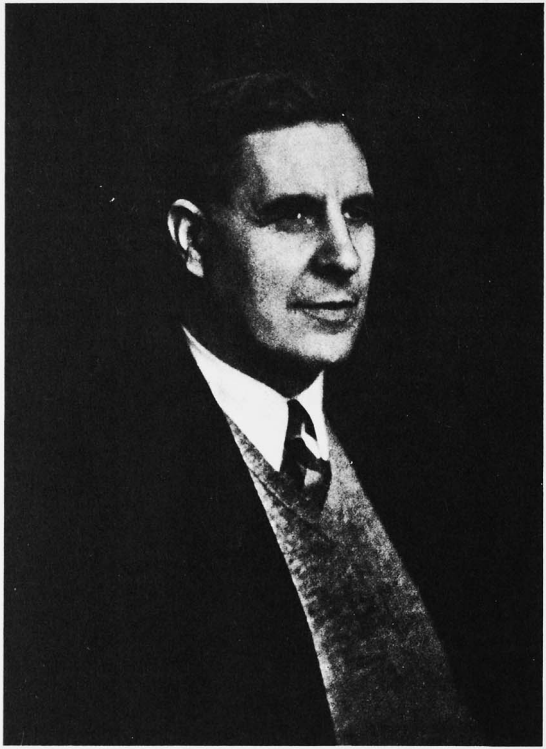

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WILLIAM J. ENTWISTLE

WILLIAM JAMES ENTWISTLE

1895–1952

WILLIAM JAMES ENTWISTLE was born on 7 December 1895 at Cheng Yang Kwan, China. His parents were both missionaries of the Inland Mission in China, where they met and married and continued together their devoted service to the Chinese community until failing health compelled a final retirement to this country in 1921. William James was the eldest of four children and showed from an early age the remarkable powers of assimilation which he displayed throughout his life. His sister, Miss Jessie Entwistle, has recorded a few details of those formative years in a memoir published in the *Aberdeen University Review* (vol. xxxiv, Autumn 1952). The family circle was a happy one, in which faith came naturally and knowledge signified an engrossing quest. In such an atmosphere what might have become a freakish precocity developed into an insatiable but balanced mental curiosity, and integrity of mind and character were not so much fostered as bred in the bone.

It was not in the character of Missionary Entwistle to neglect the more formal elements of his son's education, and among these the initiation into the study of Greek was perhaps his own most striking contribution. When, at the age of 7, William entered the China Inland Mission Schools, he was well armed at all points, and sheer momentum carried him almost at once into the 'upper school'. These Schools were distinguished by a remarkable liberality of outlook and a high degree of flexibility: the young pupil was allowed and encouraged to develop along his own lines, to achieve independence of outlook and breadth of knowledge. This was indeed fortunate, since it is recorded that William Entwistle's capacity was such as to make it difficult to keep him fully employed. That his powers of observation were already wide as well as keen is revealed by a short article contributed by him to the *Glasgow Herald* and recording, after an interval of some 25 years, his vivid recollection of the schooling dispensed in Chinese elementary schools of the neighbourhood, their primitive installation, and the limitations of the native masters.

In 1911 William Entwistle entered Robert Gordon's College at Aberdeen. So well had he been grounded that in the following year he gained his Higher Leaving Certificate and proceeded

with a bursary to the University of Aberdeen. There he presently had before him the choice between taking Honours in English, in Modern Languages, or in Classics. He decided in favour of Classics, which he read under Professors Harrower and Souter with outstanding success, being placed in the First Class with distinctions in Greek History and Comparative Philology, and awarded the Simpson and Jenkins Prize and the Seafield Gold Medal.

After taking his M.A. in 1916, he joined the Royal Field Artillery and later the Scottish Rifles. He was wounded in 1917 and a long period of convalescence left him slightly incapacitated. It was not until his early Oxford days that the last fragment of shrapnel was removed from his foot, and it was characteristic of him that he never so much as mentioned a disability which denied him any more vigorous forms of exercise than walking.

