This volume provides lively and authoritative introductions to twenty-nine of the most important British and Irish poets from Geoffrey Chaucer to Philip Larkin. The list includes, among others, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Wordsworth, Browning, Yeats, and T. S. Eliot, and represents the tradition of English poetry at its best. Each contributor offers a new assessment of a single poet’s achievement and importance, with readings of the most important poems. The essays, written by leading experts, are personal responses, written in clear, vivid language, free of academic jargon, and aim to inform, arouse interest, and deepen understanding.

Claude Rawson is Maynard Mack Professor of English at Yale University. One of the most distinguished eighteenth-century scholars working today, he has published widely on Swift, Pope, Fielding, and many other authors and topics. He is Founding General Editor of The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism and General Editor of The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of illustrations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on contributors</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface and acknowledgements</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Claude Rawson**

1 Introduction

**Claude Rawson**

1 Geoffrey Chaucer

**J. A. Burrow**

2 Thomas Wyatt

**Roland Greene**

3 Edmund Spenser

**Richard A. McCabe**

4 William Shakespeare

**David Bevington**

5 John Donne

**Achsah Guibbory**

6 Ben Jonson

**Colin Burrow**

7 George Herbert

**Helen Wilcox**

© in this web service Cambridge University Press  www.cambridge.org
CONTENTS

8 John Milton
   MARTIN EVANS 154

9 Andrew Marvell
   NIGEL SMITH 176

10 John Dryden
    DAVID HOPKINS 194

11 Jonathan Swift
    CLAUDE RAWSON 213

12 Alexander Pope
    PAUL BAINES 235

13 William Blake
    MORTON D. PALEY 254

14 Robert Burns
    KARL MILLER 271

15 William Wordsworth
    SIMON JARVIS 291

16 Samuel Taylor Coleridge
    SEAMUS PERRY 308

17 George Gordon, Lord Byron
    ANNE BARTON 328

18 Percy Bysshe Shelley
    JAMES CHANDLER 344

19 John Keats
    SUSAN J. WOLFSON 360

20 Alfred Lord Tennyson
    HERBERT F. TUCKER 376

21 Robert Browning
    J. HILLIS MILLER 392
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Poet</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Emily Brontë</td>
<td>Dinah Birch</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Christina Rossetti</td>
<td>Linda H. Peterson</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Thomas Hardy</td>
<td>Peter Robinson</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>William Butler Yeats</td>
<td>James Longenbach</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>D. H. Lawrence</td>
<td>Marjorie Perloff</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>T. S. Eliot</td>
<td>Michael North</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>W. H. Auden</td>
<td>Edward Mendelson</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Philip Larkin</td>
<td>Alan Jenkins</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index</td>
<td></td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Januarye from <em>The Shepheardes Calender</em> (1579).</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aprill from <em>The Shepheardes Calender</em> (1579).</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘The Altar’ by George Herbert, from the first edition (1633) of <em>The Temple</em>, p. 18, reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL BAINES is a Professor in the School of English, University of Liverpool. He is the author of *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1999), *The Complete Critical Guide to Alexander Pope* (2000), and many articles in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. *Edmund Curll, Bookseller*, co-written with Pat Rogers, was published in 2007. He is currently working on issues of crime and punishment in the poetry of Pope.

ANNE BARTON is a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Although most of her scholarly work has been on early modern drama, particularly Shakespeare, she has published numerous articles on Byron and the other Romantics, and a short book on Byron’s *Don Juan*. Her essay ‘Byron and Shakespeare’ was published in *The Cambridge Companion to Byron* (ed. Drummond Bone) in 2004.

DAVID BEVINGTON is the Phyllis Fay Horton Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in the Humanities at the University of Chicago, where he has taught since 1967. His studies include *From ‘Mankind’ to Marlowe* (1962), *Tudor Drama and Politics* (1968), *Action Is Eloquence: Shakespeare’s Language of Gesture* (1985), and *This Wide and Universal Theater: Shakespeare in Performance Then and Now* (2007). He is the editor of *Medieval Drama* (1975), the Bantam Shakespeare, in 29 paperback volumes (1988, recently re-edited), and *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, fifth edition (2003), as well as the Oxford *1 Henry IV* (1987), the Cambridge *Antony and Cleopatra* (1990), and the Arden Shakespeare Third Series *Troilus and Cressida* (1998). He is a senior editor of the Revels Student Editions, the Revels Plays, the forthcoming Cambridge edition of the works of Ben Jonson, and the *Norton Anthology of Renaissance Drama* (2002).
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


J. A. BURROW, Fellow of the British Academy, is Emeritus Professor and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Bristol. Of his publications, chiefly on medieval English poetry, the most recent are *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (2002), a revised edition of *Medieval Writers and their Work* (2008), and *The Poetry of Praise* (2008).


ROLAND GREENE is Mark Pigott OBE Professor in the School of Humanities and Sciences, Stanford University. He is the author and editor of several books on early modern literature and poetics, most recently *Unrequited*
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Conquests: Love and Empire in the Colonial Americas (1999). His recent work concerns the baroque, the relations between landscape and rhetoric in the colonial period, and early modern cultural semantics.


David Hopkins is Professor of English Literature at the University of Bristol. Among his recent publications are the Longman Annotated Poets edition of Dryden (with Paul Hammond, 5 volumes, 1995–2005; one-volume selection, 2007) and (with Stuart Gillespie) an edited facsimile of The Dryden–Tonson Miscellanies, 1684–1709 (2008).

