IVY COMPTON-BURNETT

Women Writers

General Editors: *Eva Figes* and *Adele King*

Published titles

Margaret Atwood, Barbara Hill Rigney
Jane Austen, Meenakshi Mukherjee
Elizabeth Bowen, Phyllis Lassner
Anne Brontë, Elizabeth Langland
Charlotte Brontë, Pauline Nestor
Emily Brontë, Lyn Pykett
Fanny Burney, Judy Simons
Willa Cather, Susie Thomas
Colette, Diana Holmes
Ivy Compton-Burnett, Kathy Justice Gentile
Emily Dickinson, Joan Kirkby
George Eliot, Kristin Brady
Sylvia Plath, Susan Bassnett
Christina Stead, Diana Brydon
Eudora Welty, Louise Westling
Edith Wharton, Katherine Joslin

Forthcoming

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Marjorie Stone
Mrs Gaskell, Jane Spencer
Doris Lessing, Margaret Moan Rowe
Katherine Mansfield, Diane DeBell
Toni Morrison, Nellie McKay
Jean Rhys, Carol Rumens
Christina Rossetti, Linda Marshall
Stevie Smith, Romana Huk
Muriel Spark, Judith Sproxton
Gertrude Stein, Jane Bowers
Virginia Woolf, Clare Hanson

Women Writers

Ivy
Compton-Burnett

Kathy Justice Gentile

M

MACMILLAN

© Kathy Justice Gentile 1991

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, Designs and Patents Act 1988 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 1991

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

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Gentile, Kathy Justice

Ivy Compton-Burnett.—(Women writers)

1. English fiction. Compton-Burnett, I. (Ivy) *1884–1969*

I. Title II. Series

823.912

ISBN 978-0-333-45609-5

ISBN 978-1-349-21699-4 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-21699-4

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Editors' Preface</i>	ix
1. To Know All Is To Forgive All: I. Compton-Burnett's Ethic of Tolerance	1
2. Radical Renovations in the House of Fiction	17
3. Unhistoric Acts: Early Novels	30
4. Mothers and Martyrs	47
5. Civilisation and his Discontents	65
6. Clouds and Clearings: the Other Novels	88
7. Character Condensed	103
8. Attention Must Be Paid: I. Compton-Burnett and her Critics	120
<i>Notes</i>	132
<i>Bibliography</i>	139
<i>Index</i>	144

To my Family

Acknowledgements

The writing of this book was supported by a 1989 summer research grant from the University of Missouri at St Louis and by a 1988 grant from the Center for the Study of Women in Society at the University of Oregon. I am indebted to all those who helped to bring this book about. Joseph Hynes reintroduced me to Ivy Compton-Burnett in a seminar on the British Novel. Louise Westling gave me the impetus to turn a dissertation chapter on Compton-Burnett into a book. My dissertation director, Clark Griffith, was especially encouraging and took time away from American literature to read several of Compton-Burnett's novels. Christine Sutphin read, and liked, Compton-Burnett's novels and provided helpful comments on five of my chapters. Thanks also to Brenda Jaeger for helping me perfect the typescript on the laser printer. Most of all, I am grateful to Jim Gentile for his careful reading of drafts and for his unstinting support and encouragement.

The author and the publishers wish to thank Curtis Brown Ltd on behalf of the Estate of Ivy Compton-Burnett for permission to quote an extract from a letter published in *Ivy When Young: The Early Life of Ivy Compton-Burnett 1884-1919* by Hilary Spurling. Copyright © 1974 by the Estate of Ivy Compton-Burnett. We also thank Peter Owen Ltd for permission to quote from copyright material in *Elizabeth and Ivy* by Robert Liddell. Copyright © by Peter Owen.

Editors' Preface

The study of women's writing has been long neglected by a male critical establishment both in academic circles and beyond. As a result, many women writers have either been unfairly neglected, or have been marginalised in some way, so that their true influence and importance has been ignored. Other women writers have been accepted by male critics and academics, but on terms which seem, to many women readers of this generation, to be false or simplistic. In the past the internal conflicts involved in being a woman in a male-dominated society have been largely ignored by readers of both sexes, and this has affected our reading of women's work. The time has come for a serious re-assessment of women's writing in the light of what we understand today.

This series is designed to help in that re-assessment. All the books are written by women, because we believe that men's understanding of feminist critique is only, at best, partial. And besides, men have held the floor quite long enough.

Eva Figes
Adele King