

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY
AMERICAN POETRY

This *Companion* shows that American poetry of the twenty-first-century, while having important continuities with the poetry of the previous century, takes place in new modes and contexts that require new critical paradigms. Offering a comprehensive introduction to studying the poetry of the new century, this collection highlights the new, multiple centers of gravity that characterize American poetry today. Chapters on African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Indigenous poetics respond to the centrality of issues of race and indigeneity in contemporary American discourse. Other chapters explore poetry and feminism, poetry and disability, and queer poetics. The environment, capitalism, and war emerge as poetic preoccupations, alongside a range of styles from the spoken word to the avant-garde, and an examination of poetry's place in the creative writing era.

Timothy Yu is the author of *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965*, the editor of *Nests and Strangers: On Asian American Women Poets*, and the author of a poetry collection, *100 Chinese Silences*. He is Martha Meier Renk-Bascom Professor of Poetry and Professor of English and Asian American Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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Edited by Timothy Yu
Frontmatter
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EDITED BY
TIMOTHY YU
University of Wisconsin–Madison



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CONTENTS

	<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	page vii
	<i>Chronology compiled by</i>	xi
	TIMOTHY YU AND JACQULYN TEOH	
	Introduction	I
	TIMOTHY YU	
1	New Black Aesthetics: Post–Civil Rights African American Poetry	17
	KEITH D. LEONARD	
2	Traditions of Innovation in Asian American Poetry	31
	MICHAEL LEONG	
3	Locations of Contemporary Latina/o Poetry	48
	DAVID A. COLÓN	
4	Sovereign Poetics and Possibilities in Indigenous Poetry	61
	MISHUANA GOEMAN	
5	Changing Topographies, New Feminisms, and Women Poets	71
	ANN VICKERY	
6	The Nearly Baroque in Contemporary Poetry	90
	STEPHANIE BURT	
7	Disability Aesthetics and Poetic Practice	106
	DECLAN GOULD	
8	Queer Poetry and Bioethics	120
	SARAH DOWLING	
		v

Contents

9	Trauma and the Avant-Garde SUEYEUN JULIETTE LEE	132
10	Blockade Chants and Cloud-Nets: Terminal Poetics of the Anthropocene JONATHAN SKINNER	147
11	Give Me Poems and Give Me Death: On the End of Slam(?) JAVON JOHNSON AND ANTHONY BLACKSHER	169
12	Anti-capitalist Poetry CHRISTOPHER NEALON	180
13	Of Poetry and Permanent War in the Twenty-First-Century STEPHEN VOYCE	191
14	Poetry in the Program Era KIMBERLY QUIOGUE ANDREWS	206
15	The Future of Poetry Studies DOROTHY WANG	220
	<i>Further Reading compiled by</i> TIMOTHY YU AND CAROLINE HENSLEY	234
	<i>Index</i>	238

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SARAH DOWLING is an assistant professor in the Centre for Comparative Literature and Victoria College at the University of Toronto. Dowling is the author of *Translingual Poetics: Writing Personhood under Settler Colonialism* (University of Iowa Press, 2018) and three poetry collections: *Entering Sappho* (Coach House, 2020), *DOWN* (Coach House, 2014), and *Security Posture* (Snare, 2009).

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SUEYEUN JULIETTE LEE is the author of the poetry books *Solar Maximum* (Futurepoem, 2013), *No Comet, That Serpent in the Sky Means Noise* (Kore Press, 2017), and *Aerial Concave Without Cloud* (Nightboat Books, 2021). A former Pew Fellow in the Arts for Literature, she has held residencies in performance, video art, and dance in Iceland, Norway, and the United States. Her installation, video, and collaborative performance work *Peace Light* (2018) was commissioned by the Asian Arts Initiative in celebration of their twenty-fifth anniversary. She has served as an editorial consultant for the Asian American Writers’ Workshop and the Smithsonian Institute’s Asian Pacific American Center’s inaugural Asian American literary festival.

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MICHAEL LEONG'S recent publications include the poetry collection *Words on Edge* (Black Square Editions, 2018) and the critical monograph *Contested Records: The Turn to Documents in Contemporary North American Poetry* (University of Iowa Press, 2020). He teaches at California Institute of the Arts.

