main points are well known—the happy childhood of the four surviving children that emerged from the shadow of their mother's and sisters' deaths, the fact that all of them were to some extent bounded, motivated, and dominated by their natural habitat, the moors of the West Riding, and the interdependence of their creative genius. Miss Hinkley is at her best in describing the early years of the young Brontës before illness and the struggle for adult existence descended upon them. She has a real feeling for children and childhood, and takes a positive delight in the normality of the children's household chores, their interest in pets, and their knowledge of current events and parish affairs. In and out of their workaday life of lessons, baking, sewing, and reading she interweaves their imaginative play which began with the "Twelves," a box of wooden soldiers given to Branwell by his father, and ended in the brilliant, teeming, and surprisingly sophisticated worlds of Angria and Gondal.

Unfortunately Miss Hinkley's rather fine portrayal of the Brontës as children runs away with her critical sense. For she sees the activities and interests of childhood as the chief source of what is still the most enigmatic flowering of literary genius known to us. Like many Brontë students since the publication of "Web of Childhood," she traces the evolution of character and situation from the magic of Gondal and Angria into the realistic novels of the Brontës' maturity. Undoubtedly Emily and Charlotte repeated themes and figures in their later work which were only half realized in their early imaginings, but the writing of their childhood and adolescence should be taken as a sign and symptom of their developing talent rather than as a reason for their eventual masterpieces.

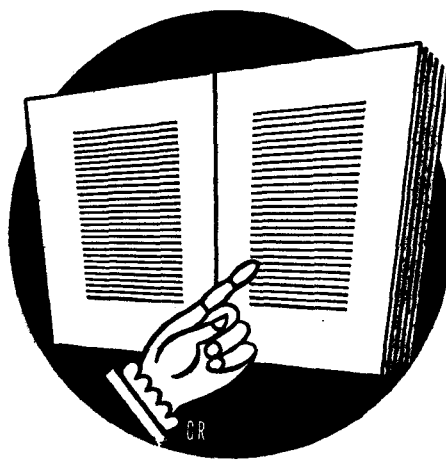
Miss Hinkley has much to add about the transmutation of ordinary experience and knowledge into the forms of narration and character delineation. She does recognize that both Emily and Charlotte were fired and haunted by the concept of the suffering but always powerful male of mysterious and unusual antecedents, but the derivation of Heathcliff seems incredible. Aside from the Brontës' fairy-tale world, she sees him in Mr. Joshua Taylor, the father of Charlotte's friends Martha and Mary, in neighborhood legends of unbridled temper, and in Emily's observation of Branwell's disintegration. Emily never met Mr. Taylor, and could only have known from Charlotte of his rough ways and devotion to a love lost in his youth. Whatever Heathcliff was born of, it was not hearsay. Emily's ability to draw his proud, violent, self-willed nature, without a single flaw, in page after page of closely integrated conflict, makes it at least arguable that this prototype was more familiar to her than a figure of dream and fancy. It is, of course, possible that the loose outlines of the plot

came from stories of nearby Yorkshire families. Branwell, too, may have played his part, but if he did, he must appear as the weak, vacillating Hindley, not the turbulent, stubborn Heathcliff.

The most promising facet of Miss Hinkley's book is her hypothesis that Emily was working on a second novel and in all probability finished it before her death. "Wuthering Heights" was completed at least two and a half years, and was in print a year, before Emily died, and yet all that survives of her work during that fallow period is one poem. It is illogical that a young authoress should abandon the writing habits of a lifetime immediately after the publication of her first novel without a vital reason. Emily was in good health for all but the last three months of her life, and as far as we know had no demands on her time and energy which were not shared by Anne and Charlotte. We know this was a season of productivity for them, with "Jane Eyre," and "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall," yet Emily's pen is strangely idle.

This is Miss Hinkley's deductive evidence. The only actual evidence that Emily continued to write is a letter written to Emily by her publisher Thomas Newby ten months before her death, and a letter written twelve days before she died by Charlotte to her publishers, Smith Elder & Co. Both correspondents discuss a second work by Ellis Bell. The language of the letters in conjunction with Emily's good physical condition seem to point to a manuscript that was lost or destroyed. Miss Hinkley believes that it was a study of degeneracy based on Branwell's life and that Emily destroyed it after his death from a sense of pity. Perhaps she did. Perhaps, also, the piercing of her pseudonym and the general criticism of Anne's study of Branwell in "Wildfell Hall" were equally strong reasons against publication. The workings of Emily's heart and mind, even the reasons for her refusal of all medical care in her last illness, are shrouded in obscurity. What little we know of her final years does seem to hint at a story as tensely dramatic in construction and climax as her own "Wuthering Heights."

But Miss Hinkley is not the author to tell that story. She is too prone to substitute conjecture and psychiatric deduction for knowledge. Even though her inferences are labelled, they form so great a part of the text that her book cannot be considered as anything other than a personal concept of the Brontës' relations to one another, to their work, and to the world of intellect and emotion in which they lived.



