

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42035-8 — The Cambridge Companion to Irish Poets
Edited by Gerald Dawe
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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION
TO IRISH POETS

The Cambridge Companion to Irish Poets offers a fascinating introduction to Irish poetry from the seventeenth century to the present. Aimed primarily at lovers of poetry, it examines a wide range of poets, including household names, such as Jonathan Swift, Thomas Moore, W. B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney, Patrick Kavanagh, Eavan Boland, and Paul Muldoon. The book is comprised of thirty chapters written by critics, leading scholars and poets, who bring an authoritative and accessible understanding to their subjects. Each chapter gives an overview of a poet's work and guides the general reader through the wider cultural, historical and comparative contexts. Exploring the dual traditions of English and Irish-speaking poets, this Companion represents the very best of Irish poetry for a general audience and highlights understanding that reveals, in clear and accessible prose, the achievement of Irish poetry in a global context. It is a book that will help and guide general readers through the many achievements of Irish poets.

GERALD DAWE is Professor of English and Fellow of Trinity College Dublin. A distinguished poet, he has published eight collections of poetry with The Gallery Press, including, most recently, *Selected Poems* (2012) and *Mickey Finn's Air* (2014). He has also published several volumes of literary essays, and has edited various anthologies, including *Earth Voices Whispering: Irish War poetry, 1914–1945* (2008).

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

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Trinity College, Dublin



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 CHRONOLOGY

 Historical Events

1537 Acts for the suppression of Irish monasteries

1541 Henry VIII declared 'king of Ireland' by statute of Irish parliament

1549 Order for use of English Book of Common Prayer in Ireland

1550–7 Plantations in Laois (Leix) and Offaly (established respectively as Queen's County and King's County in 1556)

1555 Papal Bull of Pope Paul IV declares Ireland a Kingdom

1561–7 Rebellion of Shane O'Neill; English campaigns led by Sussex and Sir Henry Sidney

1588 Ships of Spanish Armada wrecked off Irish coast

1595–1603 Rebellion of Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone

1601 Spanish army lands at Kinsale. Tyrone and 'Red Hugh' O'Donnell defeated at Kinsale; O'Donnell leaves Ireland for Spain

1603 Surrender of Tyrone at Mellifont

 Cultural/Literary Events

1550 The English Book of Common Prayer used in Ireland

1571 First printing in the Irish language, in Dublin

1577 The Great Comet recorded in Annals of the Four Masters

1580 Edmund Spenser in Ireland with Lord Leonard Grey, Lord Deputy of Ireland

1592 Charter incorporates Trinity College, Dublin

CHRONOLOGY

- 1607 Flight of the Earls (including Tyrone and Tyrconnell) from Lough Swilly
- 1608–10 Preparations for plantations in Ulster counties
- 1613 Opening of parliament in Dublin
- 1621 Patents granted for plantations in Leitrim, King’s County (Offaly), Queen’s County (Laois) and Westmeath
- 1641 Outbreak of rebellion in Ulster
- 1632 Compilation of the Annals of the Four Masters completed
- 1642–9 ‘Confederation of Kilkenny’: government of Catholic Confederates
- 1649 Oliver Cromwell arrives in Dublin as civil and military governor of Ireland. Massacres at Drogheda and Wexford. Death of Eoghan Ruadh O’Neill (Owen Roe O’Neill)
- 1650 Cromwell returns to England
- 1652–3 Act for the settlement of Ireland; Cromwellian land confiscations
- 1663 First of series of acts restricting Irish trade and exports
- 1670 Possible birthdate of Aogán Ó’Rathille
- 1689 James II arrives in Ireland. Siege of Derry begins; ends in July
- 1684 Foundation of Dublin Philosophical Society
- 1690 Forces of James II defeated by those of William III at River Boyne
- 1713 Jonathan Swift made Dean of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin
- 1691 Battle of Aughrim: Williamite victory. Treaty of Limerick, allowing evacuation of Irish army to France and promising toleration to Irish Catholics
- 1691–1703 Williamite land confiscations
- 1695 Beginning of ‘Penal Laws’: Acts restricting rights of Catholics to education,

