

A HISTORY OF 1930S BRITISH LITERATURE

This *History* offers a new and comprehensive picture of 1930s British literature. The 1930s have often been cast as a literary-historical anomaly, either as a 'low, dishonest decade', a doomed experiment in combining art and politics, or a 'late modernist' afterthought to the intense period of artistic experimentation in the 1920s. By contrast, the contributors to this volume explore the contours of a 'long 1930s' by repositioning the decade and its characteristic concerns at the heart of twentieth-century literary history. This book expands the range of writers covered, moving beyond a narrow focus on towering canonical figures to draw in a more diverse cast of characters, in terms of race, gender, class and forms of artistic expression. The book's four sections emphasise the decade's characteristic geographical and sexual identities; the new media landscapes and institutional settings its writers operated in; questions of commitment and autonomy; and British writing's international entanglements.

BENJAMIN KOHLMANN teaches English literature at the University of Freiburg. He is the author of *Committed Styles: Modernism, Politics, and Left-Wing Literature in the 1930s* (2014) and *Speculative States: Literature and Reform in Britain, 1870–1920* (forthcoming 2021). His articles have been published in *PMLA, ELH, Novel* and other journals, and he has co-edited several essay collections and special issues, including new work on literature and anti-communism (with Matthew Taunton), modernist utopianism and the communist writer Edward Upward.

MATTHEW TAUNTON is Senior Lecturer in Literature at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Red Britain: the Russian Revolution in Mid-Century Culture* (2019) and *Fictions of the City: Class, Culture and Mass Housing in London and Paris* (2009). He has also written various articles and book chapters on modern literature and politics, and on cities. With Benjamin Kohlmann, he coedited a 2015 special issue of *Literature and History* on the subject of literary anti-communism. He is deputy editor of *Critical Quarterly*.





A HISTORY OF 1930S BRITISH LITERATURE

Edited by
BENJAMIN KOHLMANN

University of Freiburg

and

MATTHEW TAUNTON

University of East Anglia





CAMBRIDGEUNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8B5, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108474535 DOI: 10.1017/9781108565592

© Cambridge University Press 2019

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 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Kohlmann, Benjamin, 1981— editor. | Taunton, Matthew, editor.

TITLE: A history of 1930s British literature / edited by Benjamin Kohlmann, Matthew Taunton.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2018041963 | ISBN 9781108474535 (hardback)
SUBJECTS: LCSH: English literature – 20th century – History and criticism. | Literature and society – Great Britain – History – 20th century.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PR478.557 H57 2019 | DDC 820.9/00912–dc23

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018041963

ISBN 978-1-108-47453-5 Hardback

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



Contents

Li.	ist of Figures	<i>page</i> viii
N	otes on Contributors	ix
	Introduction: the Long 1930s Benjamin Kohlmann and Matthew Taunton	Ι
]	PART I MAPPING A NEW DECADE: GEOGRAPHIES AND IDENTITIES	15
Ι	Beyond Englishness: the Regional and Rural Novel in the 1930 <i>Kristin Bluemel</i>	os 17
2	Uncanny Cities: Urban Geographies and Metropolitan Life in the 1930s <i>Emma Zimmerman</i>	31
3	The Making of the Working Class: Proletarian Writing in the 1930s Nick Hubble	44
4	Professional Women Writers Kristin Ewins	58
5	Queer Communist Formations: Coterie, Counterpublic, Cell Glyn Salton-Cox	72
P	PART II MEDIA HISTORIES AND THE INSTITUTIONS OF LITERATURE	87
6	Circulating Literature: Libraries, Bookshops and Book Clubs Andrew Thacker	89



V1	Contents	
7	Literature and Education in the Long 1930s Matthew Taunton	105
8	International PEN: Writers, Free Expression, Organisations <i>Rachel Potter</i>	120
9	The New Reading Public: Modernism, Popular Literature and the Paperbacks Vike Martina Plock	134
Ю	Debatable Ground: Journalism, Pamphlets and Social Critique <i>Peter Marks</i>	147
II	'Hypocrite Auditeur, Mon Semblable, Mon Frère': Literature and the Borders of the Radio Public Ian Whittington	163
12	Talking Films Laura Marcus	177
13	Telemediations James Purdon	194
PAI	RT III COMMITMENT AND AUTONOMY	209
14	Ambiguity Run Riot: Film-Mindedness in the 1930s Avant-Garde Rod Mengham	211
15	'A Vein of Insularity': British Music in the Long 1930s <i>Louise Wiggins</i>	227
16	Representing Fascism in 1930s Literature Tyrus Miller	241
17	The Documentary Impulse Leo Mellor	257
18	Religion, Modernism and Anglo-Agnostics: (Un)belief and Fiction in the 1930s Suzanne Hobson	271
19	The Colonial State and Transnational Welfare during the 1930s Depression Janice Ho	285



