

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-54928-8 - English Literature in Context
Edited by Paul Poplawski
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

English Literature in Context

Comprehensive and accessible, this textbook supports the study of English literature from the Middle Ages to the present, and is designed as a main resource for all English Literature students. The book is carefully structured for undergraduate use, with a rich range of illustrations and textboxes that enhance and summarise vital background material. The seven chronological chapters are written by a team of expert contributors who are also highly experienced teachers with a clear sense of the requirements of the undergraduate English curriculum. Each analyses a major historical period, surveying and documenting the cultural contexts that have shaped English literature, and focusing on key texts. In addition to the narrative survey, each chapter includes a detailed chronology, providing a quick-reference guide to the period; contextual readings of select literary texts; and annotated suggestions for further reading. This is an invaluable reference for students and teachers alike.

PAUL POPLAWSKI is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Leicester. He has taught widely in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, and also has teaching interests in post-colonial literature and creative writing. He has published several books and articles on D.H. Lawrence, including the revised third edition of *A Bibliography of D.H. Lawrence* (Cambridge, 2001), and is also Series Adviser for the current Penguin Classics series of D.H. Lawrence's texts. His other publications include *A Jane Austen Encyclopedia* (1998) and, as editor, *Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism* (2003).

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-54928-8 - English Literature in Context
Edited by Paul Poplawski
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

English Literature in Context

PAUL POPLAWSKI

General Editor

VALERIE ALLEN, Medieval English, 500–1500
ANDREW HISCOCK, The Renaissance, 1485–1660
LEE MORRISSEY, The Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660–1780
PETER J. KITSON, The Romantic Period, 1780–1832
MARIA FRAWLEY, The Victorian Age, 1832–1901
PAUL POPLAWSKI, The Twentieth Century, 1901–1939
JOHN BRANNIGAN, The Twentieth Century, 1939–2004



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-54928-8 - English Literature in Context
Edited by Paul Poplawski
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521549288

© Cambridge University Press 2008

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-83992-1 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-54928-8 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page vii
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xix
1 Medieval English, 500–1500	
VALERIE ALLEN	1
Chronology	2
Historical overview	12
Literary overview	33
Texts and issues	50
Readings	72
Reference	97
2 The Renaissance, 1485–1660	
ANDREW HISCOCK	110
Chronology	110
Historical overview	117
Literary overview	145
Texts and issues	170
Readings	183
Reference	207
3 The Restoration and eighteenth century, 1660–1780	
LEE MORRISSEY	211
Chronology	212
Historical overview	216
Literary overview	243
Texts and issues	264
Readings	281
Reference	301
4 The Romantic period, 1780–1832	
PETER J. KITSON	306
Chronology	306
Historical overview	311

	Literary overview	327
	Texts and issues	349
	Readings	372
	Reference	393
5	The Victorian age, 1832–1901	
	MARIA FRAWLEY	403
	Chronology	404
	Historical overview	408
	Literary overview	429
	Texts and issues	458
	Readings	488
	Reference	507
6	The twentieth century, 1901–1939	
	PAUL POPLAWSKI	519
	Chronology	520
	Historical overview	527
	Literary overview	546
	Texts and issues	559
	Readings	572
	Reference	586
7	The twentieth century, 1939–2004	
	JOHN BRANNIGAN	593
	Chronology	593
	Historical overview	601
	Literary overview	618
	Texts and issues	632
	Readings	643
	Reference	656
	<i>Index</i>	664