CHRONOLOGY

- to bear arms or to possess a horse worth more than five pounds
- 1704 Further 'Penal Law' introduced, including 'tests' on Catholics and Protestant dissenters for holding of public office; amended and strengthened August 1708
- 1718 Beginning of large-scale migration of Ulster Scots to American colonies
- 1720 Declaratory Act defines right of English parliament to legislate for Ireland
- 1740–41 'Bliadhain an Áir' ('The Year of the Slaughter'): large-scale famine, with mortality estimated at over 200,000 from a population of approximately 2 million
- 1760 Catholic Committee established in Dublin to advance Catholic interests
- 1761 Beginning of Whiteboy movement in Munster
- 1778 Beginning of Volunteer movement (local independent military forces); first company enrolled in Belfast. Catholic Relief Act grants rights of leasing and inheritance
- 1783 British Renunciation Act acknowledges exclusive right of Irish parliament to legislate for Ireland (inaugurates 'Grattan's parliament', to 1800)
- 1791 Foundation of Society of United Irishmen in Belfast
- 1792–93 Catholic Relief Acts allow Catholics to practise law and give parliamentary franchise
- 1795 Foundation of Orange Order
- 1726 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*
- 1731 Foundation of Dublin Society for Improving Husbandry, Manufacturing, and Other Useful Arts (from 1829, Royal Dublin Society)
- 1738 Death of Turlough O Carolan
- 1763 Freeman's Journal (–1924)
- 1770 Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*
- 1771 Benjamin Franklin visits Ireland
- 1785 First meeting of Irish Academy ('Royal Irish' after January 1786)
- 1788 The Linenhall Library Belfast founded
- 1790 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*

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| 1796 French fleet, with Wolfe Tone, at Bantry Bay | 1795 Act passed for establishment of Catholic Seminary at Maynooth |
| 1798 United Irishmen rising: rebellion begins in Leinster (May); outbreaks in Ulster in June; French force lands in Killala (August); French force surrenders (September). Death of Wolfe Tone | 1796 Edward Bunting, <i>Ancient Irish Music</i> |
| 1800 Act of Union dissolves Irish parliament and declares legislative union | |
| 1801 Act of Union takes effect | 1801 Copyright Act renders illegal the publication of pirate Irish editions of British publications |
| 1803 Robert Emmet's rebellion in Dublin; Emmet executed in September | |
| 1816 Failure of potato crop leads to first major famine since 1742; widespread typhus epidemic continues until late 1819 | 1808 Thomas Moore's <i>Irish Melodies</i> released in ten volumes (1834). George IV visited Ireland. Dún Laoghaire Harbour renamed Kingstown. |
| 1821 Failure of potato crop; fever follows in west of Ireland in summer 1822 | |
| 1823 Foundation of Catholic Association by Daniel O'Connell | |
| 1828 Daniel O'Connell elected MP for Clare | 1825–41 Ordnance Survey of Ireland carried out |
| 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act enables Catholics to enter parliament and to hold civil and military offices | 1831 State system of National Education introduced |
| 1837 Accession of Queen Victoria | 1834 James Clarence Mangan contributes poetry to <i>Dublin University Magazine</i> |
| 1838 English system of Poor Law is extended to Ireland | 1838 Father Mathew founds Abstinence movement |
| 1840 Repeal Association founded | 1842 First number of <i>The Nation</i> |

CHRONOLOGY

- 1841 Census of Ireland: population of island
8,175,124
- 1845 Arrival of potato blight in Ireland first
noted
- 1845–51 *An Gorta Mór* ('The Great Irish
Famine'): mortality estimated at in excess of
1 million
- 1844 Queen's University founded, with
colleges in Belfast, Cork and Galway
- 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws
- 1846 Recurrence of potato blight, leading to
large mortality in winter of 1846–7
- 1847 Death of Daniel O'Connell
- 1848 Abortive rising by William Smith O'Brien
at Ballinacorney, Co. Tipperary: beginning of
short-lived Young Ireland Rebellion
- 1851 Census of Ireland: population of island
6,552,385
- 1848 John Mitchel establishes United Irishman
newspaper
- 1854 Catholic University of Ireland founded,
with John Henry Newman as rector
- 1856 Births of George Bernard Shaw and
Oscar Wilde
- 1858 James Stephens founds Irish Republican
Brotherhood (IRB) in Dublin
- 1859 *Irish Times* Newspaper founded
- 1859 Fenian Brotherhood established in the
United States
- 1861 Census of Ireland: population 5,798,967
- 1867 Fenian rebellion: disturbances in England
and Ireland in February; execution of
Fenian 'Manchester Martyrs' in November
- 1865 Birth of W. B. Yeats
- 1869 Irish Church Act disestablishes Church of
Ireland
- 1870 Isaac Butt founds Home Government
Association: beginning of Home Rule
movement. Gladstone's first Land Act
- 1876 Society for the Preservation of the Irish
Language Founded

