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.

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLISH POETRY

EDITED BY
NEIL CORCORAN

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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
Chronology

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

      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