The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats

This accessible and thought-provoking Companion is designed to help students experience the pleasures and challenges offered by one of the twentieth century’s greatest poets. A team of international contributors examines Yeats’s poetry, drama, and prose in their historical and national contexts. The essays explain and synthesize major aspects and themes of his life and work: his lifelong engagement with Ireland; his complicated relationship to the English literary tradition; his literary, social, and political criticism; and the evolution of his complex spiritual and religious sense. First-time readers of Yeats as well as more advanced scholars will welcome this comprehensive account of his career with its useful chronological outline and survey of the most important current trends in Yeats scholarship. Taken as a whole, this Companion is an essential introduction for students and teachers of Yeats.
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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Albright teaches English and comparative arts at Harvard University. He has edited Yeats’s poems and written a number of books on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and music, including Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism (1997) and Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts (2000).

Jonathan Allison is Associate Professor of English at the University of Kentucky and Director of the Yeats International Summer School. His publications include Yeats’s Political Identities (1996), Patrick Kavanagh: A Reference Guide (1996), and Poetry and Contemporary Culture (ed. with A. M. Roberts, 2002). He is currently completing a history of modern Irish poetry and editing selected letters of Louis MacNeice.

George Bornstein, C. A. Patrides Professor of Literature at the University of Michigan, is the author of several books of literary criticism, including Yeats and Shelley (1970) and, most recently, Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page (2001). He has edited the two volumes of Yeats’s early poetic manuscripts for the Cornell Yeats Series as well as the book Letters to the New Island for the Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats. He is currently finishing co-editing the Early Essays volume for the same series and working on a critical study entitled The Colors of Zion: Blacks, Jews, and Irish a Century Ago.

Elizabeth Butler Cullingford is Jane and Roland Blumberg Centennial Professor in English Literature and University Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Her publications include Ireland’s Others: Ethnicity and Gender in Irish Literature and Popular Culture (2001; American Conference for Irish Studies Robert Rhodes Prize), Gender and History in Yeats’s Love Poetry (1993; a Choice Outstanding Academic Book), and Yeats, Ireland and Fascism (1981). She is currently studying conflicting representations of nuns in Irish literature and popular culture, and working...
on a feminist cultural studies project that examines literary representations of the only child in the contexts provided by folklore, history, demography, and sociology.

Margaret Mills Harper is the author of *The Aristocracy of Art: Joyce and Woolf* (1990) and a forthcoming study of the occult and literary collaboration between Yeats and George Yeats. She is the co-editor of two volumes of Yeats’s “Vision” Papers (1992 and 2001) and Professor of English at Georgia State University.

Marjorie Howes is Associate Professor of English and Co-director of the Irish Studies program at Boston College. She is the author of *Yeats’s Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (1996), the co-editor of *Semicolonial Joyce* (2000), and a contributor to *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume 4: Women’s Writing and Traditions* (2002).

John Kelly is a Fellow of St. John’s College, Oxford. He is the author of a number of scholarly publications, and is the general editor for *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, of which three volumes have been published to date.

Declan Kiberd is Professor of Anglo-Irish Literature and Drama at University College Dublin. He is the author of numerous scholarly books, including *Synge and the Irish Language* (1979), *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (1995), and *Irish Classics* (2000). His work has won a number of awards, including the *Irish Times* Literature Prize for Non-Fiction, the Truman Capote Prize for Best Work of Literary Criticism in the English-Speaking World, and the Oscar Wilde Award for Literary Achievement.


Helen Vendler is the Porter University Professor at Harvard University. She is the author of books on Yeats, Stevens, Keats, Herbert, Shakespeare, and Heaney. Her new book, *Poets Thinking*, was published by Harvard University Press in 2004.

