

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-69132-1 - The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry

Edited by Neil Corcoran

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLISH POETRY

The last century was characterised by an extraordinary flowering of the art of poetry in Britain. These specially commissioned essays by some of the most highly regarded poetry critics offer an up-to-date, stimulating and reliable overview of English poetry of the twentieth century. The opening section on contexts will both orientate readers relatively new to the field and provide provocative syntheses for those already familiar with it. Following the terms introduced by this section, individual chapters cover many ways of looking at the 'modern', the 'modernist' and the 'postmodern'. The core of the volume is made up of extensive discussions of individual poets, from W.B. Yeats and W.H. Auden to contemporary poets such as Simon Armitage and Carol Ann Duffy. In its coverage of the development, themes and contexts of modern poetry, this Companion is the most useful guide available for students, lecturers and readers.

NEIL CORCORAN is King Alfred Professor of English Literature at the University of Liverpool.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

DANIEL ALBRIGHT, Harvard University

LINDA ANDERSON, Newcastle University

NEIL CORCORAN, University of Liverpool

SANDRA M. GILBERT, University of California at Davis

KEVIN HART, University of Notre Dame

PETER HOWARTH, Queen Mary, University of London

EDWARD LARRISSY, Queen's University of Belfast

MICHAEL O'NEILL, University of Durham

REDELL OLSEN, Royal Holloway College, University of London

ADAM PIETTE, Sheffield University

JAHAN RAMAZANI, University of Virginia

JOHN REDMOND, University of Liverpool

STEPHEN REGAN, University of Durham

NEIL ROBERTS, Sheffield University

FIONA STAFFORD, Oxford University

M. WYNN THOMAS, Swansea University

TIMOTHY WEBB, University of Bristol

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## CHRONOLOGY

- 1901      Death of Victoria
- 1902      Coronation of Edward VII
- 1903      Emmeline Pankhurst founds the Women's Social and Political Union
- 1907      W. H. Auden born
- 1908      Ford Madox Ford founds the *English Review*
- 1909      Ezra Pound, *Personae*
- 1910      W. B. Yeats, *The Green Helmet, and Other Poems*  
Death of Edward VII, accession of George V
- 1912      The first *Georgian Poetry* anthology includes work by Rupert Brooke,  
D. H. Lawrence, Walter de la Mare and John Masefield
- 1913      Marcel Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*
- 1914      W. B. Yeats, *Responsibilities*  
Outbreak of First World War
- 1915      Rupert Brooke dies on his way to the battle at Gallipoli
- 1916      Charlotte Mew, *The Farmer's Bride*
- 1917      T. S. Eliot, *Prufrock and Other Observations*  
Ivor Gurney, *Severn and Somme*  
Edward Thomas killed in action at Arras  
The Balfour Declaration lends British support for the creation of a  
Jewish national home in Palestine  
Revolutions in Russia
- 1918      *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*  
Siegfried Sassoon, *Counter-Attack, and Other Poems*



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- Edward Thomas, *Last Poems*  
 Wilfred Owen killed during the crossing of the Sombre-Oise Canal  
 Isaac Rosenberg killed on the Somme  
 End of First World War  
 Representation of the People Act gives the vote to women (over thirty)  
 for the first time
- 1919 Treaty of Versailles
- 1920 T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*  
 Wilfred Owen, *Poems*  
 Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*  
 Government of Ireland Act and the creation of Northern Ireland
- 1921 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*
- 1922 T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* published in *The Criterion*  
 Thomas Hardy, *Late Lyrics and Earlier: with Many Other Verses*  
 A. E. Housman, *Last Poems*  
 James Joyce, *Ulysses*  
 W. B. Yeats, *Later Poems*  
 Ivor Gurney's family have him declared insane  
 Founding of the BBC
- 1923 D. H. Lawrence, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*
- 1924 André Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme*  
 Ramsay MacDonald becomes the first Labour Prime Minister
- 1926 Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*  
 The General Strike is unsuccessful in forcing the government to act to  
 prevent wage reduction and worsening conditions for coalminers
- 1927 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*  
 Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*
- 1928 W. B. Yeats, *The Tower*  
 Thomas Hardy dies  
 Charlotte Mew commits suicide
- 1929 Collapse of the New York stock market
- 1930 W. H. Auden, *Poems*  
 T. S. Eliot, *Ash-Wednesday*  
 William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*  
 John Masefield appointed Poet Laureate  
 The Great Depression hits Great Britain