In 1919 he was awarded the Fullerton Classical Prize, and it was about this time that he turned his attention definitely in the direction of Spanish. Here was a field which, in virtue of its considerable unexplored areas and the intriguing complexity of ethnological and historical conditions, presented a challenge to Entwistle's inquiring spirit. But his choice was also determined by the discerning advice of H. J. C. Grierson, who had been the Professor of English literature at Aberdeen and whom he never ceased to hold in affection and veneration. Assisted by a Carnegie award, he proceeded to Spain in 1920 and studied at the Centro de Estudios Históricos in Madrid (1920–1). His researches, carried on at the Biblioteca Nacional and in other libraries, were concerned with relations between the English and Hispanic literatures in the Middle Ages, upon which he wrote a thesis. While in Madrid he made the acquaintance of S. Griswold Morley, destined to be his life-long friend and the recipient of the most revealing personal letters available to us (see *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. xxix, pp. 185–99). Together they made, in the spring of 1921, a tour in conditions of some austerity through Estremadura and Portugal, Entwistle evincing a particular interest in the battle sites and tactical aspects of the Peninsular War.

In 1921 he returned to take up his appointment as the first Lecturer in charge of Spanish Studies at Manchester University. In the same year he married Jeanie Drysdale Buchanan of Kirkcaldy, in whom he found the ideal companion in the career of learning and teaching upon which he was now fairly launched.

To her and to their son James Edmund Buchanan I am indebted for some of the more personal details of this memoir. While at Manchester, Entwistle began the exploitation of the abundant materials he had amassed in Spain and of the more varied information which a phenomenal memory enabled him to carry away with him. The immediate result was *The Arthurian Legend in the Literatures of the Spanish Peninsula* (1925) which, apart from one or two articles, was his first serious publication. It is the first complete survey of the Arthurian romances and their derivatives in the Spanish Peninsula, the introduction of which into Spain he was led to attribute to the Plantagenets. This first book marked Entwistle at once as a meticulous and indefatigable researcher, master of his subject and not its servant, erudite and humane, refusing to have his field limited by the restrictions of any one language or any one discipline.

In 1925 Entwistle was elected to the newly created Stevenson Professorship of Spanish in the University of Glasgow and held this Chair until 1931. These years were marked by a succession of learned articles published for the most part in the *Modern Language Review*, but this was essentially a period of consolidation and of a steady maturing of future projects. Much of his time and energy was devoted to administrative responsibilities and outside activities, among which mention may be made of his work for Spanish in schools as Inspector for Spanish in the Glasgow area. Entwistle reacted vigorously against the tendency, particularly noticeable at that time, to regard Spanish from the standpoint of its commercial and practical value. It was no secret that in so doing he clashed with what were at least partly the intentions of the founder of the Chair. This gave Entwistle no pleasure; he maintained his position with dignity and the difference of opinion could not be said to have marred the satisfaction he found in developing the studies committed to his charge. He left Glasgow for Oxford matured by experience and fortified by lasting friendships formed during his seven years' tenure.

When Entwistle took office at Oxford, in April 1932, as the second holder of the King Alfonso XIII Chair of Spanish Studies, he found Spanish firmly established by his predecessor, but studied by relatively few undergraduates and taught by the Professor and the Reader. At his death there were grouped about him a further four lecturers in Spanish and one in Portuguese, while the number of students had reached approximately 100. It was on his initiative and thanks to much effort and persuasion on

his part that a Lectureship in Portuguese was established and Portuguese admitted as a Full Honours subject. He himself assumed general responsibility, with the title of Director of Portuguese Studies (1933), and regularly lectured and directed research in Portuguese subjects. On a lesser scale he developed and fostered Catalan and Spanish-American studies. His interest in South America bore fruit in such practical measures as the establishing of the Miranda Prize for Brazilian studies.

As a Curator of the Taylor Institution, in which capacity he acted throughout his tenure of the King Alfonso Chair, he was particularly assiduous in building up the Hispanic section of the Taylor Library, and he used to the fullest advantage the resources of the Spanish Fund, whether for expanding the Spanish Departmental Library or for inviting leading Hispanists to lecture at Oxford. His services were in constant demand as an examiner at Oxford and at other universities, and he was always punctilious and unsparing in this as in other duties incidental or ancillary to his statutory obligations. At board meetings he was quick to make up his mind and at times impatient to conclude, but was nevertheless a good listener and rarely failed to attend a committee, however unimportant. As a Professorial Fellow of Exeter College he took his membership of the Governing Body seriously and maintained the keenest interest in its welfare.

Not the least exacting of the responsibilities he undertook voluntarily in the interest of Spanish studies and in the wider sphere of the Modern Humanities was the joint editorship of the *Modern Language Review* from 1934 to 1948. He initiated the *Year's Work in Modern Language Studies*, of which he was general editor from 1931 to 1937, and was general editor of the Great Languages Series (from 1940 until his death). He served on the editorial boards of *Medium Aevum* and the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, was general editor of the linguistic contributions to Chambers's Encyclopaedia, and co-operated in an editorial or advisory capacity in many other periodicals and serial publications. His election as President of the Modern Humanities Research Association in 1952 came as a fitting recognition of invaluable services rendered to the Association, directly and indirectly, for a quarter of a century.

