This Companion offers a compelling engagement with British fiction from the end of the Second World War to the present day. Since 1945, British literature has served to mirror profound social, geopolitical, and environmental change. Written by a host of leading scholars, this volume explores the myriad cultural movements and literary genres that have affected the development of postwar British fiction, showing how writers have given voice to matters of racial, regional, and sexual identity. Covering subjects from immigration and ecology to science and globalism, this Companion draws on the latest critical innovations to provide insights into the traditions shaping the literary landscape of modern Britain, thus making it an essential resource for students and specialists alike.


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


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In preparing this Companion I've had the good fortune of working with outstanding contributors who have brought to their topics critical insight and flair. They have managed to do justice to the necessarily pedagogical aspects of a volume of this kind, while nonetheless opening up new and urgent areas of exploration by drawing on some of the field's latest scholarly developments. Striking that balance is no mean feat, but it's a task that my authors here have embraced with great energy and commitment. I thank Ray Ryan for inviting me in the first place to conceive this volume for the Cambridge list, and for encouraging me to take some risks with it, too. His generous advice in the early stages has been matched only by his generous patience in the later ones. Also at the Press, Caitlin Gallagher has been the epitome of efficiency and reassurance, especially as this manuscript neared submission. The Press’s scrupulous copy-editing and production teams have, as ever, been a pleasure to work with. A final debt of gratitude is owed to the Victoria Miro Gallery, and to Idris Khan for permitting us to use his captivating work.
### CHRONOLOGY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Titles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Henry Green</td>
<td><em>Loving</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>George Orwell</td>
<td><em>Animal Farm</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Christopher Isherwood</td>
<td><em>The Berlin Stories</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td><em>Back</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Somerset Maugham</td>
<td><em>Then and Now</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Malcolm Lowry</td>
<td><em>Under the Volcano</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Sylvia Townsend Warner</td>
<td><em>The Corner That Held Them</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Elizabeth Bowen</td>
<td><em>The Heat of the Day</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>George Orwell</td>
<td><em>Nineteen Eighty-Four</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td></td>
<td>NATO formed. British Mandate of Palestine terminated. Israeli declaration of independence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>William Cooper</td>
<td><em>Scenes from Provincial Life</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Rose Macaulay</td>
<td><em>The World My Wilderness</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Angus Wilson</td>
<td><em>Such Darling Dodos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Graham Greene</td>
<td><em>The End of the Affair</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Anthony Powell</td>
<td><em>A Question of Upbringing</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
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<td>Churchill returns as PM.</td>
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Chronology

1952
Britain becomes a nuclear state after detonating an atomic weapon in Operation Hurricane at Montebello Islands test site, Australia.

1953
Agatha Christie, *A Pocket Full of Rye*
The double helix structure of DNA discovered by Cambridge University’s James Watson and Francis Crick.

1954
Food rations end in Britain. Vietnam War begins.

1955
Nigel Dennis, *Cards of Identity*
Conservatives win election under Sir Anthony Eden

1956
Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*; Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*

1957
John Braine, *Room at the Top*; Colin MacInnes, *City of Spades*
Founding of the European Economic Community.

1958
Bates, *The Darling Buds of May*; Alan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*

1959
Alexander Cordell, *Rape of the Fair Country*; Sillitoe, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*; Keith Waterhouse, *Billy Liar*

1960
‘Wind of Change’ speech delivered by PM Harold Macmillan.

1961
Sid Chaplin, *The Day of the Sardine*; Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*
United States ceases diplomatic relations with Cuba. Building of the Berlin Wall commences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Significant Events</th>
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Burundi and Rwanda become independent. Cuban Missile Crisis. |
Charles de Gaulle rejects the United Kingdom’s entrance into the European Economic Community. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers ‘I Have a Dream’ speech in Washington, DC. John F. Kennedy assassinated. |
| 1964 | Raymond Williams, *Second Generation*; Wilson, *Late Call*  
U.S. President Lyndon Johnson institutes Civil Rights Act.  
Harold Wilson’s Labour Party wins general election. |
| 1965 | Drabble, *The Millstone*  
UK Race Relations Act introduced. |
| 1966 | Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*  
Britain suspends trade relations with Rhodesia. |
| 1967 | Angela Carter, *The Magic Toyshop*  
Abortion Act, legalising termination. UK Sexual Offences Act, decriminalising homosexuality. |
Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated in Memphis, TN. Student protests and mass strikes in Paris against the de Gaulle administration in May. |
UK Divorce Reform Act. |
| 1971 | Lessing, *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*; Johnson, *House Mother Normal*; V. S. Naipaul, *In a Free State*  
Immigration Bill, restricting the automatic right of Commonwealth citizens to remain in the UK. Founding of Greenpeace. |
Miners’ strike. ‘Bloody Sunday’ in Northern Ireland.

Britain joins the European Economic Community. Yom Kippur War in October (Sinai and Golan Heights).

Labour wins election under Harold Wilson.

Margaret Thatcher becomes Tory leader. Sex Discrimination Bill.