Simon Jarvis is Gorley Putt Professor of Poetry and Poetics at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Robinson College. He is the author of Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearian Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725–1765 (1995), Adorno: Critical Introduction (Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Wordsworth’s Philosophic Song (Cambridge University Press, 2007), as well as of many articles on Wordsworth, on prosody, and on philosophical aesthetics. He is currently working on a study of Pope’s versification.

Alan Jenkins is deputy editor and poetry editor at the Times Literary Supplement. He has taught creative writing in England, France, and the United States. Volumes of his poetry include Harm (Forward Prize for Best Collection, 1994), The Drift (2000), A Shorter Life (2005), and The Lost World (2010). His edition of Ian Hamilton: Collected Poems was published in 2009.

James Longenbach is the author of several books of poems, including Draft of a Letter (2007), and several works of criticism, including Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism (1988) and The Resistance to Poetry (2004). He is the Joseph H. Gilmore Professor of English at the University of Rochester.

Richard A. McCabe is Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford University and a Fellow of Merton College. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2007. He is author of Joseph Hall: A Study in Satire and Meditation (1982), The Pillars of Eternity: Time and
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


Edward Mendelson is Lionel Trilling Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University and the literary executor of the Estate of W. H. Auden. His books include Early Auden (1981), Later Auden (1999), and The Things That Matter: What Seven Classic Novels Have to Say about the Stages of Life (2006).

J. Hillis Miller is UCI Distinguished Research Professor at the University of California at Irvine. His most recent books are Literature as Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James (2005), For Derrida (2009), and The Medium is the Maker (2009). The Conflagration of Community: Fiction Before and After Auschwitz is forthcoming in 2011. He has published many books and essays about nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and about literary theory. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the American Philosophical Society, and received the MLA Lifetime Scholarly Achievement Award in 2005.

Karl Miller was literary editor of the Spectator and the New Statesman and editor of the Listener. He founded and for several years edited the London Review of Books. From 1976 to 1992 he was Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature at University College London. His books include Cockburn’s Millennium (1975), Doubles (1985), Rebecca’s Vest (1993), and Electric Shepherd (2003).

Michael North is Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. His most recent books are Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word (2005), Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern (1999), and the Norton Critical Edition of T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land (2001).

Morton D. Paley has written extensively on Romantic-period writers and artists. Among his books are Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Fine Arts (2008), The Traveller in the Evening: The Last Works of William Blake (2003), Coleridge’s Later Poetry (1996), The Apocalyptic Sublime (1986), and Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry (1999). He has been awarded two Guggenhein Fellowships, the Distinguished...
Scholar Award of the Keats–Shelley Association of America, and an Andrew F. Mellon Foundation Emeritus Fellowship. He is co-editor of *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*.


**Seamus Perry** is a Fellow of Balliol College and a Lecturer in the English Faculty at the University of Oxford. His books include *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (1999), *Alfred Tennyson* (2005), and a selected edition of *Coleridge’s Notebooks* (2002). He is an editor of the Oxford journal *Essays in Criticism*.


HERBERT F. TUCKER teaches at the University of Virginia, where he is John C. Coleman Professor, associate editor of New Literary History, and series co-editor in Victorian literature and culture for the University Press. His books include Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism (1988) and Critical Essays on Alfred Lord Tennyson (1993, ed.). To his 1991 and 1992 articles on Idylls of the King he has lately added several discussions included in Epic: Britain’s Heroic Muse 1790–1910 (2008). Leading arguments from that book inform his chapter on ‘Epic’ in the forthcoming Victorian volume (ed. Kate Flint) of the new Cambridge History of English Literature.

HELEN WILCOX is Professor of English at Bangor University, Wales, and Director of the Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the universities of Aberystwyth and Bangor. She has published widely on Herbert’s poetry and its reception, and is the editor of the fully annotated English Poems of George Herbert, published by Cambridge University Press in 2007. Her further research interests are in early modern autobiography, seventeenth-century women’s writing, and Shakespeare. She is currently completing an edition of All’s Well That Ends Well for the Arden Shakespeare Third Series.

SUSAN J. WOLFSON, Professor of English at Princeton University, is the editor of The Cambridge Companion to Keats (2002) and editions of Keats, Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, and Felicia Hemans. She has published widely on writers, issues, and texts in British Romanticism. Her books include Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry (1997) and Borderlines: The Shiftings of Gender (2006), and Romantic Interactions (2010).
The idea of this volume is to provide lively and authoritative introductions to twenty-nine of the most important British and Irish poets writing in English. The list is a mainstream or ‘traditional’ one, running from Chaucer to Larkin, and might be said non-controversially to include some of the best poetry in the world. The selection is restricted to poets of what used to be called the British Isles, though one or two exceptions have been allowed, where there is dual nationality or a distinct and historical British identity, as in the variously special cases of Eliot and Auden. No living writer has been included, as in the case of the parallel *Cambridge Companion to English Novelists*, in accordance with the practice of this series of Cambridge Companions.

I have incurred many debts. My assistant Cynthia Ingram has contributed more to the shaping of this book than I can easily describe. Colleagues and friends who have given help and advice include Linda Bree, Colin Burrow, Achsah Guibbory, Stephen Karian, James McLaverty, Ed Mendelson, Marjorie Perloff, Maartje Scheltens, James Woolley, and John Worthen.

Claude Rawson