Of the many societies in Oxford and elsewhere in which he was active or to which he was invited to speak, the Oxford Dante Society was especially congenial to him. Alone of Italian writers Dante seems to have excited and held his interest. I am not aware

that any of the papers he read to the Society were ever published, which is regrettable, for nothing he wrote was more characteristic of his literary criticism. A short essay on the *Paradiso*, in particular, revealed a sensitivity to purely aesthetic values which in his published works tended to be dominated by erudition of a more technical or historical character.

Entwistle's remarkable facility, drawing upon an exceptionally well-stored mind, enabled him to respond readily and promptly to invitations to lecture here and abroad. He liked travel and his journeys, if not undertaken as lecture tours, generally involved the delivery of communications at congresses or of addresses to academic gatherings. He took a lively interest in the work of the British Council, which he served for a time during the war as Educational Director, and for which he lectured in Spain and Portugal (1945), in South America (1941), and in the Scandinavian countries (1947). He had already visited South America in 1938.

In the academic year 1948–9 he acted as Visiting Professor to the Universities of Pennsylvania and California, an experience to which he had long looked forward. But, much as he enjoyed meeting old friends and making the acquaintance of the many scholars with whom he had corresponded, it exacted a heavy toll. He returned to Oxford exhausted by the effort it had cost him to carry out his programme in spite of bouts of illness and a major operation. For a time his friends hoped that, with some abatement of his enthusiasm and of the strain he had placed upon himself for many years, a complete recovery might be achieved, but this was not to be. He continued as tenaciously as his physical strength allowed, knowing how precarious was his hold yet firmly keeping to his path. Death, merciful in the end, took him on the way from a business meeting to a social engagement on 13 June 1952.

Such are in brief the external biography and the record of professional and public service. Those who observed these activities at close quarters never ceased to marvel that they should have left him the energy to write the half-dozen major works, the scores of articles, the hundreds of reviews and notices which came in regular succession from his pen, and above all the time to acquire the massive documentation upon which they were invariably based. For many years no volume of the *Modern Language Review* appeared without an article or a note or a review of his, but any compiler of a complete bibliography of his writings would have to consult periodicals and miscellanies

published in a dozen countries and be prepared to read his contributions in at least four different languages. In subject-matter they range from Russia to Peru, from Proto-Russian to Peruvian Spanish, from the *romanceros* of Spain to the ballads of Scotland. His personal preference was for medieval literature, viewed not as a national achievement, but as the product of European civilization. Of the twentieth century he had, on occasion, some hard things to say. Thus, in a letter to his friend Professor Morley: 'With thirty centuries to choose from I can do without this one—the nastiest of the lot.' And while he subscribed to the view that 'the social service of literature is characteristically that of a criticism of life, even if inconsistent', he could not abide the 'decadent' attitude: 'If we cannot square up to the daily emergencies [of the common man], by what title do we push God off his throne and order the universe? At least let us be good Kants or Hegels, and not copies of Spengler and Keyserling.'

He was no lover of techniques, systems, and doctrines. Literature was for him a social product conditioned by historical factors, while language was not systematic 'but impressed with patterns, generally incomplete, by our pattern-making minds'. Such was his conviction, early formed in a mind trained to think for itself and refusing to be confined within the limits of any one speciality. It was a conviction which dictated both his method and his manner, as can be seen in his earliest book, of which mention has already been made, no less than in those which followed.

Of these the most important was *European Balladry* (1939), majestic in its sweep and solid in its architecture, finished in all its details. Acting on his own precept, 'You should not be seriously in error, if you describe what you have actually seen for yourself', he set himself to acquire a reading knowledge, if he did not already possess it, of each of the European languages in which ballads are preserved; only in respect of Finnish and Esthonian did he ruefully confess that he had, for the time being, relied upon eyes other than his own. Starting with the definition of the 'ballad' as 'meaning any short traditional narrative poem sung, with or without accompaniment or dance, in assemblies of the people', he traced its history, distribution and regional development, in its oral no less than its written forms, with a rigour of method and a comprehensiveness hitherto unknown. A number of self-contained detailed studies of individual ballad areas form the basis of the classifications, filiations, and broader

conclusions which occupy the more general opening chapters and they give them a unique authority. Experts were quick to recognize the book as marking an epoch in the study of the ballad. It is also the most accessible of Entwistle's writings, its pages being enlivened and adorned by many of his own felicitous translations. Not content with acquiring the technical musical knowledge for his purpose, he devised a system of musical notation (adapted from Hustvedt's) which enabled him to identify, describe and reproduce completely any melody on one side of an index card, using an ordinary typewriter keyboard with the addition of foreign accents. Such details give the measure of his fastidious and uncompromising scholarship.

