

Pater to Forster, 1873-1924

# transitions

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Pater to Forster,  
1873–1924

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First published 2003 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010  
Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN 978-0-333-69615-6                      ISBN 978-1-4039-3781-0 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4039-3781-0

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Robbins, Ruth, 1965–

Pater to Forster, 1873–1924 / Ruth Robbins.

p. cm. – (Transitions)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-333-69614-9 - ISBN 978-0-333-69615-6 (pbk.)

1. English literature – 19th century – History and criticism. 2. Forster, E. M. (Edward Morgan), 1879–1970 – Criticism and interpretation. 3. Pater, Walter, 1839–1894 – Criticism and interpretation. 4. English literature – 20th century – History and criticism. I. Title. II. Transitions (Palgrave Macmillan (Firm))

PR461.R63 2003  
820.9'008–dc21

2003045602

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03

*For my parents,  
Cath and Stan Robbins*

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# General Editor's Preface

Transitions: *transition*-, n. of action. 1. A passing or passage from one condition, action or (rarely) place, to another. 2. Passage in thought, speech, or writing, from one subject to another. 3. **a.** The passing from one note to another. **b.** The passing from one key to another, modulation. 4. The passage from an earlier to a later stage of development or formation ... change from an earlier style to a later; a style of intermediate or mixed character ... the historical passage of language from one well-defined stage to another.

The aim of *transitions* is to explore passages and movements in language, literature and culture from Chaucer to the present day. The series also seeks to examine the ways in which the very idea of transition affects the reader's sense of period so as to address anew questions of literary history and periodization. The writers in this series unfold the cultural and historical mediations of literature during what are commonly recognized as crucial moments in the development of English literature, addressing, as the OED puts it, the 'historical passage of language from one well-defined stage to another'.

Recognizing the need to contextualize literary study, the authors offer close readings of canonical and now marginalized or overlooked literary texts from all genres, bringing to this study the rigour of historical knowledge and the sophistication of theoretically informed evaluations of writers and movements from the last 700 years. At the same time as each writer, whether Chaucer or Shakespeare, Milton or Pope, Byron, Dickens, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf or Salman Rushdie, is shown to produce his or her texts within a discernible historical, cultural, ideological and philosophical milieu, the text is read from the vantage point of recent theoretical interests and concerns. The purpose in bringing theoretical knowledge to the reading of a wide range of works is to demonstrate how the literature is always open to transition, whether in the instant of its production or in succeeding moments of its critical reception.

The series desires to enable the reader to transform her/his own reading and writing transactions by comprehending past developments.

Each book in the second tranche of the series offers a pedagogical guide to the poetics and politics of particular eras, as well as to the subsequent critical comprehension of periods and periodization. As well as transforming the cultural and literary past by interpreting its transition from the perspective of the critical and theoretical present, each study enacts transitional readings of a number of literary texts, all of which are themselves conceivable as having effected transition at the moments of their first appearance. The readings offered in these books seek, through close critical reading, historical contextualization and theoretical engagement, to demonstrate certain possibilities in reading to the student reader.

It is hoped that the student will find this series liberating because the series seeks to move beyond rigid definitions of period. What is important is the sense of passage, of motion. Rather than providing a definitive model of literature's past, *transitions* aims to place you in an active dialogue with the writing and culture of other eras, so as to comprehend not only how the present reads the past, but how the past can read the present.

*Julian Wolfreys*

# A Note on Texts Used

This book is aimed primarily at student readers. For that reason, wherever possible, I have made use of good, in-print, modern editions of the texts I discuss. In some cases this has not been possible, and the dates in the references will alert the reader to those texts which have not been recently reprinted. Dates of original publication are noted in the text, and again in the bibliographical references for your information. This process can have the effect of making references look odd – D. H. Lawrence was not still publishing in 1995, but the current Penguin edition of *The Rainbow* was produced in that year. In relation to the discussion of poetry I have made extensive use of anthologized collections because I wanted my readers to be able to read the texts for themselves. An anthology implies a certain organization of material, and a certain view of that material which is the editors' view, rather than the poets'. Editions of this kind go in and out of date, and what for example, the 1890s meant in 1970 and what they mean now are rather different things. I hereby warn readers therefore that if they want to know in more detail what 'really happened', they need to go and look for themselves in the original books. I am acting in good faith – but that's no reason why you should trust me.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to my colleagues at University College Northampton. To George Savona, Peter Brooker and Chris Ringrose, who arranged a period of study leave, and to the rest of the English Division, who spread out to close the gap, my thanks. Conversations with Laurence Marriott and the references he supplied have been extremely useful – thank you.

Julian Wolfreys is still the best of editors and the best of friends. This book's current shape owes more to him than I can possibly say. Thanks are more than due and are warmly offered. The staff of the University of Warwick Library and of UCN Learning Resources Centre have aided me much more than they know; my thanks to them. Our thanks are also due to our husband, Richard Andrews, who remains just what the doctor ordered.

King Lear, father of three daughters, was very exercised by filial ingratitude. Lest anyone should think that I have it in me to be 'sharper than a serpent's tooth', this book is dedicated to my parents, Cath and Stan Robbins.