George Watson is Professor of Irish Literature in English at the University of Aberdeen. His publications include *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Yeats, Joyce, Synge and O’Casey* (1995, second edition; first edition 1979), *Drama* (1983), and *W. B. Yeats: Short Fiction* (1995). He has written many essays on Irish literature and cultural politics, and has lectured and taught extensively in Europe and the USA. He is on the editorial board of the *James Joyce Quarterly*, and was a founding member and later Vice Chairman of the British Association of Irish Studies (1990–5). He was Director of the W. B. Yeats International Summer School in Sligo, 1998–2000. He was Mellon Fellow of the National Humanities Center in North Carolina in 2000–1, and is currently working on a monograph on *The Ideology of Celticism in Scotland and Ireland 1760–1900*. 
CHRONOLOGY OF YEATS'S LIFE

1865 13 June William Butler Yeats born in Sandymount, Dublin.
1867 John B. Yeats gives up law and moves to London to study art.
1871 Jack Butler Yeats born.
1872 July Family moves to Sligo.
1874 October Family moves back to London.
1877 Enters Godolphin School.
1881 Family moves to Dublin; Yeats enters Erasmus Smith High School.
1883 Attends Metropolitan School of Art; meets George W. Russell (AE).
1885 First meeting of the Dublin Hermetic Society.
First poems and *Mosada* published in *Dublin University Review*.
Meets Katharine Tynan and John O'Leary.
1886 Meets William Morris.
First Home Rule bill defeated.
1887 Family moves to London.
Meets Madame Blavatsky.
1888 Meets G. B. Shaw and Lady Wilde.
*Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*
Joins Esoteric Section of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society.
1889 *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems*
30 January Meets Maud Gonne.
1890 Helps found Rhymer's Club.
7 March Joins the Order of the Golden Dawn.
Asks to resign from the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society.
1891 *John Sherman and Dhoya*
*Representative Irish Tales*
First marriage proposal to Maud Gonne.
1892 *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics*
*Irish Fairy Tales*
Chronology of Yeats’s Life

1893  The Celtic Twilight
       The Works of William Blake, co-edited with Edwin Ellis
       Gaelic League founded by Douglas Hyde.
       Second Home Rule bill defeated.
1894  March–April The Land of Heart’s Desire produced in London.
       Sees Villiers de l’Isle Adams’s Axèl in Paris.
1895  Edits A Book of Irish Verse.
       Poems
1896  Meets Lady Gregory.
       Affair with Olivia Shakespear.
       Rosa Alchemica
       Summer Visits Aran Islands.
1897  The Tables of the Law and The Adoration of the Magi
       The Secret Rose
       End of affair with Olivia Shakespear.
       July–November At Coole Park with Lady Gregory.
1899  The Wind Among the Reeds
       The Countess Kathleen produced at Antient Concert Rooms in
       Dublin; opening of Irish Literary Theatre.
1900  The Shadowy Waters
1901  October Diarmuid and Grania produced in Dublin.
1902  Meets James Joyce.
       2 April Cathleen ni Houlihan produced in Dublin.
       Where There is Nothing
       Dun Emer (later Cuala) Press established.
1903  21 February Maud Gonne marries Major John MacBride.
       Ideas of Good and Evil
       In the Seven Woods
       The Hour-Glass
       American lecture tour.
1904  14 January The Shadowy Waters produced in Dublin.
       26–9 June Where There Is Nothing produced in London.
       The King’s Threshold
       27 December On Baile’s Strand produced at opening of the Abbey
       Theatre.
1905  Maud Gonne granted a separation from John MacBride.
       November Abbey company on tour in England.
       Stories of Red Hanrahan
1906  Poems 1899–1905
       Edits The Poems of Spenser.
Chronology of Yeats’s Life

1907
January Riots over Synge’s The Playboy of the Western World.
John B. Yeats moves to USA.

21 November The Unicorn from the Stars produced at the Abbey.

1908
Collected Works in Verse and Prose, eight volumes.
Affair with Mabel Dickinson.

1909
24 March Synge dies.