A book on the *Spanish Language* (1936) was bound to become in his hands first and foremost a descriptive linguistic history of the Spanish Peninsula, Portuguese and Catalan receiving their full share of attention alongside of Castilian and other Spanish dialects. The challenge presented by Basque was not one Entwistle was likely to leave unanswered, and the same was true in a lesser degree of Arabic. For the South American varieties of Spanish and for Brazilian Portuguese he was obliged to draw more heavily on the work of others, and the chapters devoted to these, though models of compression and precision, would doubtless have been revised and corrected here and there in the light of his later direct contact with the New World. The *Spanish Language* may be said to mark a new and interesting departure from the traditional manner of presenting linguistic history. It presents a striking contrast with such 'standard' treatments as R. Menéndez Pidal's *Manual* and Fr. Hanssen's *Spanische Grammatik*, which are almost solely concerned with the analysis and systematic presentation of linguistic facts more or less 'abstracted' from the rest of nature and history. Entwistle endeavoured to present the Spanish language as 'the record of the race' and therefore concentrated his attention upon those linguistic facts which have a wider historical significance and either find their explanation in social and political conditions or help to characterize the culture, or rather the cultures, of the Spanish Peninsula. His is therefore a pioneer effort, finding a French parallel in the later volumes of Brunot's *Histoire de la Langue française* and anticipating in various ways more recent departures from the conventional methods of historical grammar.

Of *Russian and the Slavonic Languages* (1949), written in collaboration with Dr. W. G. Morison, it would be presumptuous in the present writer to speak, except to record the commendation

it has received from experts. It is the first full-scale account in English of the whole Slavonic Language-group. Its kinship with the *Spanish Language* is at once apparent in the predominance of historical and descriptive preoccupations over analysis and systematization, though here detailed phonetic and morphological information bulks much larger, and consideration of the Slavonic languages as vehicles of culture is in practice reserved for the introductory chapter on The Slavs and the sections entitled Style and Vocabulary respectively. His interest in the literary aspect was fully revealed in a brilliant lecture on *Russian as an Art of Expression* under the Ilchester Foundation in 1950 (published in *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, vol. i).

Many other linguistic contributions remain scattered in handbooks (notably *A Companion to Spanish Studies*, 1929), miscellanies, and periodicals. However specific and detailed they might be, Entwistle never ceased to ponder the why and wherefore of language, and still more the how. It is from this point of view that language and languages were to be treated in his book on linguistic theory, the completed manuscript of which, with the revealing title *Aspects of Language*, he was able to hand over to his publisher within a few months of his death. The trend of his thought and his broad conclusion are foreshadowed in an article entitled 'Pre-grammar?' which was published in the first volume of *Archivum Linguisticum* (1949). Grammar he saw as 'something which emerges from the undifferentiated mass of language in the course of history'. For him the task of the philologist was analogous to that of the scientist and consisted in 'giving pictures of nature—as accurate as possible, but all open to revision and all relative because we are conditioned by our place in the universe'.

The catholicity of Entwistle's tastes in Spanish literature is reflected in the long list of his articles ranging from the *cantares de gesta* and the *romanceros* to Góngora, Lope de Vega, and beyond. He did not live to give final form to the abundant materials he had collected for a book on Calderón, but his *Cervantes* (1940) gives the measure of his originality and independence. Historical, social, and biographical data are here used to establish a new appraisal of Cervantes and a revolutionary explanation of the genesis of *Don Quijote*. He saw Cervantes as 'an earnest hard-working maker of books, guided more by sheer genius than good taste', a born writer of novelettes whose masterpiece, beginning as a novelette, expanded and blossomed into 'the first and best of novels', the painfully acquired craftsmanship of its author

being sublimated into inspired artistry. Incomplete as an explanation, perhaps, but a thought-provoking essay with the brilliance of a *tour de force*.

It was a matter of intense regret to Entwistle that circumstances over which he could have no control interrupted the publication by the Coimbra University Press of his monumental edition of the Second Part of the *Chronicle of John I of Portugal* by Fernão Lopes, based upon the British Museum manuscript. Fortunately, he had received and partly corrected the proofs of this most important text, and these are now deposited in the Library of the Taylor Institution.