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- 1877 Charles Stewart Parnell elected president of Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain
- 1877 National Library of Ireland established
- 1879 Foundation of National Land League of Mayo by Michael Davitt
- 1880 Parnell elected chairman of Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP)
- 1880 'Boycotting' coined during the land war after Captain Boycott
- 1882 'Phoenix Park murders' of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Burke
- 1886 Gladstone's Home Rule Bill defeated
- 1884 Foundation of Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) Announcement of 'Plan of Campaign' to withhold rents on certain estates
- 1890 Split in IPP, with majority opposing Parnell
- 1890 National Museum of Ireland opened
- 1891 Death of Parnell
- 1892 Labour Party established in Belfast
- 1892 National Literary Society established; Douglas Hyde's address, 'On the Necessity for De-Anglicising the Irish People'
- 1893 Second Home Rule Bill passed by House of Commons but defeated in House of Lords
- 1893 Foundation of Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge) *Douglas Hyde, Love Songs of Connacht*
- 1898 Irish Local Government Act
- 1898 Queen Victoria visited Ireland
- 1900 Foundation of Cumann na nGaedheal led by Arthur Griffith
- 1899 First production by Irish Literary Theatre
- 1901 Census of Ireland: population 4,458,775
- 1902 W. B. Yeats's play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* performed Cuala Press established (–1946)
- 1903 Wyndham Land Act
- 1907 Cumann na nGaedheal and Dungannon clubs become Sinn Féin League
- 1904 Opening of Abbey Theatre Ulster Literary Theatre founded

CHRONOLOGY

- 1908 Foundation of Irish Transport Workers' Union (later ITGWU)
- 1907 J. M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World* performed at the Abbey Theatre. The Irish International Exhibition opened in Dublin. Marconi Trans-Atlantic Telegraphy starts between Clifden in County Galway and Cape Breton Canada
- 1908 Irish Women's Franchise League formed
- 1912 Third Home Rule Bill passed by House of Commons; twice defeated in House of Lords (January and July 1913) Solemn League and Covenant signed in Ulster
- 1912 The Titanic sinks on its maiden voyage
- 1913 Foundation of Ulster Volunteer Force Beginning of ITGWU strike in Dublin, becomes general lockout. Formation of Irish Citizen Army and Irish Volunteers
- 1914 James Joyce, *Dubliners* W. B. Yeats, *Responsibilities*
- 1914 'Curragh Mutiny': resignation by sixty cavalry officers in the British army at Kildare. Ulster Volunteer Force gun-running Foundation of Cumann na mBan (women's auxiliary league). Home Rule Bill passes again in Commons. Howth gun-running by Irish Volunteers. United Kingdom and Germany go to war. Home Rule Bill suspended; John Redmond calls on Irish Volunteers to support British war; movement splits into National (pro-Redmond) and Irish (anti-Redmond) Volunteers
- 1916 James Joyce, *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*; Thomas Mac Donagh, *Literature in Ireland*
- 1915 Sinking of Lusitania
- 1916 Easter Rising (May) Execution of rebel leaders. Battle of the Somme (July)
- 1917 Death of Francis Ledwidge during third battle of Ypres, WWI (July)
- 1918 Sinn Fein victory in general election. Countess Markievicz elected to Westminster Parliament but refuses to take her seat
- 1919 Alcock and Brown completed first non-stop trans-Atlantic flight from Newfoundland to Clifden, Co, Galway