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- 1932 F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*
- 1933 W. B. Yeats, *The Winding Stair, and Other Poems*
- 1936 London International Surrealist Exhibition  
Death of George V. Following the abdication of his successor  
Edward VIII, George VI ascends to the throne  
Start of Spanish Civil War
- 1937 David Jones, *In Parenthesis*  
Stevie Smith, *A Good Time Was Had By All*
- 1939 W. B. Yeats dies  
Beginning of Second World War
- 1940 Dunkirk evacuation  
The London Blitz
- 1941 James Joyce dies  
America enters the war after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour
- 1943 Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant*
- 1944 T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*  
D-Day landings in Normandy  
Keith Douglas killed in the days after the D-Day invasion
- 1945 German unconditional surrender  
Surrender of Japan after atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and  
Nagasaki  
Labour win a landslide election victory
- 1946 Dylan Thomas, *Deaths and Entrances*  
R. S. Thomas, *The Stones of the Fields*  
Ezra Pound is found insane and committed to St Elizabeth's Hospital,  
Washington, DC
- 1947 Edith Sitwell, *The Shadow of Cain*  
India gains independence from British rule, initiating the post-war  
break-up of the British Empire  
The Partition of Palestine
- 1948 Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic  
myth*  
Ezra Pound, *The Pisan Cantos*  
Founding of the NHS  
The *Empire Windrush* lands 492 Jamaicans at Tilbury, carrying the  
first large group of West Indian immigrants to the UK. The 'open door'

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- policy continues during the 1950s to address the post-war shortage of labour
- 1949 W.S. Graham, *The White Threshold*
- 1952 David Jones, *The Anathemata*  
Lynette Roberts, *Gods with Stainless Ears*  
George VI dies, accession of Elizabeth II
- 1953 Dylan Thomas dies
- 1954 Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood*
- 1955 W.H. Auden, *The Shield of Achilles*  
Philip Larkin, *The Less Deceived*
- 1956 British invasion of, and withdrawal from, Suez  
Hungarian revolt suppressed by the Soviets
- 1957 Thom Gunn, *The Sense of Movement*  
Ted Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*
- 1958 Beginning of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
- 1959 Geoffrey Hill, *For the Unfallen*
- 1960 Penguin Books acquitted of obscenity for publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, resulting in far greater freedom to circulate explicit material
- 1961 Major expansion of British universities
- 1962 Benjamin Britten, *War Requiem* (which includes settings of poems by Wilfred Owen)  
The Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society) is founded to campaign for the future of the Welsh language: in 1967 the First Welsh Language Act is passed  
Second Vatican Council
- 1963 Sylvia Plath commits suicide  
The Beatles release their first LP, *Please Please Me*
- 1964 Philip Larkin, *The Whitsun Weddings*  
House of Commons vote to end the death penalty
- 1965 T.S. Eliot dies  
Sylvia Plath, *Ariel*  
First big Arts Council *Poetry International* festival in London; Ted Hughes one of the organisers

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- Students in Czechoslovakia elect Allen Ginsberg King of the May  
First US combat troops arrive in Vietnam; the last leave in 1973
- 1966 Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts*  
Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist*  
'Swinging London' is hailed in *Time* magazine  
Bob Dylan tours the UK with an electric backing band
- 1967 Abortion legalised  
Homosexual acts between consenting adults legalised
- 1968 J. H. Prynne, *Kitchen Poems*  
Enoch Powell makes a controversial speech attacking immigration policies  
The Prague Spring
- 1970 Ted Hughes, *Crow*
- 1971 Geoffrey Hill, *Mercian Hymns*
- 1972 R. S. Thomas, *H'm*  
John Betjeman appointed Poet Laureate
- 1973 Paul Muldoon, *New Weather*  
W. H. Auden dies  
The United Kingdom joins the European Economic Community
- 1974 Philip Larkin, *High Windows*  
David Jones dies
- 1975 Seamus Heaney, *North*  
Linton Kwesi-Johnson, *Dread, Beat an' Blood*  
Ezra Pound dies
- 1977 Rise of punk rock
- 1978 Geoffrey Hill, *Tenebrae*  
Hugh MacDiarmid dies
- 1979 Ted Hughes, *Moortown*  
Craig Raine, *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*  
Christopher Reid, *Arcadia*  
Margaret Thatcher begins a premiership (lasting until 1990) that will be characterised by support for freedom of economic competition and privatization, and opposition to the trade unions
- 1981 Creation of the Social Democratic Party

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- 1982 James Fenton, *The Memory of War: Poems 1968–1982*
- 1983 James Fenton, *The Memory of War and Children in Exile: Poems 1968–1983*  
Paul Muldoon, *Quoof*
- 1984 John Betjeman dies  
Philip Larkin declines the post of Poet Laureate; Ted Hughes is appointed instead
- 1985 Tony Harrison, *V*  
Benjamin Zephaniah, *The Dread Affair*  
Philip Larkin dies  
Coalminers' strike; violence on Yorkshire coalfields
- 1989 Simon Armitage, *Zoom!*  
Fall of the Berlin Wall
- 1990 Derek Walcott, *Omeros*
- 1991 Collapse of the USSR  
The Gulf War
- 1993 The second Welsh Language Act places Welsh on an equal footing with English in Wales
- 1994 End of apartheid in South Africa
- 1995 Seamus Heaney awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1997 Don Paterson, *God's Gift to Women*  
Tony Blair's New Labour government is elected.
- 1998 Ted Hughes dies. Publication of *Birthday Letters*  
Re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament and creation of the National Assembly for Wales
- 1999 Edwin Morgan appointed as Glasgow's first poet laureate  
Launch of the European single currency: Britain declines membership