The lectures he gave on English literature in Scandinavian and other countries, under the auspices of the British Council, were as intensively prepared as were his more severely academic publications and lectures. Out of them and the wide reading of a lifetime there grew *The Literature of England* (1943), written in collaboration with Eric Gillett. It was the most 'utilitarian' of his writings, and might seem to some to have taken him outside his range of competence, but the fact remains that it established itself to the point of having already run into a third edition.

Viewed as a whole, Entwistle's published work astonishes by its sheer erudition, by the ease with which he handled the most multifarious kinds of information, made immediately accessible to him by a quite exceptional gift for languages and kept at his instant disposal by a remarkably prehensile memory. With these qualities there went a clearness of vision and an analytical power which are not always their natural associates. He never allowed his material to dictate, and his books are unencumbered by supererogatory footnotes and elaborate bibliographies: enough for him to give the latest and most essential references, and enough for the reader to be able to check and amplify where necessary. Yet it cannot be denied that he did upon occasion fail to make immediately clear to the reader what was perfectly clear to himself. It would not be correct to say that his wood could not be seen for the trees, though it was manifestly a wood with a great many trees in it. The explanation is, I venture to think, that he was not normally interested in writing for the profane and that, when he wrote with an eye to students, he postulated in them an equipment and a degree of application which they possess but rarely. Moreover, his method was basically empirical and he was ever on his guard against doctrinal interpretations of reality, suspicious of the too precisely logical explanation. In human and earthly manifestations,

whether in history or literature or language, he discerned at most a series of patterns, each of them of engrossing interest and worth retracing: an interpretation which sacrificed this pattern effect to luminous syntheses in order to satisfy the exigencies of human 'logic' seemed to him, by that much, a falsification.

His style was personal and individual, reflecting his personality and preoccupations. He wrote easily and rapidly, and when he corrected himself (which he did without repining), successive drafts showed that it was in respect of matter and argument rather than form and style. What might appear mannerisms or eccentricities to the casual reader were usages which originated in the extraordinary richness of his linguistic equipment. He came in this way to use certain words with connotations which are not conventional and therefore make some of his writing not easily accessible. Self-consciousness did not enter into it, except for occasional whimsicalities in which he allowed himself to indulge. Distinguished but difficult, would perhaps be a just description of a style which never lapsed into the slipshod.

Entwistle's conception of his professorial duties was not pontifical but avowedly sacerdotal. 'The professoriate is a sacred priesthood and one must not abandon the temple to agitate the crowds' he once wrote on a private occasion: his public confession of faith in the studies he was called upon to represent and his views on the role they should play in a humane education are set out in his Inaugural Lecture of 1932 and in other addresses. He deplored excessive departmentalization and what may be called the centripetal tendency of modern academic research. He sought to restore the more spacious and diversified scholarship typified by the great scholars of the nineteenth century, finding in Gaston Paris the closest approximation to his ideal. While acknowledging freely and generously his indebtedness to those who had taught him and to such masters as R. Menéndez Pidal, he cannot be said ever to have been anyone's disciple. Nor did he seek to form disciples himself. His pupils, whether undergraduates or researchers, would have looked in vain to him for any indoctrination. Help and encouragement they received from him without stint, but it was above all by the force of his example that he inspired them.

Entwistle's scholarly eminence was recognized by his election as a corresponding member of numerous foreign academies, among them the Portuguese and Spanish Academies of History, the Barcelona Centre of Catalan Studies, the Hispanic Society of America, the American Folklore Society, and the Norwegian

Academy. The University of Coimbra in 1945 conferred on him the honorary degree of Doutor em Letras and the University of Pennsylvania that of Litt.D. Nearer home, he had been honoured with the degree of LL.D. by the Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1950.

Fundamentally Entwistle was a shy man, devoid of affectations and showing the simplicity and generosity of greatness, firm in his religious beliefs but without a vestige of bigotry and intolerance. Formidable as his learning made him appear, he was in fact the most approachable and hospitable of men, never so happy as when, with his wife and son at his side, he entertained his students and colleagues or visitors from abroad. His international repute as a scholar and his punctiliousness involved him in a ceaseless and worldwide interchange of letters, an additional burden which he seemed to accept as natural and to bear with complete equanimity. It can truly be said that in him conviction, precept, action, and performance were all of a piece and inseparable. All his work is hall-marked indelibly by sincerity and integrity, virtues to which he adhered steadfastly in all things and upon all occasions.

A. EWERT