Illustrations

1 Medieval English, 500–1500

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1 Anglo-Saxon England. Based on the map reproduced in <i>The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature</i> , ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge. Features added by Gary Zaragovitch | page 15 |
| 2 ‘The sign of King William’ and ‘the sign of Queen Matilda’, marked by crosses. Detail from the Accord of Winchester 1072. Reproduced with permission from the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury | 20 |
| 3 Wat Tyler killed by Lord Mayor Walworth in front of Richard II. <i>Chroniques de France et d’Angleterre</i> . S. Netherlands, c. 1460–80. Art Resource, NY. British Library Royal 18 E, f.175 | 24 |
| 4 Henry II argues with Thomas Becket. From Peter of Langtoft’s <i>Chronicle of England</i> . c. 1300–25. Art Resource, NY. British Library | 31 |
| 5 The West-Saxon Gospel. 1000–50. Translation of Matthew 3.13. CCC MS. 140, f. 4v. By courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge | 37 |
| 6 <i>Heaþosteapa Helm</i> (The High Battle-Helmet) (<i>Beowulf</i> , 1245 [A]). Reconstructed from actual helmet in Sutton Hoo, early C.7th. Art Resource, NY. The British Museum, London | 41 |
| 7 Harold swears an oath to William. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry. C.11th. By Special Permission of the City of Bayeux | 44 |
| 8 Map of York pageant stations. By permission of Meg Twycross | 49 |
| 9 Mary bares her breast before Christ on behalf of sinners. Hereford <i>Mappa Mundi</i> . c. 1285. With the Permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust | 53 |
| 10 The Desborough necklace. C.7th. Gold and garnet. The cross indicates it belonged to a convert. © The Trustees of the British Museum | 56 |
| 11 The Cuerdale hoard. c. 905. Art Resource, NY. The British Museum, London | 58 |
| 12 Gossiping women surrounded by demons. c. 1325–40. Window n.11. By permission of the Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas Parish Church, Stanford on Avon | 63 |
| 13 Man defecates before praying nun. <i>Romance of Alexander</i> . French and English, C.14th–15th MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 56r. By courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford | 67 |

-
- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----|
| 14 | Baboons reading. <i>Romance of Alexander</i> . French and English, C.14th–15th MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 94v. By courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford | 71 |
| 15 | Map of Maldon, Essex. By courtesy of Humphrey Berridge www.battleofmaldon.org.uk/index . | 73 |
| 16 | Norman cavalry and English shieldwall. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry. C.11th. By special permission of the City of Bayeux | 76 |
| 17 | The enclosing of a recluse. CCC MS. 79, f. 72r. c. 1397–1435. By courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge | 80 |
| 18 | Map of Arthurian Britain. Copyright 1996 from <i>The New Arthurian Encyclopedia</i> (p. 2), ed. Norris J. Lacy. Reproduced by Permission of Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, LLC | 85 |
| 19 | Arming scene. Pierpont Morgan Library. Manuscript. M.775 [Ordonances of Chivalry], fol. 122v. With permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York | 87 |
| 20 | Annunciation to the shepherds. Holkham Picture Bible. London, British Library, Add. MS. 47682, f. 13. By permission of the British Library | 93 |
| 2 The Renaissance, 1485–1660 | | |
| 1 | Isaac Oliver, <i>A Miniature Depicting an Allegory of Virtue Confronting Vice</i> , c. 1590 (Detail). SMK Foto, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen | 118 |
| 2 | Lucas De Heere, (1534–84), <i>The Family of Henry VIII: an Allegory of the Tudor Succession</i> . National Museums and Galleries of Wales | 118 |
| 3 | Van Dyck c. 1632, <i>Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria with Their Two Eldest Children</i> . The Royal Collection © 2005, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II | 122 |
| 4 | <i>The Execution of Charles I</i> , c. 1649–50. On loan to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, reproduced by permission of Lord Dalmeny | 123 |
| 5 | Title page from John Fitzherbert's <i>Here Begynneth a Newe Tract or Treatyse Moost Profitable for All Husbandmen</i> (1532). By permission of the British Library | 128 |
| 6 | Woodcut from 1611 Edition of George Gascoigne's <i>The Noble Arte of Venerie or Hunting</i> . The first edition was published in 1575. In this later edition the image of Elizabeth is replaced with that of James. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California | 151 |
| 7 | A detail from Wenceslas Hollar's engraving 'Long View of London' (1644). The attributions of 'The Globe' And 'Beere Bayting' are not accurate and should be reversed | 152 |
| 8 | Detail from a painting of a Public Sermon at St Paul's Cross, 1620 | 153 |
| 9 | Robert Greene's <i>The Third and Last Part of Conny-Catching</i> , 1592
Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California | 155 |
| 10 | Woodcut displaying an early modern print workshop from the title page of Edmund Reeve's <i>Twelve Rules Introducing to the Art of Latine</i> (1620). By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library | 159 |

