

561
E7019

00155

7990015

外文书库

EIGHT MODERN WRITERS

BY

J. I. M. STEWART



OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

✓

© *Oxford University Press* 1963

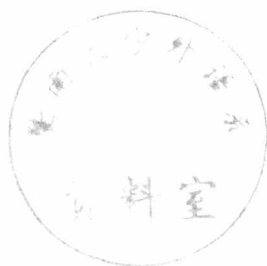
FIRST PUBLISHED 1963
REPRINTED, 1964 (WITH CORRECTIONS)
1966 (WITH CORRECTIONS)

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

OXFORD HISTORY OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Edited by

F. P. WILSON *and* BONAMY DOBRÉE



THE OXFORD HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

Edited by

F. P. WILSON *and* BONAMY DOBRÉE

- I. Part 1. ENGLISH LITERATURE BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST
- Part 2. MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE
- II. Part 1. CHAUCER AND THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY (Published)
- Part 2. THE CLOSE OF THE MIDDLE AGES (Published)
- III. THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY (excluding drama) (Published)
- IV. THE ENGLISH DRAMA, *c.* 1485–1642
- V. THE EARLIER SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, 1600–1660 (Published)
- VI. THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
- VII. THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, 1700–1740 (Published)
- VIII. THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
- IX. 1789–1815 (Published)
- X. 1815–1832
- XI. THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY
- XII. EIGHT MODERN WRITERS (Published)

PREFACE

IN *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* G. M. Young writes:

To a foreigner, the age through which we ourselves have been living is the age of Galsworthy, Wells, and Shaw; before them of Wilde. Something, doubtless, beside literary enjoyment guides his taste.

It is Young's point that the foreigner, in exalting these writers, is showing a 'malicious preference for what is most critical and most subversive' of England in the heyday of her imperialism. Here is 'an echo of that passionate jealousy of England which for a generation was the most widely diffused emotion in Europe'. And Young adds (for he has been reviewing the history of Anglo-Irish relations): 'Two Irishmen in a list of four. It is something to be thought of.'

From this volume I have excluded living writers, and have then attempted a record of the eight who seem to me of unchallengeable importance in the period. Wilde is not among these: nevertheless there are three Irishmen, since to Shaw I have added Yeats and Joyce. So again there is 'something to be thought of'. Moreover I include in James an American, in Conrad a Pole, and in Kipling an Indian-born writer who remained to some extent an explorer rather than a native of England. But I do not think that Young's 'malicious preference' has been at work in me, a Scot, to produce this incidence. It is a fact of literary history of which we must make what we can.

My inclusions and exclusions are best not defended: let them be shot at by anybody who is interested. I will only say that, unlike the jealous foreigner, I have let nothing 'beside literary enjoyment' guide my taste. It would be rash to suggest that the chosen eight will eventually prove to be the only great writers of their age. As the mists of near-contemporaneity disperse, other peaks must appear. But I think it likely that these eight will remain important landmarks when literary historians come to a fuller survey of the terrain. Meantime they afford a scale against which a good deal can be measured in a tentative way. What I have attempted is a volume that may serve as

a companion to a first fairly extensive reading in them. The introductory chapter merely sketches in a general background in the light of this purpose.

I am grateful to the General Editors, Professor F. P. Wilson and Professor Bonamy Dobrée, for a great deal of help and patience; to Mr. Rayner Heppenstall for detailed and valuable criticism of the whole work; and to Mr. J. A. Burrow, Mr. C. H. Collie, and Mr. Howell Daniels for equally valuable criticism of individual chapters. Mr. Daniels has put me further in his debt by providing the bibliographies of Hardy, James, Conrad, Yeats, and Lawrence. In the introductory chapter I have reproduced the substance of the Garnett Sedgewick Memorial Lecture given in the University of British Columbia in 1961; in the chapter on Hardy some paragraphs from a paper which appeared in *Essays and Studies* for 1948; and in the chapter on Joyce parts of a pamphlet published in 1957 in the series *Writers and their Work*. For permission to quote substantially from copyright material I am grateful to the Trustees of the Hardy Estate, Messrs. Macmillan and Company, and the Macmillan Company of New York (Thomas Hardy's *Collected Poems*); to the Public Trustee and the Society of Authors (Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* and *Major Barbara*); to Mrs. George Bambridge, Messrs. A. P. Watt & Son, Messrs. Methuen & Company, the Macmillan Company of Canada, and Messrs. Doubleday & Company (Rudyard Kipling's *The Seven Seas*, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, and 'In Partibus'); to Mrs. W. B. Yeats, Messrs. A. P. Watt & Son, Messrs. Macmillan & Company, and the Macmillan Company of New York (W. B. Yeats's *Collected Poems*); to Messrs. Jonathan Cape Ltd., the Viking Press, and the Society of Authors (James Joyce's *Chamber Music*, *Pomes Penyeach*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*); to Messrs. Laurence Pollinger Ltd., the Viking Press, and the Estate of the late Mrs. Frieda Lawrence (D. H. Lawrence's *Collected Poems*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *Kangaroo*, and *The Captain's Doll*); and to the Society of Authors, Messrs. Jonathan Cape Ltd., and Messrs. Holt, Rinehart & Winston (A. E. Housman's 'With rue my heart is laden').