MOTO IIIIOIIII GEIOII			

	Contents	V11
20	Science Fiction, Left Science and the Politics of Planning <i>Boris Jardine</i>	299
PA	RT IV THE GLOBAL 1930S: CONFLICT AND CHANGE	315
21	Anglo-Soviet Literary Relations in the Long 1930s John Connor	317
22	A Declining Empire in a Rising Power: British Writers in America Greg Barnhisel	331
23	Late Modernism and the Spanish Civil War <i>Patricia Rae</i>	345
24	Total War Marina MacKay	362
25	Colonial Intellectuals and the Aesthetic Cold War Peter Kalliney	376
26	Imperial Fictions: Writing the End of Empire Laura Winkiel	391
Bib	liography	405
Ind	lex	436



Figures

6.1	Flyer for Lahr's Bookshop in Red Lion Street, Holborn	page 97
13.1	The Mihály-Traub television system (<i>Television and Short-Wave World</i> , Nov. 1936)	203
19.1	Still from <i>God's Chillun</i> (1938) by the GPO Film Unit	294
19.2	Still from <i>God's Chillun</i> (1938) by the GPO Film Unit	296
20.1	The cover of Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge, <i>First Year's Work, 1937–38</i> (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1938).	308
20.2	Diagram 'Organisation of Science', from J. D. Bernal, The Social Function of Science (1938)	310
23.1	'What Are You Doing?', anti-fascist Spanish Civil War poster, (1937)	353
23.2	First World War enlistment poster, (1915)	355

viii



Notes on Contributors

GREG BARNHISEL is Professor of English at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *James Laughlin, New Directions, and the Remaking of Ezra Pound* (2005) and *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (2015), and co-editor of the journal *Book History*. He is currently writing a biography of the Yale professor/spy Norman Holmes Pearson.

Endowed Chair in the Humanities at Monmouth University in New Jersey. She is author or editor of many studies on interwar, wartime or modernist literature, including *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain* (2009) and *Rural Modernity in Britain: a Critical Intervention* (2018), co-edited with Michael McCluskey. Her work in progress is tentatively titled, 'Picturing Nostalgia: Rural Modernity and the 1930s Wood Engraving Revival'.

JOHN CONNOR is Lecturer in Literature and Politics at King's College, London, and taught previously at Colgate University in Upstate New York. He is finishing a monograph on the mid-century historical novel and researching a second project on the Soviet-world reception of British communist, proletarian and colonial writers. Related work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Journal of Modern Literature*, Key Words, Modernist Cultures and the Review of English Studies, and he has chapters in the Cambridge Companion to British Literature.

KRISTIN EWINS is Associate Professor in English at Örebro University, Sweden. She is one of the editors of the *Journal of European Periodical Studies* and the current Chair of the Raymond Williams Society.

JANICE HO is Associate Professor of English at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her monograph *Nation and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century*



Notes on Contributors

X

British Novel was published by Cambridge University Press in 2015, and various essays on modernist and contemporary literature have appeared in forums such as Novel, Modern Fiction Studies, Literature Compass and Journal of Modern Literature. She is currently at work on a project tracing transnational genealogies of the welfare state and its links with postwar discourses of global development and aid.

SUZANNE HOBSON is Senior Lecturer in Twentieth-Century Literature in the English Department at Queen Mary University of London. She is the author of *Angels of Modernism: Religion, Culture, Aesthetics, 1910–60* (2011) and co-editor with Rachel Potter of *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy* (2010). She has published widely on topics relating to modernism and religion and is currently working on a project titled *Unbelief: Modernist Cultures of Doubt*. She is on the executive committee of the British Association for Modernist Studies and was Chair of the association in 2017–18.

NICK HUBBLE is Reader in English at Brunel University London and author of the monographs Mass-Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, History, Theory (2006/2010) and The Proletarian Answer to the Modernist Question (2017). He is currently working on a new monograph entitled The Science Fiction Futures of Modernism: From Virginia Woolf to Feminist Speculative Fiction of the 21st Century.