11	Title page from the 1623 'First Folio' of Shakespeare's dramatic works. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library	167
12	Woodcut from Foxe's <i>Acts And Monuments</i> illustrating the martyrdom of William Tyndale. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California	169
13	<i>Elizabeth I Receiving Dutch Emissaries</i> , c. 1585. Staatliche Museen Kassel	172
14	Miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, <i>Young Man against a Flame Background</i> . V & A Images	178
15	Engraving recalling Francis Drake's arrival in the Moluccan Islands. Published by Gottfried (1655) © National Maritime Museum, London	182
16	Illustration depicting the Moghul emperor Jahangir preferring a Sufi sheikh to kings (which include James I), c. 1615–18. Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC	184
17	Woodcut image of the island of Utopia from the 1518 Basle edition of More's <i>Utopia</i> . Bielefeld University Library	186
18	Copy of a drawing of the Swan Theatre originally made in 1596 by Johannes De Witt. University Library, Utrecht	194
19	Nicholas Hilliard's famous miniature of an Elizabethan lover, entitled <i>Young Man among the Roses</i> . V & A Images	201
3	The Restoration and eighteenth century, 1660–1780	
1	Hogarth, <i>The South Sea Scheme</i> (1721). Guildhall Library, City of London	226
2	Platte Grondt der Verbrande Stadt London (1666). By permission of the British Library	230
3	Canaletto, view of St Paul's Cathedral, façade (c. 1747). Guildhall Library, City of London	231
4	Hogarth, <i>Harlot's Progress</i> , Plate I (1732). Guildhall Library, City of London	232
5	Hogarth, <i>Idle Prentice executed at Tyburn</i> (1747). Guildhall Library, City of London	233
6	Hogarth, <i>Gin Lane</i> (1751). Guildhall Library, City of London	235
7	Ranelagh Gardens, interior. Guildhall Library, City of London	236
8	Ranelagh Gardens, exterior. Guildhall Library, City of London	236
9	Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, exterior	237
10	Royal Observatory, Greenwich. Guildhall Library, City of London	241
11	Greenwich, Royal Naval College. From <i>Vitruvius Britannicus</i> , Clemson University Library	242
12	Greenwich Hospital, Painted Hall, James Thornhill	243
13	[Vanbrugh,] <i>General Plan of Blenheim</i> . From <i>Vitruvius Britannicus</i> , Clemson University Library	247
14	Hogarth, <i>Masquerades and Operas, or The Taste of the Town</i> (1724). Guildhall Library, City of London	254
15	Royal Exchange. Guildhall Library, City of London	273
16	<i>Plan of a slave ship</i> , 1808. By permission of the British Library	276
17	Francis Hayman, <i>Robert Clive and Mir Jaffier after the Battle of Plassey</i> , 1757 (c. 1760). National Portrait Gallery, London	280