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- 1919 First meeting of Dáil Eireann at Mansion House, with Eamon de Valera elected president. Irish Volunteer organisation increasingly known as Irish Republican Army
- 1919–21 Irish War of Independence/Anglo-Irish War (January) 1920. First recruits of British ex-soldiers and sailors ('Black and Tans') join Royal Irish Constabulary (December) 1920. Government of Ireland Act provides for creation of separate parliaments in Dublin and Belfast. George V opens Northern Irish Parliament. Truce between IRA and British Army, Anglo-Irish Treaty signed
- 1922 Treaty approved by Dáil Eireann (sixty-four to fifty-seven): establishment of Irish Free State. Beginning of Irish Civil War between pro-Treaty (Free State) and anti-Treaty (Republican) forces
- 1922 Censorship of Films Act. W. B. Yeats is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1923 Cumann na nGaedheal (political party) founded as first new post-independence party Suspension of Republican campaign. Irish Free State enters League of Nations
- 1923 George Bernard Shaw is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1924 BBC Northern Ireland first broadcast
- 1925 Findings of Boundary Commission leaked April 1926 Census of Ireland: population of Irish Free State 2,971,992; population of Northern Ireland 1,256,561
- 1926 Foundation of Fianna Fail
- 1926 Radio Eireann begin broadcasting
- 1927 Irish Free State Justice Minister, Kevin O'Higgins assassinated
- 1928 Irish Manuscripts Commission founded. Samuel Beckett moves to Paris. W. B. Yeats, *The Tower* Opening of The Gate Theatre First citizen of an independent Ireland Dr. Pat O'Callaghan wins a Gold Medal at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam
- 1929 Ireland elected to the Council of the League of Nations
- 1929 Censorship of Publications Act
- 1930 Fianna Fail wins general election. Thirty-First International Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin
- 1930 First Censorship Board appointed in Irish Free State

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| 1933 Foundation of Fine Gael (replaces Cumann na nGaedheal) | 1935 Samuel Beckett, <i>Echo's Bones and other Precipitates</i> |
| 1936 IRA declared illegal | 1936 W. B. Yeats Editor, <i>Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892–1935</i> . Aer Lingus inaugural flight Dublin-Bristol (UK) |
| 1937 De Valera's new constitution (Bunreacht na h Éireann) approved; Éire declared official name of state | 1937 Charles Donnelly killed fighting with International Brigade during Spanish Civil War |
| 1938 Douglas Hyde becomes first president of Ireland. Eamon de Valera elected president of the League of Nations | 1938 Austin Clarke, <i>Night and Morning</i> |
| 1939 Éire's policy of neutrality announced | 1939 Death of W. B. Yeats in France. Louis MacNeice, <i>Autumn Journal</i> . Irish Red Cross Established Inaugural Trans-Atlantic Air Service to the United States |
| 1939–45 'Emergency' years | 1940 <i>The Bell</i> begins publication |
| 1941 (April and May) Air-raids on Belfast. Approximately 700 people killed | 1941 Samuel Beckett joins Paris-Based Resistance cell (Gloria SMH) |
| | 1942 Patrick Kavanagh, <i>The Great Hunger</i> Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) founded in Belfast |
| 1948 Fianna Fail loses overall majority; replaced by coalition government under John A. Costello. Republic of Ireland Act under which Éire becomes Republic of Ireland and leaves Commonwealth | 1945 Samuel Beckett awarded the 'Croix de Coeur' and 'Medaille de la Resistance' by the French government |
| | 1948 Re-interment of W. B. Yeats in Drumcliffe, Co. Sligo |
| 1951 Catholic hierarchy condemns 'Mother and Child' Scheme; resignation of Dr Noel Browne as Minister of Health | 1949 <i>Envoy: A Review of Literature and Art</i> founded by John Ryan |
| | 1950 Thomas MacGreevy appointed director of National Gallery of Ireland (retires 1963) |
| 1955 Republic of Ireland joins United Nations | 1951 Arts Council of Ireland founded. Dolmen Press founded by Liam and Josephine Miller. Lyric Theatre founded by Mary and Pearse O'Malley |