CHRISTOPHER NEALON teaches English at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of two books of literary criticism, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall* (Duke University Press, 2001) and *The Matter of Capital: Poetry and Crisis in the American Century* (Harvard University Press, 2011), and four books of poetry: *The Joyous Age* (Black Square Editions, 2004), *Plummet* (Edge Books, 2009), *Heteronomy* (Edge Books, 2014), and *The Shore* (Wave Books, 2020). He lives in Washington, DC.

JONATHAN SKINNER is Reader in English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. He founded the journal *ecopoetics* and is the author of numerous essays in ecocriticism, sound studies, geopoetics, and postwar and contemporary American poetry and poetics. His poetry collections include *Earth Shadow* (Ahsakta, 2020), *Birds of Tiff* (BlazeVOX, 2011), and *Political Cactus Poems* (Palm Press, 2005).

JACQULYN TEOH is a PhD candidate in the Department of English at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her work has appeared in *Modern Fiction Studies* and *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

ANN VICKERY is Associate Professor of Writing and Literature at Deakin University. She is the author of *Stressing the Modern: Cultural Politics in Australian Women's Poetry* (Salt Publishing, 2007) and *Leaving Lines of Gender: A Feminist Genealogy of Language Writing* (Wesleyan University Press, 2000). She is coauthor of *The Intimate Archive: Journeys through Private Papers* (National Library of Australia, 2009) and coeditor of *Poetry and the Trace* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2013) and *Manifesting Australian Literary Feminisms: Nexus and Faultlines* (Australian Literary Studies, 2009). She is also the author of two poetry collections, *Devious Intimacy* (Hunter Publishers, 2015) and *The Complete Pocketbook of Swoon* (Vagabond Press, 2014).

STEPHEN VOYCE is Associate Professor of English at the University of Iowa, where he also holds appointments in the Digital Studio and the Center for the Book. He is the author of *Poetic Community: Avant-Garde Activism and Cold War Culture* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), the editor of bpNichol's *a book of variations*:

Notes on Contributors

love – zygal – art facts (Coach House Books, 2013), and the director of the Fluxus Digital Collection.

DOROTHY WANG is Professor of American Studies at Williams College. She is the author of *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford University Press, 2013); the first national conference on race and creative writing was named after the monograph. She also conceived of and cofounded the Race and Poetry and Poetics in the UK (RAPAPUK) research collective, based in the UK.

TIMOTHY YU is Professor of English and Asian American studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is the author of *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965* (Stanford University Press, 2009) and the editor of *Nests and Strangers: On Asian American Women Poets* (Kelsey Street Press, 2015). He is also the author of a poetry collection, *100 Chinese Silences* (Les Figues Press, 2016).

CHRONOLOGY

TIMOTHY YU AND JACQULYN TEOH

2000–2019

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
2000	Anthropocene popularized as a geological concept by atmospheric chemist Paul. J. Crutzen George W. Bush elected US president Pulitzer Prize: C. K. Williams, <i>Repair</i> National Book Award: Lucille Clifton, <i>Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems, 1988–2000</i> National Book Critics Circle Award: Judy Jordan, <i>Carolina Ghost Woods</i> Stanley Kunitz appointed Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to Library of Congress	
2001	George W. Bush sworn in as 43rd US president September 11 attacks on the United States; the United States invades Afghanistan Pulitzer Prize: Stephen Dunn, <i>Different Hours</i>	Alice Fulton, <i>Felt</i> Allen Grossman, <i>How to Do Things with Tears</i> Nada Gordon and Gary Sullivan, <i>Swoon</i> Rod Smith, <i>The Good House</i>