4 The Romantic period, 1780–1832

- 1 Industrial Revolution: Joseph Wright, 'An Iron Forge 1786'. Derby Art Gallery 313
- 2 Frontispiece of George Adams, *An Essay on Electricity, Explaining the Theory and Practice of that Useful Science; and the Mode of Applying it to Medical Purposes* (London, 1799). St Andrews University Library 319
- 3 James Gillray, *Un Petit Souper à la Parisienne: or A Family of Sans Cullotts refreshing after the fatigues of the day* (H. Humphry 1792). Reproduced from *The Works of James Gillray from the Original Plates* (London, 1819). Glasgow University Library 324
- 4 Barbauld, Hymn VIII. 'Hymns in Prose for Children'. Author's copy. 327
- 5 James Gillray, 'New Morality, or the promised instalment of the High Priest of the Theophilanthropes, with the homage of Leviathan and his suite'. Glasgow University Library 330
- 6 Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (1782). Detroit Institute of Art 331
- 7 Mechanical press. Dundee Contemporary Arts 333
- 8 Page of the *Quarterly Review* Volume 1, No. 2. St Andrews University Library 336
- 9 William Blake, 'The Tyger' from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794). Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 338
- 10 Frontispiece to *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London, 1859) 341
- 11 Title page of Burke's *Reflections*. P. 1. St Andrews University Library 350
- 12 Picturesque image of a Scottish landscape from William Gilpin's *Observations on Several parts of Great Britain, particularly the High-lands of Scotland, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*. Third Edition (London, 1808). Glasgow University Library 355
- 13 Sublime image: John Martin, 'Manfred on the Jungfrau', Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery 357
- 14 Blake, 'Newton'. Tate Gallery 359
- 15 Oriental Image: Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh* (1817). Author's copy 367
- 16 William Blake, 'The Little Black Boy' from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 369
- 17 Tintern Abbey from William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c.* Fourth edition (London, 1800). Author's copy 373
- 18 Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*. Author's copy 378
- 19 'A Turkish Female Slave' by John Cam Hobhouse. St Andrew's University Library 385
- 20 Frontispiece and title page to the English Standard Novels edition of *Frankenstein* (1831) 387

5 The Victorian age, 1832–1901

- 1 Victoria Jubilee. Courtesy of the Library of Congress 410
- 2 New Poor Law poster. Reproduced by permission of the National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey 413
- 3 Crystal Palace. 'Centre Transept, Crystal Palace.' London, 1855
 Reproduced with Permission of The British Library. Tab.442.a.5.f67.
 Copyright © The British Library 420

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 4 | Joseph Mallord William Turner. <i>Rain, Steam and Speed – the Great Western Railway</i> . Reproduced with the permission of The National Gallery, London | 422 |
| 5 | ‘The People’s Pickwick’. Advertisement for a cheap reprint of <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> that appeared in the wrapper of <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> . Courtesy of Special Collections, University Library, University of California Santa Cruz | 426 |
| 6 | Great Exhibition Supplement/ <i>Illustrated London News</i> . Courtesy Special Collections and University Archives. Gelman Library. The George Washington University | 427 |
| 7 | ‘Kaye’s Worsdell’s Vegetable Restorative Pills’. Courtesy, Special Collections, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz | 428 |
| 8 | Frontispiece to the first edition of <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> , with an illustration by ‘Phiz’ (Hablot Browne). Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Gelman Library, The George Washington University | 432 |
| 9 | ‘Two scenes from the <i>Canterbury Tales</i> ,’ produced by William Morris’s Kelmscott Press. Copyright © The British Library. Reproduced with permission of The British Library. C.43.h19 plates 272–3 | 434 |
| 10 | Kate Greenaway. <i>Marigold Garden: Pictures and Rhymes</i> . London, New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1885. Frontispiece. Courtesy of the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware | 435 |
| 11 | ‘Exchanging Books at Mudie’s’, an image from George Sims’s <i>Living London</i> , 1902. Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Gelman Library, The George Washington University | 436 |
| 12 | ‘Mudie’s Select Library’. Courtesy, Special Collections, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz | 437 |
| 13 | ‘Isabella and the Pot of Basil’ (1867–8) by William Holman Hunt. DAM# 1947–9. Reproduced with the permission of the Delaware Art Museum | 449 |
| 14 | <i>The Yellow Book</i> . Volume I. April 1894 (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1894). Front Cover Design by Aubrey Beardsley. Courtesy of the Mark Samuels Lasner Special Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware | 454 |
| 15 | ‘The Little London Girl’. This illustration and poem, both by Kate Greenaway, appeared in <i>Marigold Garden: Pictures and Rhymes</i> (London, New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1885). Courtesy of the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware | 467 |
| 16 | ‘Egdon Heath’ by Hetty Rogers. Reproduced with permission of the Dorset County Museum (Thomas Hardy Memorial Collection). | 470 |
| 17 | Darwin cartoon, ‘Monkeyana’, which appeared in <i>Punch</i> in 1861. London, 1861. Copyright © The British Library. Reproduced with permission of the British Library, P.P. 5270.ah. 206 | 473 |
| 18 | ‘The Rhodes’ Colossus,’ drawn by Linley Sambourne, appeared in <i>Punch</i> in 1892. Reproduced with the permission of Punch, Ltd. www.punch.co.uk | 477 |