J. I. M. S.

Christ Church, Oxford
30 September 1962

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	I
II. HARDY	19
III. JAMES	71
IV. SHAW	122
V. CONRAD	184
VI. KIPLING	223
VII. YEATS	294
VIII. JOYCE	422
IX. LAWRENCE	484
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE	595
BIBLIOGRAPHY	629
INDEX	695

I · INTRODUCTION

I

THE present volume, some convenient backward glances apart, begins at 1880. It is the year of an old-fashioned novel, *The Trumpet Major*, and of a novel not so old-fashioned, *Washington Square*. George Eliot died. Flaubert died. Maupassant published *Boule de suif*, Zola *Nana*, and Dostoevski *The Brothers Karamazov*. But literary history, like the neo-classical dramatists, observes the *liaison des scènes*; we never arrive at a cleared stage. So here is only the suggestion of a changed balance. If we look in 1880 for a single definitive event we may find it not in imaginative literature but in the appearance in England of the American Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. In 1871 *The Times* had judged it possible to 'look at the present with undisturbed satisfaction'. But as the decade advanced it became clear that rising production was not bringing rising prosperity. Prices sank, and by 1879 the spectre of general unemployment had declared itself. Britain was facing perplexities of which no very sufficient analysis was available. Along with the products of her industrial revolution she had inevitably sold its techniques, and her customers were already becoming her competitors. A new economic imperialism was to be the answer worked out rapidly and vigorously in face of this exigency. But the vastly increased complexity and the radically changing tensions in the social structure as a whole were seen by some far to transcend the sphere of classical economics. From George's book may be dated a new sort of involvement of the speculative and imaginative intelligence in the largest social questions. A literature of protest or outcry, such as Mrs. Gaskell's or Charles Kingsley's, was not enough; nor did pietistic solutions—the gospel of a change of heart—hold water. Political science must be mastered in the interest of political morality, and the resultant findings be brought home to the people alike by rational persuasion and the resources of art. The London Democratic

Federation was founded in 1881 and the Fabian Society and the Socialist League in 1884. *News from Nowhere* was published in 1890. *Widowers' Houses* was played in 1892.

Britain's second empire, like her industrial revolution, was made possible by science; its instruments were the submarine telegraph, fire power, and the reliability of steam. But science, as well as liberating vast material forces, assaulted the mind. This is the grand commonplace of every disquisition on the age, and we may glance at it by moving on a little and considering the year 1888. It is only necessary to listen with half an ear at this point in order to hear history turning with a faint creak on its hinge.

In 1888 Matthew Arnold dies. T. S. Eliot is born. Arnold's niece, Mrs. Humphry Ward, publishes *Robert Elsmere*—in this emulating her other Arnold uncle, William, who in *Oakfield* (1853) had produced a religious novel turning on the temptations of Indian army life. And Elsmere was only the first of a line of clergymen with whose interwoven doctrinal and domestic difficulties Mrs. Ward edified and entertained her public; as late as 1911 we find Elsmere's daughter marrying another of these unfortunate men in *The Case of Richard Meynell*. Throughout the age literature and religion come variously together, and in the process there is perhaps a progression to be observed. In 1848 a finer mind than Mrs. Ward's had judged fiction a fitting medium for the discussion of a priestly vocation, and the result was Newman's *Loss and Gain*. *Adam Bede* appeared in 1859, and Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* fourteen years later. Kipling's 'Recessional' was printed in *The Times* on 17 July 1897. Mr. Eliot was to have *Thoughts after Lambeth* in 1931 and to expound his views on modern heresy to an American audience a little later. When we consider, against George Eliot's achievement and Arnold's, what Mr. Gladstone and other eminent persons were prepared to applaud in Mrs. Ward, we must suspect a seeping away of the intellectual energies of the time from areas where they had hitherto been intensively at play. When we notice that the Deity addressed in Kipling's striking poem is as patently a trope of rhetoric as He is in equally striking poems of Hardy's, and when we mark the tone of Mr. Eliot's theological discourses and their general odd-man-out effect, we are made sharply aware of something already sufficiently evident: the progressive dominance of purely secular assumptions