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| 1956 IRA begins campaign on Northern border | 1952 Séan Ó Riordáin, <i>Eireaball Spideoige</i> [<i>A Robin's Tail</i>] |
| | 1953 BBC Northern Ireland TV broadcast Samuel Beckett <i>En attendant Godot</i> |
| 1958 First Programme for Economic Expansion introduced, encouraging exports along with private and foreign investment in manufacturing | 1954 Richard Murphy settled in Cleggan, Co. Galway |
| | 1955 Austin Clarke, <i>Ancient Lights</i> |
| 1959 De Valera elected president | 1957 John Hewitt appointed director of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, England (retires 1972) |
| 1963 Terence O'Neill becomes prime minister of Northern Ireland Visit of John F. Kennedy Ian Paisley founds Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) | 1960 Patrick Kavanagh, <i>Come Dance with Kitty Stobling</i> |
| 1966 Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), loyalist paramilitary group (taking its name from the 1913 movement), founded January 1967 Foundation of Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association | 1961 RTE (Radio Telefís Éireann) begins television service |
| 1968 Civil rights marches in Northern Ireland; clashes between marchers and police in Derry mark beginning of 'the Troubles' | 1962 The Arts Council of Northern Ireland established |
| 1970 IRA splits into Official IRA and Provisional IRA. Foundation of Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) in Northern Ireland | 1963 Death of Louis MacNeice (55) |
| 1971 Internment introduced in Northern Ireland | 1963–73 Belfast 'Group' of poets meets at Queen's University |
| 1972 Stormont parliament in Belfast suspended; direct rule from London introduced. 30 January 'Bloody Sunday': fourteen civilians killed and twelve wounded in Derry by British Army. 21 July 'Bloody Friday': twenty-two bombs set off in Belfast by IRA; nine people killed and some hundred and thirty wounded | 1967 Death of Patrick Kavanagh (63) |
| | 1968 Thomas Kinsella, <i>Nightwalker and other poems</i> . Honest Ulsterman, founded by James Simmons. (2003). Lyric New Theatre opens in Belfast |

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| 1973 Republic of Ireland joins European Economic Community (EEC) | 1969 Samuel Beckett is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature |
| | 1970 The Gallery Press founded by Peter Fallon. |
| 1974 Ulster Workers' Council declares general Strike | 1971 Seán Ó Riada dies |
| 1975 Suspension of internment without trial in Northern Ireland | 1973 Brendan Kennelly appointed first Professor of Modern Literature, Trinity College Dublin (retires 2005) |
| 1979 Pope John Paul II visits Ireland | 1974 Austin Clarke dies |
| 1980 Hunger strikes in Maze and Armagh Prisons | 1975 Eavan Boland, <i>The War Horse</i> . Paul Durcan, <i>O Westport in the Light of Asia Minor</i> . Seamus Heaney, <i>North</i> Michel Hartnett, <i>A Farewell to English</i> . Cyphers Magazine established. <i>Two Decades of Irish Writing: A Critical Survey</i> (ed. Douglas Dunn) published Arlen House, Ireland's first feminist press, founded by Catherine Rose |
| 1981 Ten IRA and Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) hunger-strikers die, including Bobby Sands (elected MP, April 1981) | 1977 <i>The Crane Bag</i> journal founded |
| 1983 Amendment to constitution passed by referendum, seeking to prevent any possible legalisation of abortion | 1978 Poetry Ireland founded by John F. Deane who also founded Dedalus Press (1985) |
| 1984 Report of the New Ireland Forum is published | 1979 Medbh McGuckian wins the National Poetry Competition (UK) |
| 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement signed by Garret FitzGerald and Margaret Thatcher | |
| 1986 Referendum upholds constitutional ban on Divorce | 1980 Field Day Theatre and Publishing Company established |
| 1987 Referendum approves Single European Act | 1981 Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, <i>An Dealg Droighin</i> . Salmon Poetry founded by Jessie Lendennie. Thomas Kinsella and Sean O'Tuama (eds), <i>An Dunaire' 1600-1900 Poems of the Dispossessed</i> . Aosdána, an |

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- Irish association of artists established by the Arts Council
- 1982 Medbh McGuckian, *The Flower Master*
- 1983 John Hewitt made a Freeman of the City of Belfast
- 1986 Edna Longley, *Poetry in the Wars*
- 1987 Ciaran Carson, *The Irish for No*
- 1990 Mary Robinson elected president of Ireland, the first female president
- 1990 Samuel Beckett dies (83)
- 1990 Paul Durcan, *Daddy, Daddy*
- 1992 Referendum held on three abortion-related issues: the right to travel and the right to information supported
- 1991 Michael Longley, *Gorse Fires; Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*
- 1993 Downing Street Declaration signed by Albert Reynolds and John Major
- 1992 Derek Mahon, *The Yaddo Letter*
- 1994 IRA and Loyalist paramilitaries declare ceasefires (later suspended and restored)
- 1995 Seamus Heaney is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1995 Referendum allowing divorce is carried
- 1996 Eavan Boland appointed Bella Mabury Knapp Professor in Humanities, Stanford University, USA. Ciaran Carson, *Last Night's Fun: About Time, Food and Music*
- 1997 Mary McAleese elected president of Ireland
- 1998 John Montague appointed inaugural Ireland; every three years a poet of honour and distinction is chosen to represent the Chair as Ireland's Professor of Poetry. Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996*
- 1998 Good Friday Agreement is negotiated and endorsed in referendums in Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (May)
- 2001 Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill appointed first Irish Language Ireland Professor of Poetry
- 1999 Northern Irish Assembly meets. Ireland adopts the euro
- 2002 Richard Murphy, *The Kick: A Life among Writers*