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	National Book Award: Alan Dugan, <i>Poems Seven: New and Complete Poetry</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Albert Goldbarth, <i>Saving Lives</i>	
	Billy Collins appointed Poet Laureate	
2002	Lilly Pharmaceuticals heiress Ruth Lilly bequeaths \$100 million to <i>Poetry: A Magazine of Verse</i> Russell Simmons Presents Def <i>Poetry Jam</i> begins airing on HBO	Rachel Blau DuPlessis, <i>Drafts 1–38</i> Myung Mi Kim, <i>Commons</i> Major Jackson, <i>Leaving Saturn</i>
	Ron Silliman launches “Silliman’s Blog”	Robyn Schiff, <i>Worth</i> Harryette Mullen, <i>Sleeping with the Dictionary</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Carl Dennis, <i>Practical Gods</i>	Lyn Hejinian, <i>The Language of Inquiry</i>
	National Book Award: Ruth Stone, <i>In the Next Galaxy</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: B. H. Fairchild, <i>Early Occult Memory Systems of the Lower Midwest</i>	
2003	Establishment of the Poetry Foundation	Kenneth Goldsmith, <i>Day</i> K. Silem Mohammad, <i>Deer Head Nation</i>
	US war in Iraq begins	
	Pulitzer Prize: Paul Muldoon, <i>Moy Sand and Gravel</i>	C. D. Wright, <i>One Big Self Poets Against the War</i> , ed.
	National Book Award: C. K. Williams, <i>The Singing</i>	Sam Hamill Mei-meï Berssenbrugge,
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Susan Stewart, <i>Columbarium</i>	<i>Nest</i>
	Louise Glück appointed Poet Laureate	
2004	Myspace and Facebook founded	Jen Bervin, <i>Nets</i> D. A. Powell, <i>Cocktails</i> Christine Pugh, <i>Rotary</i>

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	Inaugural Kundiman Workshop Retreat held at the University of Virginia	Claudia Rankine, <i>Don't Let Me Be Lonely</i> Srikanth Reddy, <i>Facts for Visitors</i>
	MacArthur Fellowship: C. D. Wright	Matthew Rohrer, <i>A Green Light</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Franz Wright, <i>Walking to Martha's Vineyard</i>	Cole Swensen, <i>Goest</i>
	National Book Award: Jean Valentine, <i>Door in the Mountain: New and Collected Poems, 1965– 2003</i>	
2005	Ted Kooser appointed Poet Laureate YouTube founded Hurricane Katrina devastates areas of Louisiana and Florida, killing more than 1,800 people Kyoto Protocol on climate change goes into effect	Elizabeth Alexander, <i>American Sublime</i> Jennifer Moxley, <i>Often, Capital</i> Juliana Spahr, <i>This Connection of Everyone with Lungs</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Ted Kooser, <i>Delights and Shadows</i>	Kay Ryan, <i>The Niagara River</i>
	National Book Award: W. S. Merwin, <i>Migration: New and Selected Poems</i>	Anne Winters, <i>The Displaced of Capital</i>
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Jack Gilbert, <i>Refusing Heaven</i>	John Yau, <i>Ing Grish</i> Richard Siken, <i>Crush</i>
2006	Twitter founded Tarana Burke creates the “Me Too” campaign for survivors of sexual assault	Joshua Clover, <i>The Totality for Kids</i> Noah Eli Gordon, <i>Inbox</i> Terrance Hayes, <i>Wind in a Box</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Claudia Emerson, <i>Late Wife</i>	Alice Notley, <i>Grave Light: New and Selected Poems, 1970–2005</i>
	National Book Award: Nathaniel Mackey, <i>Splay Anthem</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Troy Jollimore, <i>Tom Thomson in Purgatory</i>	

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	Donald Hall appointed Poet Laureate	
2007	First iPhone released	Rae Armantrout, <i>Next Life</i>
	Mass shooting at Virginia Tech kills thirty-two people	Matthea Harvey, <i>Modern Life</i>
	MacArthur Fellowship: Peter Cole	Susan Howe, <i>Souls of the Labadie Tract</i>
	National Book Award: Robert Hass, <i>Time and Materials</i>	Rod Smith, <i>Deed</i>
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Mary Jo Bang, <i>Elegy</i>	Aracelis Girmay, <i>Teeth</i>
	Charles Simic appointed Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to Library of Congress	
2008	Global financial crisis peaks; Bush administration sanctions Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008	Anne Boyer, <i>The Romance of Happy Workers</i> Kevin Davies, <i>The Golden Age of Paraphernalia</i>
	Election of Barack Obama as US president	Rodrigo Toscano, <i>Collapsible Poetics Theater</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Philip Schultz, <i>Failure</i>	Craig Santos Perez, <i>from unincorporated territory [hacha]</i>
	National Book Award: Mark Doty, <i>Fire to Fire: New and Collected Poems</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Juan Felipe Herrera, <i>Half the World in Light</i> ; August Kleinzahler, <i>Sleeping If Off in Rapid City</i>	Petra Kuppens and Neil Marcus, <i>Cripple Poetics: A Love Story</i>
	Kay Ryan appointed Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to Library of Congress	
2009	Barack Obama sworn in as 44th US president	Rita Dove, <i>Sonata Mulattica</i> Frank Bidart, <i>Watching the Spring Festival</i>
	CantoMundo founded	
	Obama signs the Native American Apology Resolution	Carl Phillips, <i>Speak Low</i>