throughout the age, and the surprising facility with which men were able to persuade themselves that they could make do with these. Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, begun in 1873 and left in a drawer like a time-bomb until 1903, is significant here. It cannot be called a less serious book than *Adam Bede*. Yet it seems to celebrate the achieving of a confident and cheerful irreverence inconceivable in the most assured agnostic of the mid-Victorian period. It rings out Clough and Hardy as absolutely as it rings out Canon Butler himself. It rings in Shaw and Wells.

This movement into an age of science and rationalism is something so large as to be difficult to keep in clear focus; we stare through it without reading the signs, as we do through an advertisement in too brutally sprawled a type. It comes home to us most effectively if we try to consider its impact upon whatever may be our own familiar environment and particular concern. Oxford undergraduates, turning over family letters, may find themselves surprised by the topics upon which their great-grandfathers thought it interesting to correspond in vacations. They may reflect, when tramping their laboratories, that in Newman's prime the pursuit of experimental philosophy in their University was confined to a cellar in Balliol and a small building in Christ Church's back yard. And when disposed to ascribe vaguely to 'the influence of science' a certain aridity in the methods by which they are now invited to study literature, they may usefully consider that this is only indirectly true. The multitude of persons whose acute minds now afflict them in textbooks and journals have in fact nothing scientific about them but are theologians *manqués*. A hundred years ago they would have been planning themselves a reputation not from some dissection of Donne or Yeats but from a well-conceived pamphlet on Pelagianism or a history of liturgical lights.

2

Butler has somewhere a witticism about the amount of doubt that lived in the honest faith of his contemporaries. Yet we now incline to admire the Victorians just because of the truth in the gibe; they did well, we feel, not too quickly to throw up the sponge, but to remain fighting in the ring until the bell went. Nevertheless, because the world in which we live is perpetually changing, at times rapidly and disturbingly changing,

our guesses about that world must be perpetually changing too. Literature and the arts are among our means of guessing, and for this reason any literature and art will be of inferior quality and interest which has not been created at some growing-point of its time. The period of our present study, more perhaps than some others, affords the spectacle of a good deal of aesthetic waste thus occasioned. We are conscious of writers of talent and sensibility who do not really command our attention, since they have either ignored the challenge of their age or met it in an inadequate manner.

Robert Bridges is perhaps the finest artist that we have to characterize in this way. The earlier of his *Shorter Poems*, in particular, hold an authentic lyric power, and even much later he can make us pause and admire:

Open for me the gates of delight,
The gates of the garden of man's desire;
Where spirits touch'd by heavenly fire
Have planted the trees of life.—
Their branches in beauty are spread,
Their fruit divine
To the nations is given for bread,
And crush'd into wine.

But what—we find ourselves asking—is wrong? What underlies our feeling that the counters have worn a little too smooth? We answer that the poet has elected to write out of a phase of imaginative experience that is no longer actual, but historical. And yet what is to seek in Bridges is precisely an historical sense. Had he seen his time accurately in relation to other times he would not have thought to write, as he did in *The Testament of Beauty* (1929), a long philosophical poem, nor would he have proposed to recommend this archaic contrivance by clothing it in elaborate metrical innovation. Still, what is wrong in Bridges is almost balanced by what is right. If one wants to see this particular sort of wrongness in chemical purity one has to turn to William Watson.

This we need not do now. But a contemporary of Watson's, James Barrie, was a writer of more considerable talent which won wide acclaim, and it is worth pausing to consider why his name suggests today not so much plays to see and novels to read as a case to consider. His work represents, we may think, very

much that sustained and uncontrolled exhibition of a morbid personality which Mr. Eliot was at one time disposed to see as the mainspring of Hardy. With Barrie the process takes the form—very different from any imaginable in the author of *Jude the Obscure*—of exploiting any convention that can be used to assert the wholesomeness and sweetness of the general situation. The Victorian cult of childhood was tough on children, and the Victorian attitude to women was a stain upon the age. But at least these things had to be, and for reasons—too ramifying to be entered upon—having nothing to do with any individual's psychopathology. Barrie is still feebly involved with them; he is an instance of an artist perpetuating bad and obsolete guesses for his own ease and for the ease of lazy minds and time-lagged sensibilities. He entered the London theatre, we have to note, in the same year as Shaw.