-
- | | |
|--|-----|
| 19 'Found', Rossetti. DAM# 1935-27. Reproduced with permission of the Delaware Art Museum | 484 |
| 20 'Oscar Wilde at Bow Street' appeared in the <i>Illustrated Police News Law-Courts and Weekly Record</i> on 20 April 1895. Copyright © The British Library. Colindale. Colindale, Front Page no. 1627. Reproduced with permission of the British Library | 487 |
| 21 The title page to <i>Bleak House</i> , with illustrations by H. K. Browne ('Phiz'). London: Bradbury & Evans, 1853. Copyright © The British Library. Reproduced with permission of the British Library, Dex.287 000 | 493 |
| 22 The illustrated title page to <i>Goblin Market and Other Poems</i> (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1862). Courtesy of the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware | 497 |

6 The twentieth century, 1901–1939

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1 'Progress' by George Morrow (<i>Punch</i> 1910) – cartoon. Reproduced with the permission of Punch, Ltd. www.punch.co.uk | 528 |
| 2 Balloon race, Ranelagh, 1906 | 530 |
| 3 Soup queue, 1906 | 534 |
| 4 Sylvia Pankhurst and police escort, 1912 | 535 |
| 5 'After the Battle' | 537 |
| 6 The <i>British Worker</i> , 12 May 1926, and the <i>British Gazette</i> , 13 May 1926: newspaper front pages announcing the end of the General Strike. University of Leicester Library Special Collections | 542 |
| 7 Granada Cinema, Tooting, c. 1931 | 545 |
| 8 'No comfort at all': war widow, 1917 | 560 |
| 9 <i>The Book</i> , 1913, by Juan Gris: cubist painting | 568 |
| 10 Advertisements. University of Leicester Library Special Collections | 574 |

Images 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 reproduced courtesy of Getty Images

7 The twentieth century, 1939–2004

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1 London in the Blitz | 602 |
| 2 Atomic bomb devastation in Nagasaki, 1945 | 605 |
| 3 The Beatles receiving the MBE award | 609 |
| 4 Spaghetti Junction motorway intersection, near Birmingham | 612 |
| 5 Victory in Europe (VE) Day celebrations, 1945 | 619 |
| 6 The Penguin edition of D. H. Lawrence's <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> , which was ruled to be not obscene by a jury at the Old Bailey in 1960 | 626 |
| 7 Tony Ray-Jones, 'Brighton Beach, 1966' © National Museum of Photography, Film & Television. Image, ref. 10452878 | 634 |
| 8 Woman reads as baby sleeps, about 1949. Copyright National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, NMPFT: Collections Reference Number: 1997-5002_10754 | 639 |
| 9 <i>The Empire Windrush</i> , bringing Caribbean immigrants to England in 1948 | 640 |
| 10 Poster for the film <i>1984</i> , based on Orwell's novel | 646 |

All the above images courtesy of Getty Images

Notes on contributors

VALERIE ALLEN teaches literature and justice studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City University of New York. She was educated at Trinity College Dublin, and taught in Scotland and Florida before moving to New York. Her publications include *On Farting: Language and Laughter in the Middle Ages* (Palgrave, 2006), an edited collection, *New Casebooks: Chaucer* (Macmillan, 1997) and essays on various topics and writers – *Se7en*, Emmanuel Levinas, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Chaucer, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, medieval grammar, chivalry, and medieval women and shame.

