

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04023-6 - The Cambridge Companion to: British Fiction Since 1945

Edited by David James

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
BRITISH FICTION SINCE 1945

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.

David James is Reader in Modern and Contemporary Literature at Queen Mary, University of London. Author of *Contemporary British Fiction* and *the Artistry of Space* (2008) and *Modernist Futures* (2012), his collaborative volumes on late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century narrative include *The Legacies of Modernism* (2012), *Fiction since 2000: Postmillennial Commitments* (2012), and *Andrea Levy: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (2014). For Columbia University Press, he co-edits the book series *Literature Now*.

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

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Queen Mary, University of London



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KIRSTI BOHATA is Senior Lecturer in English at Swansea University. She is the author of *Postcolonialism Revisited: Writing Wales in English* (2004), co-editor of *Stranger Within the Gates: Selected Stories* (2008), and guest editor of a 2010 double issue of the *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*. Her interdisciplinary work also spans the digital humanities and disability studies.

PETER BOXALL is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. His recent books include *Since Beckett: Contemporary Writing in the Wake of Modernism* (2009) and *Twenty-First-Century Fiction: A Critical Introduction* (2013). A co-editor of *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Volume VII: British and Irish Fiction since 1940* (2015), he currently edits the journal *Textual Practice*.

JOSEPH BROOKER is Reader in Modern Literature at Birkbeck, University of London, where he is Director of the Centre for Contemporary Literature. He is the author of *Joyce's Critics* (2004), *Flann O'Brien* (2005), and *Literature of the 1980s* (2010), and he has acted as editor or co-editor of special issues of the *Journal of Law and Society, New Formations, Textual Practice, and Critical Quarterly*.

SARAH BROPHY is Professor of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Her research addresses embodiment, race, gender, and sexuality in contemporary visual culture and literature. She is the author of *Witnessing AIDS: Writing Testimony and the Work of Mourning* (2004) and co-editor with Janice Hladki of *Embodied Politics in Visual Autobiography* (2014). Her work has appeared in *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies, Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies, Interventions, Contemporary Women's Writing, Literature and Medicine, and PMLA*.

DAVID GOLDIE is Senior Lecturer in English in the School of Humanities at the University of Strathclyde. He has written extensively on Scottish twentieth-century literature, from essays in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English* (2011) and *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature* (2012) to articles in the *International Journal of Scottish Literature, the Review of Scottish Culture, and*

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the *London Review of Books*. He is the co-editor, with Gerard Carruthers and Alastair Renfrew, of *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* (2004) and, with Roderick Watson, of *From the Line: Scottish War Poetry 1914–1945* (2014).

WEIHSIN GUI is Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Riverside. He is the author of *National Consciousness and Literary Cosmopolitics: Postcolonial Literature in a Global Moment* (2013) and editor of an essay anthology on the Singaporean poet Arthur Yap, entitled *Common Lines and City Spaces* (2014). His essays have appeared in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, and *Pacific Coast Philology*.

MATTHEW HART is Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He is the author of *Nations of Nothing But Poetry* (2010) and has published articles and chapters in venues such as *ALH*, *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel*, *Contemporary Literature*, *MFS*, and *The Oxford History of the Novel*. He is co-editor, with Jim Hansen, of *Contemporary Literature and the State* (2008), a special issue of *Contemporary Literature*, of which he is also an associate editor. With David James and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, he is the founding co-editor of the *Literature Now* book series, published by Columbia University Press.

DOMINIC HEAD is Professor of English at the University of Nottingham. His previous publications include *The Modernist Short Story* (1992), *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction* (2002), *The State of the Novel* (2008), and, as editor, *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (third edn., 2006). He has also published monographs on Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, and Ian McEwan. He is currently finishing *Modernity and the Rural English Novel* and editing *The Cambridge History of the English Short Story* (both forthcoming with Cambridge University Press).

KASIM HUSAIN is a PhD candidate in English and cultural studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. His dissertation, entitled ‘Race, Religion and the Cultural Politics of Neoliberalism in the Contemporary British Novel’, articulates a method of reading the history of neoliberalism in the United Kingdom in relation to migration narratives and second-generation *bildungsroman*. His research has appeared in *Postcolonial Text*, *South Asian History and Culture*, and Chandrima Chakraborty, ed., *Mapping South Asian Masculinities* (2015).

JULIA JORDAN is Lecturer in Post-1945 Literature in the Department of English Language and Literature at University College London. Author of *Chance and the Modern British Novel* (2010), she has edited *B. S. Johnson and Postwar Literature* (2014) in addition to an anthology of Johnson’s writing, *Well Done*

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God! (2013). Her work on twentieth-century avant-garde and experimental writing has appeared in *Textual Practice*, *Critique*, and *Modern Language Review*. She is currently working on a book about accidents in contemporary fiction.

MICHAEL LEMAHIEU is Associate Professor of English and director of the Pearce Centre for Professional Communication at Clemson University. He is the author of *Fictions of Fact and Value: The Erasure of Logical Positivism in American Literature, 1945–1975* (2013) and co-editor of the journal *Contemporary Literature*.