A Personal Conflict and Victory

WASTELAND. By Jo Sinclair. New York: Harper and Bros. 1945. 321 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HAROLD FIELDS

HERE, in the twelfth in the series of Harper Prize novels, is a book that is not a novel—it is without a plot and without a climax—but rather a continuous characterization that carries the reader along through a series of flashbacks into the home life of a simple, frightened newspaper-cameraman who is seeking to find himself.

"Wasteland" is the story of Jakie Braunstein who tried to conceal his Jewish ancestry and environment behind the cloak of Jack Brown and who found peace only when he dared revert to the personality of Jakie Brown. Ashamed of his family, frightened by the confining and seemingly empty wasteland of the rituals and drabness of his Jewish life, lonely in his isolation from his relatives and yet unconsciously hungry for their company, he comes to the psychiatrist for guidance. His is the painful tale of the second generation that struggles to be part of the new and yet remains part of the old. Jakie Brown is in constant conflict with himself, with his family, and with his world. He is Jack Brown at the newspaper office, fearful that he will be identified as a Jew and yet unable to break his ties with his Jewish heritage; he is Jakie at home, fearful that his family will obtrude itself some day on his "Gentile" world and yet unable to identify himself wholly with that world. Having tasted the joys of his newer environment, he struggles to establish himself in his proper place, so that there shall be balance and meshing between the European customs and attitudes of his parents, and the American pattern of his daily life. It is as though his feet were sunk in heritage, his hands and head gripped in the ever-strengthening talons of American environment, and his body and soul torn between them.

This is no tale of how the foreigner becomes the American: Louis Adamic and Mary Antin and Professor Steiner have done that in past years. This study, this novel, is different in its approach. Its treatment is subtle; it is a moving analysis, as told to the psychiatrist, of Jake Brown's own torment.

Throughout his story of his relations with the individual members of his family there runs the umbilical cord of tradition. He is now a recognized cameraman for his newspaper who is

urged by his associates to give a one-man show of his work, but he is afraid and uncertain of himself professionally because of the tenuousness of his family background and because he is a Jew. As the psychiatrist jots down, after one of the Saturday chats, Jack Brown "is unable to leave these traditions in his mind, even after he has left them physically, because he feels a strong, groping urge for roots, for the stable cultural, racial, social roots of a people." And yet he sees about him, when he visits home, a



wasteland. It becomes more keen each year at Passover, when the story of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt is related at the Seder. "His unwillingness to face the significance of the Passover and Seder ritual, an ever-recurring pattern . . . is tied in his mind to the pattern of his family, each generation repeating itself (like the yearly Seder) in a new generation of wasteland."

It is the meaningless, insufferable repetition and purposelessness of life that bogs him down. His mother who toils and spins and finds it impossible to escape from the rut of her life. His father who is content to read and turn the page, turn the page, turn the page, through life but without personal or family gain. His brother Sig who started life as a rocket and plummeted to earth like a dud. His sister Roz whose marriage was followed by divorce and whose framework of happiness exists in a roadhouse as waitress. His sister Sarah whose home is soured by her sneering husband and her misguided children. His nephews who suffered from lack of understanding and guidance and whose remediable defects lead to jeers. And his sister Deborah, the only one who, unthwarted by these circumstances, quietly proceeds in her own way, patiently helping the others and not at all abashed by her surroundings.

All through the book there is the portrayal of "people who have wandered off into odd valleys. Physical,

mental, or spiritual alleys . . . the strange people, the ones who are despised . . . or lost." And yet the novel is not one of despair or disillusionment; through it run threads that slowly are being woven to make a sturdy cloth of hope and faith. Jake Brown's feeling of shame—as shown in his early unwillingness to photograph the members of his family—is strong as long as he stifles it. But as he discusses his problems and lays the elements of his conflicts before himself and before the psychiatrist, he sees their rich values and begins to feel both the pride of his history, and his joy in perpetuating the contributions of his family. Being a Jew has been for him a source of fear, humiliation, and resentfulness against the wasteland of the future. This goes on as long as he allows his emotions and apologetics to dominate; as soon as he begins to understand his mother's love, his father's background, his sisters' and brother's ambitions, he senses a feeling of oneness with them and begins to give them all that he has in order to draw them out of the morass and quicksand of their environment. In that attitude he begins to find himself and gather strength.

Such a portrayal is effective when it is harshly realistic in its approach, and such the author has made it. This story of the loneliness in one man's soul, and its liberation through self-appraisal and frank recognition, must of necessity have a fundamental appeal where suffering prevails. The author has spared us the vapid homiletics with which such a theme could easily be embroidered; there is no moralizing and there is no philosophizing.

The story sweeps along with such emotional power that the reader shares Jakie Brown's own conflict and victory.

Arthur Davison Ficke

(November 30, 1945)

By Witter Bynner

AFTER the joy, the pain,
The swift, the slow,
You have not hoped in vain.
I know.

And yet I do not know
How not to blame
This fate to which you go,
From which you came,
In which you could not tame
The hurt of being
For all your golden flame,
For all your seeing.

At least you were never fleeing
Toward night from day:
Into this blind agreeing
You are drawn away.