JOHN BRANNIGAN is senior lecturer in the School of English and Drama at University College Dublin. His publications include *Literature, Culture and Society in Postwar England, 1945–1965* (Edwin Mellen, 2002), *Orwell to the Present: Literature in England, 1945–2000* (Palgrave, 2003) and *Pat Barker* (Manchester University Press, 2005).

MARIA FRAWLEY is an associate professor of English at George Washington University, where she teaches courses in nineteenth-century British literature. She is the author of three books: *A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England*, *Anne Brontë* and, most recently, *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. In addition, she has prepared an edition of Harriet Martineau's *Life in the Sick-Room* for Broadview Press. She is currently working on a variety of projects related to Victorian literary and medical history and is also beginning a reference work titled *Jane Austen's Keywords*.

ANDREW HISCOCK is Reader in English at University of Wales Bangor. His most recent publications include *The Uses of this World: Thinking Space in Shakespeare, Marlowe, Cary and Jonson* and the co-edited collection *Teaching Shakespeare and Early Modern Dramatists*. He is currently researching discourses of memory in early modern literature.

PETER J. KITSON is Professor of English at the University of Dundee and has published widely in the field of Romantic studies. He is the editor (with Tim Fulford) of *Romanticism and Colonialism* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); (with Debbie Lee), *Slavery Abolition and Emancipation* (8 vols.: Pickering and Chatto, 1999); and (with Tim Fulford) *Travels, Explorations and Empires* (8 vols.: Pickering and Chatto, 2001–2). Most recently he is the author (with Fulford and Lee) of *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge University

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-54928-8 - English Literature in Context
Edited by Paul Poplawski
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Press, 2004) and of *Romanticism, Race and Colonial Encounter, 1770–1830* (Palgrave USA, 2007). Professor Kitson is also Chair of the English Association (2005–8).

LEE MORRISSEY, Professor of English at Clemson University, is the author of *From the Temple to the Castle: An Architectural History of English Literature, 1660–1760*.

Preface

Don't want your drum and trumpet history – no fear . . . Don't want to know who was who's mistress, and why so-and-so devastated such a province; that's bound to be all lies and upsy-down anyhow. Not my affair. Nobody's affair now. Chaps who did it didn't clearly know . . . What I want to know is, in the middle ages Did they Do Anything for Housemaid's Knee? What did they put in their hot baths after jousting, and was the Black Prince – you know the Black Prince – was he enamelled or painted, or what? I think myself, black-leaded – very likely – like pipe-clay – but *did* they use blacking so early?

(H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay* (1909), p. 214)

As Edward Ponderevo's rambling comments from Wells's novel humorously illustrate, literature regularly asks questions about history and about the processes by which historical knowledge and understanding are shaped. What is somewhat less common is to see historical questions asked of literature – questions, for example, such as how and why particular types of literature should emerge from particular sets of historical circumstances. The academic study of literature usually takes for granted the idea that literature should function as a critical reflection on people and society in history, and on the ways in which people make historical sense of their lives, but it often glosses over the fact that literature (in both its material and symbolic aspects) is itself always actively part of the historical process and inextricably bound up with its surrounding historical contexts.

There has certainly been a growing trend among critics and scholars in recent years to place increased emphasis on the precise historical contextualisation of literature, and this trend has to some extent been reflected within degree programmes in English. However, it remains the case that undergraduate literature students often have only a fairly limited sense of relevant historical contexts, and this is partly because of the relative dearth of appropriate and accessible study materials within this field. By its very nature, relevant historical information for the whole sweep of English literature tends to be widely scattered in a number of different sources, and, in any case, historical information of itself does not *necessarily* illuminate literary study without further interpretation and contextualisation of its own – and students often need guidance with this. There are many helpful general histories of English literature, of course, and these can go some way towards providing such guidance, but they usually deal mainly with the 'internal' development of literature through the ages and only briefly, if at all, with the broader historical contexts

which have helped to shape that development. At the other end of the spectrum, there are also many useful books of specialised historical literary criticism which deal in close detail with specific periods, and these are certainly valuable resources for a focused historical understanding of literature. However, broad-based books dedicated to introducing students to the systematic study of literature in context, with historical and literary material relevant to all periods of literature, are very few and far between, and it is this particular gap in provision for students that the present book seeks to address.