NICKY MARSH is Professor of English at the University of Southampton. Author of *Money, Speculation and Finance in Contemporary British Fiction* (2007) and *Democracy in Contemporary US Women's Poetry* (2007), she is also co-editor of *Literature and Globalization* (2010) and *Show Me the Money: The Image of Finance, 1700 to the Present* (2014).

EMMA PARKER is Reader in Postwar and Contemporary Literature at the University of Leicester. She is the author of *Kate Atkinson's Behind the Scenes at the Museum: A Reader's Guide* (2002), editor of *Contemporary British Women Writers* (2004), and co-editor of the journal *Contemporary Women's Writing*. She is currently co-editing, with Mary Eagleton, *The Palgrave History of British Women's Writing, 1970–Present*, and she is a founding member of the Contemporary Women's Writing Association (www.the-cwwa.org).

AARTHI VADDE is Assistant Professor of English and International Comparative Studies at Duke University. She specializes in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Anglophone literature and globalization studies. Her essays on contemporary literature, transnational modernism, postcolonialism, and environmentalism have appeared in such venues as *Novel*, *Comparative Literature*, *Public Books*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and *Ariel*. She is currently completing a book entitled *Chimeras of Form*, which charts the aesthetic innovations of modernist writing in relation to colonial and contemporary philosophies of internationalism.

DANIEL WESTON is Lecturer in Twentieth-Century English Literature at the University of Hull. His research focuses on literary representations of landscape, place, and environment, with particular emphasis on contemporary poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. Integrating textual analysis and cultural geography, his latest work considers ecology and literary form. His articles have appeared in *Cultural Geographies*, *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*, *Textual Practice*, *Contemporary Literature*, and *C21 Literature*.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1945 Henry Green, *Loving*; George Orwell, *Animal Farm*; Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Stories*
Soviet Red Army liberates Auschwitz and Birkenau camps in January. VE-Day on 8 May. Atomic bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August and of Nagasaki on 9 August. August revolution in Vietnam. Clement Attlee's Labour Party wins election over Winston Churchill's Conservatives.
- 1946 Green, *Back*; Somerset Maugham, *Then and Now*
Winston Churchill delivers the 'Iron Curtain' speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. United States conducts atomic weapons tests at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.
- 1947 Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*
Nationalisation of British coal mining. Cold War commences. Truman Doctrine of containment implemented.
- 1948 Sylvia Townsend Warner, *The Corner That Held Them*
- 1949 Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*; Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
NATO formed. British Mandate of Palestine terminated. Israeli declaration of independence.
- 1950 William Cooper, *Scenes from Provincial Life*; Rose Macaulay, *The World My Wilderness*; Angus Wilson, *Such a Darling Dodos*
People's Republic of China recognised by Britain. Outbreak of Korean War.
- 1951 Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair*; Anthony Powell, *A Question of Upbringing*
Churchill returns as PM.

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- 1952 H. E. Bates, *Love for Lydia*; Evelyn Waugh, *Men at Arms*; Wilson, *Hemlock and After*
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 Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*; William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*; George Lamming, *The Emigrants*; Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net*
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*
New Cuban government formed under Fidel Castro. Britain grants independence to Cyprus. Annual 'Commonwealth Day' replaces 'Empire Day'. Conservatives win under Harold Macmillan.
- 1960 Lynne Reid Banks, *The L-Shaped Room*; Stan Bartow, *A Kind of Loving*; Olivia Manning, *The Great Fortune*; David Storey, *This Sporting Life*; Raymond Williams, *Border Country*
'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.

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- 1962 Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*; Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*
Burundi and Rwanda become independent. Cuban Missile Crisis.
- 1963 Margaret Drabble, *A Summer Bird-Cage*; Nell Dunn, *Up the Junction*; B. S. Johnson, *Travelling People*; Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book*
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.
- 1968 Bowen, *Eva Trout*; Barry Hines, *A Kestrel for a Knave*; Powell, *The Military Philosophers*
Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated in Memphis, TN. Student protests and mass strikes in Paris against the de Gaulle administration in May.
- 1969 John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*; B. S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*; Bernice Rubens, *The Elected Member*
UK Divorce Reform Act.
- 1970 Muriel Spark, *The Driver's Seat*; J. G. Farrell, *Troubles*
Labour lose election to Conservative Party led by Edward Heath. Equal Pay 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.