'Escape literature' has become a common term, and it suggests itself here. A wise circumspection is not invariably, perhaps, observed in its use. Thus the sense in which it may be applied to Stevenson, a compatriot of Barrie's and his senior by a decade, is not an easy one. Stevenson in himself represents an escape; he is one of the very few persons artistically endowed who in a whole hundred years and more have escaped the direr consequences of being born north of the Tweed. He was an invalid, and his best writing—which is superb—lay in the field of romance. Heroes and heroines and villains are its mainstays; and this shows at once, we may be told, that it is idle stuff. Yet escape is of a special, and perhaps precious, quality when it is into an ideal world. Stevenson follows Scott. He hands on to innumerable popular writers a tradition in which it is important that a gentleman should know just when to draw his sword or punch a gangster on the jaw. If gentlemen are no longer put to making these calculations—except, indeed, in conditions of mass slaughter—it is perhaps the gentlemen who are doing the escaping, after all.

But Stevenson as well as being a romancer was an aesthete. He wrote a delicate prose. His hair depended upon his shoulders and he wore a velvet jacket—dangerous manifestations for which, it may here be recorded, Edinburgh parents and schoolmasters were looking out with anxiety many years after his death. That death took place in 1894, which was the year of Pater's death too. If, as Yeats reminds us in writing of the

Rhymers, not everybody in the nineties wore velvet, it was no doubt Pater who was the chastening impulse. The prophet of a subfusc decadence, he ran to a huge moustache but would not have ventured upon flowing locks. We deprecate Henry James's description of him as a 'faint, embarrassed figure'—yet we can ourselves hardly think of him without smiling, so infinitely incapable of experiences appears this high priest of experience at its extreme. The aesthetes and decadents of the age are not, perhaps, too absolutely to be fathered on him; yet with him they have in common the stance less of escapists than of men whom something has eluded. With a greater effort of the intelligence and the will, we feel, they might at least in part have escaped escapism, as Morris did; and Johnson, Dowson, and Beardsley need not have been left clutching mere simulacra in Holy Church, fleshly fulfilment, an art that was only for art. In Yeats they nourished for a brief space the giant of a later time; awkwardly among them was John Davidson, a man of heroic integrity and potentially of poetic mark; Max Beerbohm, who contrived to give an air of wit to the statement that he belonged to the Beardsley period, carried forward from that period an *indifferent* pose which was drastically to delimit the reach of a formidably fused critical and comic talent. It is no accident that Beerbohm's prime aversion was Kipling, for it was Kipling who, by the mere spectacle of a man who had caught hold of something, was first to cast the Beardsley period into perspective. But of course it was not the Beardsley period at all. It was the Wilde period. That Wilde dominated so large a segment of the eighties and nineties may in fact be their measure. Yet his is certainly a figure that cannot be passed by.

3

Whistler, from whom Wilde in a sense stole the aesthetic show, was to declare that the 'esurient Oscar' had 'the courage of the opinions . . . of others!' However this may be, Wilde's possessing plain courage is a cardinal fact about him as a man—is the only personal fact, perhaps, worth recording. He was lured to the United States as a cock-shy. In a full awareness of this, and upon being asked at a customs barrier whether he had anything to declare, he answered, 'Nothing but my genius!' It was extremely flamboyant and even a little vulgar, and he

was to be vulgar and flamboyant enough throughout his career. If his character was courageous it was weak, and success did no good to it. But there was something large about him as well as something bloated; something generous in intellect as well as flashing in wit. And yet nearly all his assaults upon the art—or Art—that he so sincerely (if again flamboyantly) exalted were failures or at least operations of little account; and it has lately become clear that his letters are to be, with his legend, his best monument. Yeats's prose, at least, was for a time not less silly and over-scented than Wilde's. Yet Yeats was to achieve the stature of a major English poet, whereas Wilde was done for long before his overt fate overtook him. Why? We may say, if in an insular mood, that his excellent education unfortunately enabled him to make more of the contemporary French decadence than Yeats could manage. But we do better to note—if we are to continue what is only an insubstantial comparison—that Yeats had Sligo and Rosses whereas Wilde had only his bizarre mother's *salon* in Merrion Square. To have nothing to hold on to is even more fatal to large talents than to small, and Wilde suffered from his hour more even than did the minor members of Yeats's 'Tragic Generation'. Unlike James, who had both dinner parties and an absorbed interest in the survival of moral ideas in an affluent society, he had the dinner parties only. By the time he wrote *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891) there had been too many of them for him not to fail, not just to fail, in the serious consideration of a substantial subject. The essay is said to have been bad for the parties—Wilde came to be disliked by the fashionable society that cultivated him—and the parties were bad for the essay and everything else. His situation has been expressed with characteristic colour by G. K. Chesterton at the end of *The Victorian Age in Literature* (1913): 'Anselm would have despised a civic crown, but he would not have despised a relic. Voltaire would have despised a relic, but he would not have despised a vote. We hardly find them both despised till we come to the age of Oscar Wilde.'

