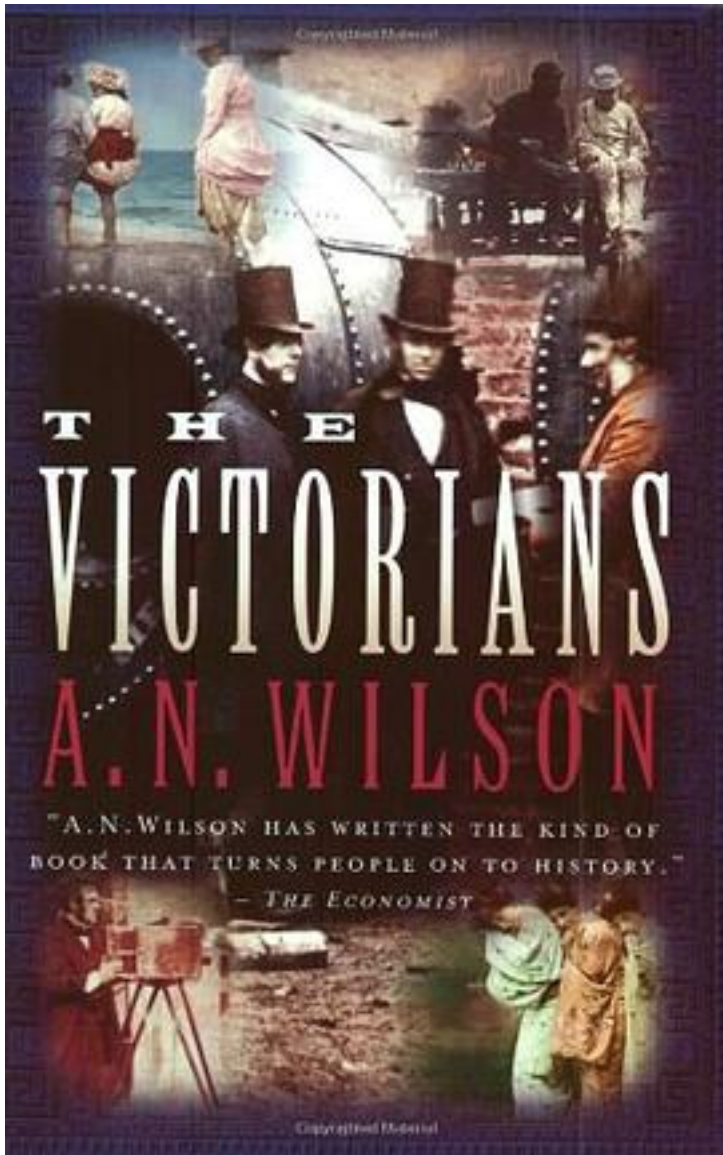


The Victorians



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Heralding a new era in literary studies, the "Oxford English Literary History" breaks the mould of traditional approaches to the canon, by focusing on the contexts in which the authors wrote and how their work was shaped by the times in which they lived. Each volume offers a fresh, ground-breaking re-assessment of the authors, their works, and the events and ideas, which shaped the literary voice of their age. Written by some of the leading scholars in the field, under the general-editorship of Jonathan Bate, the "Oxford English Literary History" is essential reading for everyone studying, teaching, and researching in English literature. This volume covers the flowering of Victorian literature, from the decade when Tennyson started writing "In Memoriam" and Darwin embarked on the Beagle to the publication of Hardy's first great novels and the death of George Eliot. The Victorian era produced a literature of diversity and experimentation, engaged with powerful controversies and heartfelt arguments that lie at the centre of the formation of the modern world. It has often been misrepresented, either as an age of dull and rigid certainty or one of anxious and depressive morbidity, but what distinguishes the writing of the period - from its origins in the 1830s to its crisis point around 1880 - is its power of serious inquiry. It poses questions about the relation between society and the individual, the rival claims of market and morality, the form and function of democracy, and, above all, the existence or non-existence of God and the purposes of human life. Such concerns make this a time in which literature has a new urgency and vitality, and lies close to the heart of a culminating crisis of the Western conscience, less tied to the canonical authors and much more interested in placing both canonical and non-canonical writings in their historical context. These are books that every serious student and scholar of the period, will need on their shelves.

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