1976  Storey, *Saville*  

1977  Carter, *The Passion of New Eve*; Drabble, *The Ice Age*  


1979  Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*; Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*; Penelope Fitzgerald, *Offshore*  
Thatcher’s Conservative Party wins the general election, beginning four consecutive terms in government (ending 1997).

Ronald Regan becomes U.S. president.


The Falklands conflict.

CHRONOLOGY

1984  Amis, Money; Barker, Blow Your House Down; Barnes, Flaubert's Parrot; Carter, Nights at the Circus; Anita Brookner, Hotel du Lac
Miners' strike. Conservative Party Conference at Brighton bombed by the IRA.

1985  Jeanette Winterson, Boating for Beginners; Caryl Phillips, The Final Passage; Peter Ackroyd, Hawksmoor

1986  Ishiguro, An Artist of the Floating World; Jim Crace, Continent; Kingsley Amis, The Old Devils

1987  McEwan, The Child in Time; Penelope Lively, Moon Tiger; Drabble, The Radiant Way; Naipaul, The Enigma of Arrival
Stock market crash. Conservatives led by Thatcher elected for a third term in government.

1988  Rushdie, The Satanic Verses; Alan Hollinghurst, The Swimming Pool Library; David Lodge, Nice Work; Bruce Chatwin, Utz; Swift, Out of This World
National Curriculum introduced to UK schools by the Education Reform Act.

1989  Amis, London Fields; Barnes, A History of the World in 10½ Chapters; Ishiguro, The Remains of the Day; Winterson, Sexing the Cherry; James Kelman, A Disaffection; Rose Tremain, Restoration
Dismantling of the Berlin Wall, closing the Cold War. Iran issues fatwa against Salman Rushdie.

1990  Hanif Kureishi, The Buddha of Suburbia; A. S. Byatt, Possession; Nicholas Mosley, Hopeful Monsters
Unification of East and West Germany.

1991  Amis, Time's Arrow; Barker, Regeneration; Carter, Wise Children; Phillips, Cambridge; Ben Okri, The Famished Road; Iain Sinclair, Downriver
Gulf War begins.

1992  McEwan, Black Dogs; Winterson, Written on the Body; Alasdair Gray, Poor Things; Swift, Ever After
Conservative Party led by John Major wins general election.

1993  Barker, The Eye in the Door; Irvine Welsh, Trainspotting; Phillips, Crossing the River
Chronology

First women priests ordained by the Church of England.


1996  Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*; Alex Garland, *The Beach*; Swift, *Last Orders*

Princess of Wales dies in a car accident in Paris with Dodi Fayed. Referendums held on Scottish and Welsh devolution. Labour government elected under Tony Blair’s leadership. Hong Kong returned to China.

Peace agreement reached in Northern Ireland.


George W. Bush elected U.S. president. Vladimir Putin becomes Russian president.

Twin Towers in New York destroyed by coordinated terrorists attacks on September 11. Tony Blair’s Labour government is re-elected.


**Chronology**

*Dog in the Night-Time; Patterson, *Number 5*; Phillips, *A Distant Shore*; Swift, *The Light of Day*

Second Gulf War (Iraq war) begins in March.

2004


European Union expands to include Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Indian Ocean tsunami strikes on 26 December (following the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake) several coastal areas in Southeast Asia, killing more than 200,000 people.

2005


Labour wins a third term in government under Tony Blair.

2006


2007


Bulgaria and Romania join the EU. Gordon Brown becomes PM and leads Labour until 2010. Global economy enters a downturn.

2008

Lessing, *Alfred & Emily*; Ross Raisin, *God’s Own Country*

2009


UK officially in recession for the first time since 1991. Barack Hussein Obama is inaugurated as U.S. president on 20 January, becoming the first African American to hold the position.

2010


General election results in hung parliament: Conservatives and Liberal Democrats form a coalition, with David Cameron as PM.
Chronology

2011

Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending*; Hollinghurst, *The Stranger’s Child*

2012

Mantel, *Bring Up the Bodies*; McEwan, *Sweet Tooth*; McGregor, *This Isn’t the Sort of Thing that Happens to Someone Like You*; Self, *Umbrella*; Zadie Smith, *NW*

2013

Kate Atkinson, *Life after Life*; Iain Banks, *The Quarry*; Jim Crace, *Harvest*
House of Lords approves same-sex marriage bill.

2014

Ebola virus epidemic breaks out across West Africa. Israel launches ‘Operation Protective Edge’ in Gaza, costing the lives of 66 Israeli military personnel and killing 1,462 Palestinian civilians (according to UN figures), including 495 children and 253 women. National referendum on Scottish independence: with a turnout of 84.5 per cent, Scotland votes ‘No’ (55.3 per cent to 44.7 per cent).

2015

Church of England appoints Rev. Libby Lane as Britain’s first woman Bishop. Tributes are paid in London in January to the victims of the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attacks in Paris. Defying all predictions, the Conservatives win May general election and David Cameron forms a majority government. In a historic landslide victory, the Scottish National Party led by Nicola Sturgeon wins 56 out of 59 seats in Scotland.

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