Wilde, in fact, is the first distinguished tenant of Heartbreak House—and Chesterton will be found to have provided the metaphor in the very year that Shaw began the play. According to Chesterton, too, it was Shaw who, along with Kipling, least ineffectively explored means of breaking out: socialism and imperialism were real forces, together totally destructive of the

Victorian compromise, to the interests of which it was possible for the imagination to harness itself, gaining release by having again a load to draw. There is strength in this analysis; much writing of importance in the new century can be placed in terms of it. It fails only in not taking due account of a certain virtue in the age not to be classed as of a disruptive sort. We are here obliged to take a further glance at social history.

4

There is a real grimness in the eighties and nineties, and at the turn of the century things look bad. We have noted the underlying economic dilemma. It was breeding, beneath the surface of national life, problems more urgent than a Fabian policy seemed likely to master. And on the surface, the polite surface, there glittered a most impolite and vulgar opulence the perfect memorial to which is Sargent's series of portraits and portrait groups in the Tate Gallery. It is the age of cigars and diamonds; of the incursion of Levantine persons into the hunting field and the manor; of the digging out, within the shadow of Rheims Cathedral, of vaster and vaster caverns for the storage of millions and millions more bottles of champagne. Yet this age discovered for itself a real strength—formidable indeed if not particularly glorious—in a certain obstinate social cohesion. Visiting foreigners, we are told, are constantly staggered by the rigid class-stratifications to be found in these islands. They will concede, if well informed, the process whereby a governing class perpetually recruits itself, with prudence and cunning, from people of gathering substance coming up from below. It seems to be less obvious to them that a converse form of assimilation must exist; that the thing can be managed at all only on a basis of give-and-take. Typically, the boys who move from some small provincial and commercial prosperity through public schools into a new ambience have insisted on taking a good deal along with them; they impose as well as accept; and the impositions are themselves accepted. Similar processes occur at the other social frontiers, so that the English class-system perpetually exists and is perpetually changing. The change may be more apparent now at one point and now at another, and its incidence may not be the same in different geographical regions. Middle-aged people bred in the Home

Counties, and brought up to note a mysterious absoluteness in the gap between the upper-middle and lower-middle classes, have to modify their picture if they move north, just as they have to modify it if—resisting outrage and bewilderment—they allow some credence to the younger social novelists of the present generation. It seems hardly within the genius of the British people that this process should have any stop. And it has produced in our own century large areas of confidence, of common assumption, of openness, of ability to get along on working assumptions, such as the troubled souls of the Victorians could scarcely have looked forward to. All this is not to be proclaimed as any very notable achievement of spiritual health. But it did, in the immediate period to which we now come, produce a confident, widely available, open, and empirically proceeding literature of far-reaching social relevance. There are in that literature peaks from which the view is scarcely reassuring. At the same time it is a literature of a breadth and a modestly rich productivity unexampled in our history: a terrain through which we could wander, harvesting and glean- ing, for a very long time.

5

We may again pause for a moment at a single year. It is 1904. We are Edwardians now—and the Victorian age, in departing, seems obligingly to have taken most of its anxieties in its baggage. The solvents glimpsed and dreaded by our grandfathers have flooded in and done their work, yet the large and liberal fabric of modern European civilization triumphantly stands.

For it is not in Britain alone that cohesive forces appear to be in control. In Germany *Buddenbrooks* has been published, but it is hard to catch any real sense that the *Burgerzeit* is in decline. In France Proust has been translating Ruskin; presently he will enter Dr. Sollier's clinic for neurotics, but will see no reason to stop there for very long, since to a contrived seclusion of his own all society will repair should he choose to require it. In Russia, indeed, it is the very year in which the axes are heard in *The Cherry Orchard*, and Chekhov himself dies as if upon their stroke. But when a young contemporary of his, Ivan Pavlov, is awarded a Nobel prize it occurs to none of his compatriots to take the matter amiss. Europe is like a great country-house.