The Victorian period has a strong tradition of poetry written by women. In this Companion, leading scholars deliver accessible and cutting-edge essays that situate Victorian women’s poetry in its relation to print culture, diverse identities, and aesthetic and cultural issues. The book is inclusive in method, demonstrating, for example, the benefits of both distant and close reading approaches and featuring major figures like Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti but also more than one hundred poets altogether. Thematically arranged, the chapters deliver studies on a comprehensive array of subjects that address women’s poetry in its manifold forms and investigate its global context. Chapters shed light on children’s poetry, domestic relations, sexualities, and stylistic artifice and conclude by looking at how women poets placed their published poems and how we can “place” Victorian women poets today.


A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
VICTORIAN WOMEN’S POETRY

EDITED BY
LINDA K. HUGHES
Texas Christian University
I dedicate this book to all the scholars who have led the way in studying Victorian women poets, from the late twentieth century into the present, and to all the students with whom I have had the joy of reading and discussing Victorian women's poetry.
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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This *Cambridge Companion* owes most to the gifted scholars whose chapters make it the exciting volume that it is. My hope from the beginning was to gather a collection of essays that exhibit the compelling interest posed by Victorian women poets, exemplify the best of scholarly methods and sensibilities, and point forward to future paths for study. This hope has been richly fulfilled by the volume authors who have distilled their groundbreaking research, presented in accessible form for a range of readers. I also thank contributors for their patience with my revision requests and many email reminders.

Warmest thanks go also to Linda Bree, who first suggested this project to me and supported it throughout its development. I likewise thank Bethany Thomas for providing a smooth transition from Linda Bree’s oversight to her own; her expertise and that of the Cambridge University Press staff have been invaluable during the production phase of this *Cambridge Companion*.

Individual contributors indicate their permissions to quote or reproduce images. I express special appreciation to those institutions and individuals that provided images and reproduction permissions pro bono: the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware; the Toronto Public Library; and Frances Brown’s biographer Patrick Bonar.

Among my TCU colleagues, I thank Merry Roberts for assistance with preparation of the typescript, as well as the outstanding Addie Levy Research Fellows whose efforts have assisted me in recent years: Heidi Hakimi-Hood, Claire Landes, Sofia Prado Huggins, and Kaylee Henderson. I also express my gratitude to the late Linda H. Peterson, who invited me to contribute the chapter on “Poetry” to her *Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women’s Writing* (2015). I have come to think of her volume and invitation as the “germ” of this present *Cambridge Companion* and welcome the opportunity to express what I and so many others, including several contributors to this book, owe to her.
This chronology features important “firsts” and major achievements in the careers of Victorian women poets. It highlights publications and events mentioned in the chapters that follow. Birth and death dates are given at the poet’s first entry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Elizabeth Barrett Barrett (later Browning, 1806–61) receives fifty privately printed copies of <em>The Battle of Marathon: A Poem</em> from her father on her fourteenth birthday. Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–38) places her first poem in the <em>Literary Gazette</em>, signed “L” (later “L.E.L.”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Elizabeth Barrett publishes “Stanzas Excited by Reflections on the Present State of Greece” in the <em>New Monthly Magazine</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Mary Howitt (1799–1888) co-publishes <em>The Forest Minstrel and Other Poems</em>, with her husband William.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>L.E.L. publishes <em>The Improvisatrice</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Felicia Hemans (1793–1835) publishes <em>The Forest Sanctuary</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>Caroline Sheridan Norton (1808–77) anonymously publishes “The Sorrows of Rosalie.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Hemans publishes <em>Records of Woman</em>, her most popular volume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>First Reform Act passes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Slavery Abolition Act passes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Howitt publishes <em>Sketches of Natural History</em> with her ballad “The Spider and the Fly.”</td>
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</table>
### Chronology of Publications and Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–65) and her husband William co-publish <em>Sketches among the Poor</em>, a poetry cycle, in <em>Blackwood’s Magazine</em>. Eliza Cook (1818–89) publishes <em>Lays of a Wild Harp</em>. Grace Aguilar (1816–47) publishes <em>The Magic Wreath</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>Norton legally separates from her husband and becomes a prominent campaigner for women’s rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Victoria (1819–1901) becomes queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Christian Isobel Johnstone initiates an annual anthology of working-class poetry in <em>Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Cook publishes <em>Melaia and Other Poems</em>. Irish-Australian poet Eliza Hamilton Dunlop (1796–1880) publishes “The Aboriginal Mother” in the <em>Australian</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Custody of Infants Act passes. <em>The Zenana and Other Poems</em> by L.E.L. is edited by Emma Roberts (1791–1840) and posthumously published after Landon’s mysterious death in Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>Copyright Act extends term to forty-two years from publication or seven after author’s death.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Elizabeth Barrett begins writing <em>Sonnets from the Portuguese</em> (published 1850) given to Robert Browning after their marriage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>The Brontë sisters publish <em>Poems</em>, using the pseudonyms Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë, 1816–55), Ellis Bell (Emily Brontë, 1818–48), and Acton Bell (Anne Brontë, 1820–49).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Howitt and her husband William launch <em>Howitt’s Journal</em> (1847–8).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Verses: Dedicated to Her Mother** by Christina Rossetti (1830–94) is privately printed by her grandfather.