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- 1997–2008 Economic boom years become known as ‘Celtic Tiger’
- 2001 Amendment to Constitution provide universal ban on death penalty. Census of population of Northern Ireland: 1,685,267. Census of population of Republic of Ireland: 3,917,203
- 2008–11 Financial crisis leads to dissolution of 30th Dáil and election of coalition government to oversee programme of financial austerity and EU ‘bail-out’. Election of Michael D. Higgins as thirteenth president of Ireland
- 2015 Referendum makes Ireland the first country to legalise same-sex marriage by popular vote: 62%–38%
- 2016 Centenary of the Easter Rising celebrated nationally and globally
- 2003 Paul Muldoon awarded Pulitzer Prize for *Moy Sand and Gravel*
- 2004 Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, Queen’s University Belfast opened
- 2007 Thomas Kinsella received Freedom of the City of Dublin. Derek Mahon awarded David Cohen Prize for literature in recognition of an entire body of work written in English
- 2009 Derek Mahon awarded Griffin Poetry Prize for *Life on Earth*
- 2010 Michael Longley awarded Commander of the British Empire. John Montague made a Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur, France’s highest civil award. Eilean Ni Chuilleanáin awarded Griffin Poetry Prize for *The Sun Fish*. *The Penguin Book of Irish Poetry* and *An Anthology of Modern Irish Poetry* (Harvard) published Harry Clifton appointed Ireland Professor of Poetry
- 2012 Death of Dennis O’Driscoll poet, critic and editor of *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (2008)
- 2013 Death of Seamus Heaney (74). Paula Meehan appointed Ireland Professor of Poetry
- 2016 Deaths of John Montague (87) and Anthony Cronin (88). Opening of The Home Place, dedicated to Seamus Heaney in Bellaghy, Co. Derry. Eilean Ni Chuilleanáin appointed Ireland Professor of Poetry
- ‘Historical Events’ draws upon Margaret Kelleher and Philip O’Leary, eds. *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2006)

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume aims to provide fresh and lucid accounts of twenty-nine Irish poets writing in English and Irish from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century. While the focus of the individual chapters varies from poet to poet, the intention of each contribution to this *Companion* is to give an overview of the poet's work and to guide the interested reader through the wider cultural, historical and comparative contexts, but without overloading or obscuring the primary concentration on the poet's work. Many of the contributors are poets themselves; others have written substantial monographs and studies of Irish poets other than those they have written about here. The critical and cultural exchange which takes place across the generations of Irish poetry and the resounding resonances and conversations between individual poets and their lives and times is a noteworthy though unintended feature of this volume.

As editor I would like to thank Ray Ryan of Cambridge University Press for his patience and support while the *Companion* gathered momentum, and Conor Linnie, a doctoral student with the School of English at Trinity College, who helped with the final formatting of the text and the 'Further Reading' section. Kyle Hughes, also a graduate student with the School of English, kindly stepped in at a critical moment when a technical issue confounded our best computer skills. I owe a debt of gratitude to Julitta Clancy for producing the Index, an epic poem all to itself. But my main debt of gratitude is to the contributors who responded to their tasks so enthusiastically despite carrying heavy workloads both within the academy and without. As the *Companion* was going into production we sadly lost one of our contributors, Aodán Mac Póilin, an inspirational presence whose love and knowledge of Irish poetry in both Irish and English was legendary. The book is testament to how we are all as readers still enthralled by what Seamus Heaney praised in his poem, 'Song' as 'the mud-flowers of dialect/And the immortelles of perfect pitch/ And that moment when the bird sings very close/To the music of what happens' (*Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996*, 1998, p. 181).

Gerald Dawe

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