BORIS JARDINE is a post-doctoral research fellow in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science and Whipple Museum of the History of Science, University of Cambridge. His research deals with the material culture of science (scientific instrumentation, collections and buildings) and with interwar developments in the historiography of science, especially in relation to left-wing politics, and he is currently preparing a monograph with the working title 'Experiments in Utopia: Science and Modernism on the Eve of World War II'. His former posts include a curatorship at the Science Museum, London, and the Munby Fellowship in Bibliography, Cambridge University Library.

PETER KALLINEY is the William and Nina Tuggle Professor of English at the University of Kentucky. He is author of three books, most recent of which is *Modernism in a Global Context* (2016). He is currently working on the impact of the Cold War on the literatures of decolonisation.

BENJAMIN KOHLMANN teaches English literature at the University of Freiburg. He is the author of *Speculative States: Literature and Reform in*



Notes on Contributors

хi

Britain, 1870–1920 (2021) and Committed Styles: Modernism, Politics, and Left-Wing Literature (2014). His articles have been published in PMLA, ELH, Novel and other journals, and he has co-edited several essay collections and special issues, including new work on literature and anti-communism, modernist utopianism and the communist writer Edward Upward.

- MARINA MACKAY is Associate Professor of English and Tutorial Fellow of St Peter's College, University of Oxford. She has published widely on mid-century British literature and culture, and her most recent book is *Ian Watt: the Novel and the Wartime Critic* (2018).
- LAURA MARCUS is Goldsmiths' Professor of English at the University of Oxford, and a Professorial Fellow of New College. Her book publications include Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice (1994), Virginia Woolf: Writers and Their Work (1997/2004), The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period (2007; awarded the 2008 James Russell Lowell Prize of the Modern Language Association), Dreams of Modernity: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Cinema (2015) and, as co-editor, The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature (Cambridge, 2004).
- PETER MARKS is Professor of English at the University of Sydney. His books include George Orwell the Essayist: Literature, Politics and the Periodical Culture (2011), Imagining Surveillance: Eutopian and Dystopian Literature and Film (2015) and Literature of the 1990s: Endings and Beginnings (2018).
- LEO MELLOR is the Roma Gill Fellow in English at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge. His first book was *Reading the Ruins: Bombsites, Modernism and British Culture* (2011) and in 2015 he co-edited a special issue of *Critical Quarterly* on 'the long 1930s'. He is currently writing about night trains in the European imagination.
- TYRUS MILLER is Dean of the School of Humanities and Professor of English and Art History at the University of California, Irvine. He is author of Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars (1999), Singular Examples: Artistic Politics and the Neo-Avant-Garde (2009), Time Images: Alternative Temporalities in Twentieth-Century Theory, Literature, and Art (2009) and Modernism and the Frankfurt School (2014), editor of Given World and Time: Temporalities in Context (2008) and The Cambridge Companion to



xii

Notes on Contributors

Wyndham Lewis (2015), and editor and translator of György Lukács, The Culture of People's Democracy: Hungarian Essays on Literature, Art, and Democratic Transition, 1945–1948 (2013).

ROD MENGHAM is Reader in Modern English Literature at Cambridge University. He has published monographs on Charles Dickens, Emily Brontë and Henry Green, co-written (with Sophie Gilmartin) *Thomas Hardy's Shorter Fiction* (2007), edited essay collections on contemporary fiction, violence and avant-garde art, fiction of the 1940s, Australian poetry, and co-edited the anthologies *Altered State: the New Polish Poetry* (2003) and *Vanishing Points: New Modernist Poems* (2005). He is author of several poetry publications, including *Chance of a Storm* (2015) and *Grimspound* and *Inhabiting Art* (2018), and of translations, including *Speedometry* (poems by Andrzej Sosnowski) (2014).

VIKE MARTINA PLOCK is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Exeter. She is the author of Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity (2010) and Modernism, Fashion and Interwar Women Writers (2017). She is associate editor of the James Joyce Quarterly and editor of the interdisciplinary journal Literature and History. Her research interests include a number of different topics relating to modernism and the interwar period and recently she has turned her attention to book and media history more generally. She is currently working on a cultural history of the BBC German Service during the Second World War.