Jane Francesca Wilde (1821–96) begins contributing nationalist poetry to the *Nation* using the pseudonym “Speranza.”

1848  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (EBB) publishes “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” in the American abolitionist annual *The Liberty Bell*.

1849  
Cook founds *Eliza Cook’s Journal*, writing most material herself but also soliciting poetry from working-class women writers.

1850  
Following Wordsworth’s death in June, the *Athenaeum* proposes EBB for Poet Laureate. Alfred Tennyson publishes *In Memoriam A. H. H.* in May and is appointed Poet Laureate in November. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood launches *The Germ*, with lyrics by Christina Rossetti as “Ellen Alleyn.” Agnes Strickland (1796–1874) publishes *Historic Scenes and Poetic Fancies*. Jean Ingelow (1820–97) publishes *A Rhyming Chronicle of Incidents and Feelings*.

1851  
EBB publishes *Casa Guidi Windows*. Adelaide Anne Procter (1825–64) begins publishing in Dickens’s *Household Words* (1840–59), sending him eight lyrics under the pseudonym Mary Berwick.

1856  
EBB publishes *Aurora Leigh* (date stamped 1857).

1857  
George Eliot anonymously reviews *Aurora Leigh* in the *Westminster Review*.

1858  
Procter publishes *Legends and Lyrics*, first series.

1859  
Isa Craig (1831–1903) wins the Burns Centenary Prize for the best poem submitted to the competition. Dinah Maria Mulock Craik (1826–87) publishes her first collection of poetry, *Poems*. Proprietors Bradbury and Evans found the illustrated *Once a Week*, which publishes numerous poems by women. *Macmillan’s Magazine*, in which many of Christina Rossetti’s and other women’s poems first appears.
**Chronology of Publications and Events**

1860  
*Cornhill Magazine*, edited by W. M. Thackeray, is launched; the July issue publishes EBB’s “A Musical Instrument,” illustrated by Frederic Leighton.

1862  
EBB’s *Last Poems* is posthumously published. Christina Rossetti publishes *Goblin Market* with illustrations and cover design by D. G. Rossetti (1828–82).

1863  
Janet Hamilton (1795–1873) publishes *Poems and Essays*.

1864  
First Contagious Diseases Act passes, allowing arrest and compulsory medical examination of prostitutes. The acts are a catalyst for feminist activism led by Josephine Butler (1828–1906) and helped lay the groundwork for the suffragist movement. Cook publishes her final book of poetry *New Echoes, and Other Poems*.

1866  
Christina Rossetti publishes *The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems*. Augusta Webster (1837–94) publishes *Dramatic Studies*.

1867  

1868  

1870  
Married Women’s Property Act passes, allowing women to own the money they earn and to inherit property. Webster publishes *Portraits*.

1872  
Christina Rossetti publishes *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme-Book*.

1875  
**Chronology of Publications and Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Edith Nesbit (1858–1924) publishes her poem “A Year Ago” in <em>Good Words</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>A. Mary F. Robinson (1857–1944), in preference to a party offered by her parents to mark her twenty-first birthday, chooses to have her first volume of poems published, <em>A Handful of Honeysuckle</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Webster is elected to the London School Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Christina Rossetti’s “Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets” appears in <em>A Pageant and Other Poems</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amy Levy (1861–89) publishes <em>Xantippe and Other Verse</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constance Naden (1858–89) publishes <em>Songs and Sonnets of Springtime</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Married Women’s Property Act grants women’s right to own and control property after marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan</em> by Toru Dutt (1856–73) is published in London by John Lane, the Bodley Head Press.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Third Reform Act passes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May Kendall (1861–1943) publishes <em>Dreams to Sell</em>.</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>Blind publishes <em>The Ascent of Man</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Michael Field” (Katherine Bradley, 1846–1914, and Edith Cooper, 1862–1913) publishes <em>Long Ago</em>, a response to Sappho.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levy commits suicide; <em>A London Plane-Tree</em>, containing her last poems, is posthumously published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Michael Field publishes <em>Sight and Song</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Coventry Patmore “nominates” Alice Meynell for the poet laureateship in the <em>Saturday Review</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Pauline Johnson (1861–1913) publishes <em>The White Wampum</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Christina Rossetti’s <em>New Poems</em>, edited by W. M. Rossetti, is posthumously published.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1897
Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee.
National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies is founded.

1901
Queen Victoria dies on January 22.

Note: Throughout this volume, Elizabeth Barrett Browning will be referred to as EBB after a first mention of her name in full. This accords with the poet’s own practice, since she signed as “EBB” both before and after her marriage. This Companion also adopts L.E.L., the poet’s elected publishing signature, after an initial reference to Letitia (Elizabeth) Landon.