1910
Granted Civil List pension (150 pounds per year).
The Green Helmet and Other Poems
The Abbey Theatre continues production after death of King Edward VII.

1911
September–October With Abbey Players on American tour.
Meets Ezra Pound.

Synge and the Ireland of His Time
Plays for an Irish Theatre

1912
Meets Rabindranath Tagore.
The Cutting of an Agate

1913
Poems Written in Discouragement
November–January At Stone Cottage in Sussex with Ezra Pound.

1914
January–April American lecture tour.
4 August United Kingdom declares war on Germany.
Responsibilities: Poems and a Play

1915
May Hugh Lane killed on the Lusitania.
December Refuses a knighthood.

1916
Reveries over Childhood and Youth
4 April At the Hawk’s Well performed.
24 April Easter Rising begins in Dublin.
3–12 May Leaders, including Major John MacBride, executed.
July–August Final marriage proposal to Maud Gonne, in Normandy.

1917
March Purchases Norman tower house outside Gort, Co. Galway;
names it Thoor Ballylee.
August Marriage proposal to Iscult Gonne rejected.
20 October Marriage to Bertha Georgie Hyde Lees.
George Yeats begins automatic writing that becomes basis for A Vision.
The Wild Swans at Coole

1918
Per Amica Silentia Lunae
Moves to Oxford.
Robert Gregory killed in action in Italy.
Chronology of Yeats’s Life

Thoor Ballylee restored.
11 November End of First World War.

1919 January Irish War of Independence begins.
Two Plays for Dancers
26 February Birth of Anne Yeats.
The Player Queen produced in London.

1920 January–May American lecture tour.

1921 Michael Robartes and the Dancer
22 August Birth of Michael Yeats.
Four Plays for Dancers
Four Years
6 December Anglo-Irish treaty signed in London.

1922 3 February John B. Yeats dies in New York.
Becomes Senator in the Irish Free State.
June Civil War begins.
The Trembling of the Veil
Later Poems
Plays in Prose and Verse
Joyce’s Ulysses published.

1923 May Civil War ends.
November Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.
Plays and Controversies

1924 Essays
The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems

1925 January–February Travels to Sicily and Rome.
The Bounty of Sweden
Early Poems and Stories
A Vision published privately.

1926 15 January A Vision delivered to subscribers.
Estrangement
Autobiographies

1927 October Blast
November Visits Algeciras, Seville, and Cannes.

1928 The Tower
Sophocles’ King Oedipus
The Death of Synge
Resigns from the Senate.
Winters in Rapallo.

1929 A Packet for Ezra Pound
The Winding Stair
December–early 1930 Suffers Malta fever in Rapallo.
1930 Meets Virginia Woolf and Walter de la Mare. 
17 November *The Words upon the Window Pane* produced at the Abbey.

1931 Receives honorary degree from Oxford.

1932 *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends* 
22 May Death of Lady Gregory.
Moves to Rathfarnam, Dublin.
*Words for Music Perhaps* 

1933 *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* 
*The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*

1934 *Letters to the New Island* 
*April* Undergoes Steinach operation in London. 
*Wheels and Butterflies* 
*The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* 
*The King of the Great Clock Tower*

1935 17 July Death of George Russell (AE). 
*A Full Moon in March* 
*Dramatis Personae* 

1936 *January* Illness in Majorca. 
Edits *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*.

*Essays, 1931–1936* 
29 December New constitution for Éire comes into effect.

1938 *The Herne’s Egg* 
*New Poems* 
10 August *Purgatory* produced at the Abbey Theatre. 
Death of Olivia Shakespear.

1939 28 January Dies and is buried at Roquebrune, France. 
*Last Poems and Two Plays* 
*On the Boiler*

1940 *Last Poems and Plays* 
1941 17 September Body reinterred in Drumcliffe churchyard, Co. Sligo.
### Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>CT</td>
<td>The Celtic Twilight. London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893.</td>
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