English Literature in Context has been written and designed specifically for undergraduates to provide a detailed and accessible source of contextual reference material to support the study of English literature from the Middle Ages to the present. The book offers a wide-ranging introduction to the key historical and cultural contexts in which literature has been produced through the ages and it explores the complex interactions between literature and its contexts through focused discussions of particular literary trends, movements, texts and issues within each period. Each chapter of the book provides a comprehensive overview of one broad period of English literature, outlining important historical and literary events and examining the ways in which the diverse social, economic, political and cultural aspects of the period have informed its literary activity. To consolidate and enhance the reader's understanding of the period and its literature, a range of illustrations and 'break-out' textboxes also feature in each chapter.

As indicated above, the book has been written as an introductory text for undergraduates and, in particular, the authors have tried to maintain a clear, lively and accessible style of writing without any assumption of prior specialist knowledge on the part of the reader. At the same time, however, we hope that the book's detailed treatment of particular trends, texts and contexts within each period will make it suitable as a source of reference and stimulus for more advanced study too. It should perhaps be noted that the authors are all experienced teachers of literature with a clear grasp of the learning needs of students as they progress through degree programmes in English, and the book has been designed to cater flexibly for those needs.

Using this book

Each chapter of the book has a common structure of five main sections which move the focus gradually from the general to the particular as they each develop the dialogue between history and literature, contexts and texts. These five sections are as follows:

- i. Historical overview
- ii. Literary overview
- iii. Texts and issues
- iv. Readings
- v. Reference

In each chapter, the ‘Historical overview’ is preceded by a brief introductory paragraph and a chronology which covers the period in question, listing all major historical and cultural events alongside key literary developments. Among other things, the chronologies are intended to provide a quick reference guide to the literature and history of each period and to enable readers to make some critical observations of their own about the period, both before and after reading the main part of the related chapter. The first two sections then lay narrative foundations for each chapter by broadly surveying the historical and literary trends of the relevant period and by drawing attention to key points of conjunction between the two. The third section, ‘Texts and issues’, looks more closely at such points of conjunction and expands on the inter-relations between texts and contexts by considering some of the dominant issues or themes which can be seen to permeate the period, both in its literature and in its broader social and cultural contexts. The ‘Readings’ section then narrows the focus further by providing short contextualised readings of a small group of representative texts from the period. In their attention to textual and contextual detail, these critical readings are intended to draw together specific elements of the preceding historical, literary and thematic overviews while also serving as practical examples of how to discuss individual texts in close relation to their historical contexts. The final ‘Reference’ section in each chapter provides readers with structured and annotated suggestions for further reading and research, as well as full references for all works cited in the main text.

Within the common broad structure outlined above, there are different types of emphasis from chapter to chapter and many individual variations in how material is organised within each of the five main sections. These variations reflect the different characteristics of each particular period (including their differences in length) as well as the different interests of individual authors – for, while we have aimed at a certain degree of standardisation of style and structure across chapters, we have wanted to avoid a narrow uniformity and have done our best to retain a clear sense of our own individual voices, along with a lively feel for the distinctiveness of our periods.

It should be made clear that the focus of the book is on British literature primarily and that American literature and other literatures in English are not dealt with in any detail here. Having said that, variable historical circumstances over the centuries inevitably mean that authors have had to make their own critical judgements for their specific periods as to how narrowly or broadly to interpret the concept of ‘British literature’ and how far to trace literary developments and influences beyond Britain at any particular point. Similarly, although several chapters touch on critical questions about how we define and delimit literary periods in the first place, and also about how we decide on what constitutes a relevant historical context, we have not felt it appropriate in a practically oriented book like this to dwell too much on such matters. We certainly want readers to reflect on these things for