RACHEL POTTER is Professor of Modern Literature at the University of East Anglia. She writes on modernist literature and early twentieth-century culture, literature and censorship, and free expression and writers' organisations. Her books include Obscene Modernism: Literary Censorship and Experiment, 1900–1940 (2013), The Edinburgh Introduction to Modernism (2012) and Modernism and Democracy: Literary Culture, 1900–1930 (2006). She is currently completing The World Literary Republic: PEN, Literature and Free Expression, and is principal investigator on a collaborative four-year project on international writers' organisations, literature and free expression from 1921 to the present day.

JAMES PURDON is Lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews. He is author of *Modernist Informatics: Literature, Information, and the State* (2016) and editor of *British Literature in Transition, 1900–1920: A New Age?*, and is currently working on a book about literature and other media in Cold War Britain.



Notes on Contributors

xiii

PATRICIA RAE is Professor in the Department of English at Queen's University at Kingston, Canada. She is the editor of *Modernism and Mourning* (2007) and author of *The Practical Muse* (1997) and essays in books and journals including *ELH*, Comparative Literature, Twentieth Century Literature, Prose Studies and The Wallace Stevens Journal. Further essays on Spanish Civil War writing have appeared in Journal of War and Culture Studies, Queen's Quarterly, The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy and Anindya Raychaudhuri's The Spanish Civil War: History, Memory, Representation. She is currently completing Modernist Orwell, a monograph on George Orwell and literary modernism.

GLYN SALTON-COX is Assistant Professor of English and Affiliate of Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His monograph *Queer Communism and the Ministry of Love: Sexual Revolution in British Writing of the 1930s* was published in 2018 and he is guest editor, with Leo Mellor, of a special edition of *Critical Quarterly* on 'The Long 1930s'. His work has appeared in journals including *Modern Language Quarterly, Comparative Literature, Keywords: a Journal of Cultural Materialism* and *Twentieth-Century Communism.* He is currently working on a monograph on the cultural history of the lumpenproletariat.

MATTHEW TAUNTON is Senior Lecturer in Literature at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Red Britain: The Russian Revolution in Mid-Century Culture* (2019) and *Fictions of the City: Class, Culture and Mass Housing in London and Paris* (2009). He has also written various articles and book chapters on modern literature and politics, and on cities. With Benjamin Kohlmann, he co-edited a 2015 special issue of *Literature and History* on the subject of literary anti-communism and he is deputy editor of *Critical Quarterly*.

ANDREW THACKER is Professor of Twentieth-Century Literature at Nottingham Trent University. He is the author or editor of several books, including the three volumes of *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (2009–13), *Geographies of Modernism* (2005), *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (2003) and *Modernism, Space and the City* (2019). He was a founder member and Chair of the British Association for Modernist Studies and an editor of *Literature and History*. He is currently working on two projects: a cultural history of the modern bookshop and a new series of volumes on global modernist magazines.



xiv

Notes on Contributors

IAN WHITTINGTON is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Mississippi, where he researches and teaches twentieth-century British and Anglophone culture, with a particular focus on mid-century media culture in Britain. He is the author of *Writing the Radio War: Literature, Politics, and the BBC, 1939–1945* (2018) and has published essays on Louis MacNeice, Rose Macaulay, Zoë Wicomb and the intersections of radio and literature more generally.

LOUISE WIGGINS completed her PhD in Musicology at the University of Bristol (2018). Her publications to date include "Story of a Friendship": Alan Bush, Grigorii Shneerson and Cultural Diplomacy before and during the Cold War', *Russian Journal of Communication* (2016) and 'Friendship of the Musicians: Anglo-Soviet Musical Exchanges, 1938–1948' (co-authored with Pauline Fairclough), in *Music, Art and Diplomacy: East–West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War* (2016). Louise gained her undergraduate degree from the Royal Academy of Music, and performs professionally as a harpist.

LAURA WINKIEL is Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She is author of *Modernism: the Basics* (2017) and *Modernism, Race and Manifestos* (2008) and co-editor with Laura Doyle of *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (2005). She is presently at work on a book on queer ecologies of the sea in modernist and postcolonial Anglophone literature.

EMMA ZIMMERMAN is a Teaching Fellow in Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Literature at the University of Birmingham. She has published articles on literary modernism, urban space and narrative form in *Journal of Modern Literature* and *Literary Geographies*. She is currently completing a monograph on the concept of 'architexture', examining the connections between architectural space and place and modernist literary forms.