THE THIRTIES
IN BRITAIN

CONTEXT AND COMMENTARY

Series Editor: ARTHUR POLLARD

Published titles

J. A. V. Chapple
SCIENCE AND LITERATURE IN THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY

Pamela Horn
LIFE AND LABOUR IN RURAL ENGLAND, 1760–1850

Elisabeth Jay
FAITH AND DOUBT IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

Robin Headlam Wells
SHAKESPEARE, POLITICS AND THE STATE

Dominic Hibberd
THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Norman Page
THE THIRTIES IN BRITAIN

Stephen Prickett
ENGLAND AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Alan and Dorothy Shelston
THE INDUSTRIAL CITY, 1820–1870

Forthcoming titles

Roger Richardson
REVOLT AND RESTORATION IN THE
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Alan Downie
LITERATURE AND POLITICS 1678–1780

THE THIRTIES IN BRITAIN

Norman Page

M
MACMILLAN

© Norman Page 1990

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1956 (as amended), or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 33–4 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7DP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published 1990

Published by
MACMILLAN EDUCATION LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

Typeset by Wessex Typesetters
(Division of The Eastern Press Ltd)
Frome, Somerset

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Page, Norman
The Thirties in Britain.—(Context and commentary).
1. English literature, 1900–1945. Influence of
political events, 1920–1940—Critical studies
I. Title II. Series
820'.9'00912

ISBN 978-0-333-41927-4 ISBN 978-1-349-20489-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-20489-2

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vi
<i>List of Plates</i>	vii
<i>Editor's Preface</i>	viii
Introduction	1
1. The Great Depression: Unemployment and Poverty	18
2. 'Ferocious theologies'	49
3. The Spanish Civil War: 'To-day the struggle'	82
4. The Road to the Second World War	106
Postscript	134
<i>Chronological Table</i>	135
<i>A Guide to Reading</i>	142
<i>Index</i>	146

Acknowledgements

The author and publishers wish to thank the following who have kindly given permission for the use of copyright material: Jonathan Cape Ltd and Peters Fraser and Dunlop Ltd on behalf of the Executors of the Estate of C. Day Lewis for extracts from 'Bombers' and 'Newsreel' from *Collected Poems 1954* by C. Day Lewis, and 'Battle of Britain' from *Poems of C. Day Lewis* edited by Ian Parsons, Jonathan Cape and the Hogarth Press; Carcanet Press Ltd for 'A Letter from Aragon' and 'Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesea' from *Collected Writings* by John Cornford, 1986; Ad. Donker (Pty) Ltd and Francisco Campbell Custodio for an extract from 'Flowering Rifle' from *Collected Poems* by Roy Campbell; Faber and Faber Ltd for extracts from 'Autumn Journal', 'Birmingham' and 'The Sunlight on the Garden' from *The Collected Poems of Louis MacNiece*; 'An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum' from *Collected Poems 1928–1953* by Stephen Spender; with Random House, Inc. for extracts from 'Letter to Lord Byron' from *Collected Poems*, 'September 1st, 1939', 'Song for the New Year', 'Spain 1937' and 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' from *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927–1939* by W. H. Auden, edited by Edward Mendelson, copyright © 1977 by Edward Mendelson, William Meredith and Munroe E. Spears, Executors of the Estate of W. H. Auden; John Murray, Publishers, Ltd for an extract from 'Slough' from *Collected Poems* by John Betjeman, 1958; Penguin Books Ltd for 'Farewell Chorus' by David Gascoyne from *Poetry of the Thirties*, edited by Robin Skelton, 1964, copyright © 1964 Robin Skelton.

Every effort has been made to trace all the copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

List of Plates

1. A Wigan street scene during the Depression.
Photograph © Hulton Picture Library.
2. The Jarrow marchers passing through a Bedfordshire village (26 October 1936).
Photograph © Hulton Picture Library.
3. A Punch Cartoon, 5 December 1934: ‘Adolf in the looking-glass. Herr Hitler: “How Frightful I look to-day!”’ by Bernard Partridge (1861–1945).
Illustration © PUNCH.
4. A Punch Cartoon, 7 September 1938: ‘The Master-Singer of Nuremberg’ by Bernard Partridge (1861–1945).
Illustration © PUNCH.
5. Neville Chamberlain on his return from Munich, 30 September 1938.
Photograph © Hulton Picture Library.
6. Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden about to leave for China (January 1938).
Photograph © Hulton Picture Library.
7. George Orwell.
Photograph © Popperfoto.
8. Evelyn Waugh.
Photograph © Hulton Picture Library.

Editor's Preface

J.H. Plumb has said that 'the aim of (the historian) is to understand men both as individuals and in their social relationships in time. "Social" embraces all of man's activities – economic, religious, political, artistic, legal, military, scientific – everything, indeed, that affects the life of mankind.' Literature is itself similarly comprehensive. From Terence onwards writers have embraced his dictum that all things human are their concern.

It is the aim of this series to trace the interweavings of history and literature, to show by judicious quotation and commentary how those actually working within the various fields of human activity influenced and were influenced by those who were writing the novels, poems and plays within the several periods. An attempt has been made to show the special contribution that such writers make to the understanding of their times by virtue of their peculiar imaginative 'feel' for their subjects and the intensely personal angle from which they observe the historical phenomena that provide their inspiration and come within their creative vision. In its turn the historical evidence, besides and beyond its intrinsic importance, serves to 'place' the imaginative testimony of the writers.

The authors of the several volumes in this series have sought to intermingle history and literature in the conviction that the study of each is enhanced thereby. They have been free to adopt their own approach within the broad general pattern of the series. The topics themselves have sometimes also a particular slant and emphasis. Commentary, for instance, has had to be more detailed in some cases than in others. All the contributors to the series are at one, however, in the belief (at a time when some critics would not only divorce texts from their periods but even from their authors) that literature is the creation of actual men and women, actually living in an identifiable set of historical circumstances, themselves both the creatures and the creators of their times.

ARTHUR POLLARD