themselves, and we have tried in our discussions to retain a degree of flexibility and open-endedness to encourage this, but, equally, in organising our material we have each had to make some clear-cut decisions and selections – and in the main these have been guided by a pragmatic sense of the broad requirements of undergraduate studies in English and of the sorts of literary traditions, periods and texts that are widely taught and studied in universities and colleges around the world. We are aware, of course, that there is no neat consensus on such matters and that English degrees are as many and various as the institutions which offer them, but we hope our coverage is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the requirements of at least some parts of most degree programmes. It should be stressed, moreover, that much of the discussion in the book (especially in the ‘Texts and issues’ and ‘Readings’ sections) is only intended to be *illustrative* of a general approach to the study of literature in its historical contexts. We are by no means trying to prescribe particular programmes of study of our own, or indeed to narrow the possibilities of analysis and interpretation to the ones presented here. Our hope is simply that we can provide a firm foundation for historically contextualised literary study, along with sufficiently stimulating examples of such study to encourage readers to make their own critical explorations in this field according to their own circumstances and interests.

Sources for all quotations and references are cited in abbreviated form in the main text and full details of such citations can be found in the relevant ‘Reference’ section at the end of each chapter. For ease of orientation within that section, citations are always keyed to its various sub-sections (A, Bi, Cii, etc.) – for example:

Stephen Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain between the Wars*, pp. 1–2 [Bi]

Acknowledgements

The editor and contributors would like to thank current and former colleagues at Cambridge University Press for their invaluable support and encouragement throughout the whole period of this book's planning, development and production. In particular, we would like to thank Rachel de Wachter and Sarah Stanton for initiating the project; Pat Maurice and Juliet Davis-Berry for their help in planning and developing the book's overall design; Paul Stevens for his help with shepherding the illustrations; our wonderfully sharp-eyed copy-editor, Margaret Berrill, who made innumerable and invaluable improvements to the book in its later stages; Mike Leach for the index and Alison Powell for efficiently steering us through the final production process; Sarah Stanton again for overseeing the whole project from beginning to end; and last, but certainly not least, Rebecca Jones for her detailed editorial and organisational work throughout, and for her enthusiastic good cheer in helping us to bring the book to completion.

The editor would like to thank the other contributors for their professionalism and support throughout the many years it has taken to complete the book, and for their great perseverance and friendly good humour in the face of his seemingly endless requests for revisions, additions, amendments, corrections and 'just one more thing'! For *her* great perseverance and support, he would also like to express his love and gratitude to his wife, Angie. For his own chapter, he would like to thank the University of Leicester for granting a period of study leave during which some of the research and writing was carried out. He is grateful, too, to Cynthia Brown for helpful advice on the illustrations and to past and present students and colleagues for making *his* contexts for the study of literature so congenial.

Valerie Allen would like to thank Ares Axiotis and Michael Sargent for help with her chapter.

John Brannigan would like to thank colleagues and students at University College Dublin for their advice and support: in particular Professor Tony Roche, for a fruitful discussion on Larkin; Professor Andrew Carpenter for supporting a period of research leave which helped with the completion of the chapter; and the English graduates of 2005 for responding to classes on Sarah Kane and Pat Barker. His wife, Moyra, and two children, Conor and Owen, helped with useful distractions and replenishments.

Maria Frawley would like to thank her research assistants from the George Washington University Honors Program, Liza Blake and Taylor Asen, for their generous help both with researching material for her chapter and for reading portions of the chapter in draft.

Andrew Hiscock is grateful to the many colleagues with whom he has discussed his chapter and he wishes particularly to thank Dr Tony Claydon (University of Wales Bangor), Professor Heather Easterling (Gonzaga University) and Dr Ceri Sullivan (University of Wales Bangor) for their invaluable advice and comments.

Peter J. Kitson would like to thank his colleague at the University of Dundee, Dr David Robb, for help with the photography for his chapter and also Rebecca Jones for her advice and help with the illustrations.

Lee Morrissey gratefully acknowledges Clemson University's College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities Research Grants for supporting his contribution to this book.