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- 1972 Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*; Margaret Drabble, *The Needle's Eye*; John Berger, *G*
Miners' strike. 'Bloody Sunday' in Northern Ireland.
- 1973 Martin Amis, *The Rachel Papers*; J. G. Ballard, *Crash*; J. G. Farrell, *The Siege of Krishnapur*
Britain joins the European Economic Community. Yom Kippur War in October (Sinai and Golan Heights).
- 1974 Martin Amis, *Dead Babies*; Lessing, *The Memoirs of a Survivor*; Murdoch, *The Sacred & Profane Love Machine*
Labour wins election under Harold Wilson.
- 1975 Ian McEwan, *First Love, Last Rites*; Salman Rushdie, *Grimus*; Selvon, *Moses Ascending*
Margaret Thatcher becomes Tory leader. Sex Discrimination Bill.
- 1976 Storey, *Saville*
UK Race Relations and Domestic Violence Acts. Notting Hill Riots.
- 1977 Carter, *The Passion of New Eve*; Drabble, *The Ice Age*
- 1978 McEwan, *The Cement Garden*; Fay Weldon, *Praxis*; Murdoch, *The Sea, the Sea*
- 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).
- 1980 William Golding, *Rites of Passage*; Graham Swift, *The Sweetshop Owner*; Julian Barnes, *Metroland*
Ronald Regan becomes U.S. president.
- 1981 McEwan, *The Comfort of Strangers*; Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*; Swift, *Shuttlecock*
- 1982 Swift, *Learning to Swim and Other Stories*; Pat Barker, *Union Street*; Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills*; Timothy Mo, *Sour Sweet*; John Wain, *Young Shoulders*
The Falklands conflict.
- 1983 Michèle Roberts, *The Visitation*; Rushdie, *Shame*; Swift, *Waterland*

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- 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*

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- 1994 Jonathan Coe, *What a Carve Up!*; Romesh Gunesekera, *Reef*; Hollinghurst, *The Folding Star*; Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*; Rushdie, *East, West*
First women priests ordained by the Church of England.
- 1995 Amis, *The Information*; Barker, *The Ghost Road*; Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity*; Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled*; Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*
- 1996 Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*; Alex Garland, *The Beach*; Swift, *Last Orders*
- 1997 Amis, *Night Train*; Crace, *Quarantine*; McEwan, *Enduring Love*; Will Self, *Great Apes*; Sinclair, *Lights Out for the Territory*; Winterson, *Gut Symmetries*
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.
- 1998 Pat Barker, *Another World*; Nicola Barker, *Wide Open*; Justin Cartwright, *Leading the Cheers*; A. L. Kennedy, *Original Bliss*; Kureishi, *Intimacy*; McEwan, *Amsterdam*
Peace agreement reached in Northern Ireland.
- 1999 Crace, *Being Dead*; Glenn Patterson, *The International*; Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*; Tremain, *Music and Silence*
- 2000 Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*; David Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*; Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*
George W. Bush elected U.S. president. Vladimir Putin becomes Russian president.
- 2001 Barker, *Border Crossing*; McEwan, *Atonement*; Rushdie, *Fury*; Rachel Seifert, *The Dark Room*; Winterson, *The PowerBook*
Twin Towers in New York destroyed by coordinated terrorists attacks on September 11. Tony Blair's Labour government is re-elected.
- 2002 Jon McGregor, *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*; Zadie Smith, *The Autograph Man*; Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith*
- 2003 Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*; Amis, *Yellow Dog*; Pat Barker, *Double Vision*; Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the*

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- 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 Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*; Kennedy, *Paradise*; Andrea Levy, *Small Island*; Lodge, *Author, Author*; Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*
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 Maggie Gee, *My Cleaner*, Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*; Tom McCarthy, *Remainder* (Metronome Press edition); McEwan, *Saturday*; Phillips, *Dancing in the Dark*; Zadie Smith, *On Beauty*
Labour wins a third term in government under Tony Blair.
- 2006 Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*; Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*; Self, *The Book of Dave*; Ali Smith, *The Accidental*; Waters, *The Night Watch*
- 2007 Pat Barker, *Life Class*; Kennedy, *Day*; Nicola Barker, *Darkmans*; Lessing, *The Cleft*; McGregor, *So Many Ways to Begin*; McEwan, *On Chesil Beach*
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 Byatt, *The Children's Book*; Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall*; Phillips, *In the Falling Snow*
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 Howard Jacobson, *The Finkler Question*; Levy, *The Long Song*; McCarthy, C; McGregor, *Even the Dogs*
General election results in hung parliament: Conservatives and Liberal Democrats form a coalition, with David Cameron as PM.

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- 2011 Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending*; Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*
Thousands march in London in protest against government budget cuts. DUP and Sinn Féin win majority of seats in Northern Ireland Assembly election. Scottish National Party wins overall majority in Scottish Parliamentary election. Welsh Labour Party wins half of the Welsh Assembly seats. In early August, riots spread across London, Birmingham, Bristol, and Manchester.
- 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*
Queen Elizabeth II celebrates Diamond Jubilee. London hosts Olympic Games in July and August. Obama re-elected U.S. president.
- 2013 Kate Atkinson, *Life after Life*; Iain Banks, *The Quarry*; Jim Crace, *Harvest*
House of Lords approves same-sex marriage bill.
- 2014 Jacobson, *J*; McEwan, *The Children Act*; Mitchell, *The Bone Clocks*; Self, *Shark*; Ali Smith, *How to Be Both*
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 Sarah Hall, *The Wolf Border*; Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant*; McCarthy, *Satin Island*; Andrew O'Hagan, *The Illuminations*; Phillips, *The Lost Child*
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.