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	Pulitzer Prize: W. S. Merwin, <i>The Shadow of Sirius</i>	
	National Books Critics Circle Award: Rae Armantrout, <i>Versed</i>	
2010	<i>Deepwater Horizon</i> oil spill occurs <i>Asian American Literary Review</i> and <i>Lantern Review</i> founded Instagram launched First VIDA count highlights gender imbalances in publishing	Ben Lerner, <i>Mean Free Path</i> Anne Carson, <i>Nox</i> Timothy Donnelly, <i>The Cloud Corporation</i> Charles Bernstein, <i>All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems</i> John Koethe, <i>Ninety-Fifth Street</i> Valerie Martinez, <i>Each and Her</i>
2011	Eduardo C. Corral becomes first Latino poet to win the Yale Series of Younger Poets with <i>Slow Lightning</i> Button Poetry founded by Sam Cook and Sierra DeMulder Occupy movement established with “Occupy Wall Street” protest in New York City MacArthur Fellowship: Kay Ryan and A. E. Stallings Pulitzer Prize: Kay Ryan, <i>The Best of It: New and Selected Poems</i> National Book Award: Nikky Finney, <i>Head Off & Split: Poems</i> National Book Critics Circle Award: Laura Kasischke, <i>Space, in Chains</i> Philip Levine appointed Poet Laureate	Bhanu Kapil, <i>Schizophrenie</i> Jean Valentine, <i>Break the Glass</i> Yusef Komunyakaa, <i>The Chameleon Couch</i> Adrienne Rich, <i>Tonight No Poetry Will Serve: Poems: 2007–2010</i>
2012	Brooklyn Poets founded	Cathy Park Hong, <i>Engine Empire</i>

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	Shooting of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida	Eileen Myles, <i>Snowflake / Different Streets</i>
	Mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut kills twenty-six people	Brenda Shaughnessy, <i>Our Andromeda</i>
	“Superstorm” Sandy strikes the East Coast of the United States	Patricia Smith, <i>Shoulda Been Jimi Savannah</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Tracy K. Smith, <i>Life on Mars</i>	
	National Book Award: David Ferry, <i>Bewilderment: New Poems and Translations</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: D. A. Powell, <i>Useless Landscape, or A Guide for Boys</i>	
	Natasha Trethewey appointed Poet Laureate	
2013	Reelection of President Obama	Lucie Brock-Broido, <i>Stay, Illusion</i>
	Black Lives Matter movement founded	Adrian Matejka, <i>The Big Smoke</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Sharon Olds, <i>Stag’s Leap</i>	Brenda Hillman, <i>Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire</i>
	National Book Award: Mary Szybist, <i>Incarnadine</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Frank Bidart, <i>Metaphysical Dog</i>	
2014	Shooting of Michael Brown Jr. in Ferguson, Missouri; #BlackPoetsSpeakOut launched in response	Rupi Kaur, <i>Milk and Honey</i> Hugo Garcia Manriquez, <i>Anti-Humboldt</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Vijay Seshadri, <i>3 Sections</i>	Dawn Lundy Martin, <i>Life in a Box Is a Pretty Life</i>
	National Book Award: Louise Glück, <i>Faithful and Virtuous Night</i>	Claudia Rankine, <i>Citizen: An American Lyric</i>

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	Charles Wright appointed Poet Laureate	
2015	“Yi-Fen Chou” is revealed to be the pseudonym of Michael Derrick Hudson in a biographical note published as part of the 2015 edition of <i>The Best American Poetry</i> , edited by Sherman Alexie	Paolo Javier, <i>Court of the Dragon</i> Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, <i>Bodymap</i> Philip Metres, <i>Sand Opera</i>
	Mongrel Coalition Against Gringpo established in response to Kenneth Goldsmith’s poem “The Body of Michael Brown” and Vanessa Place’s Twitter-based remix of <i>Gone with the Wind</i>	
	<i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i> legalizes gay marriage in all fifty states	
	Pulitzer Prize: Gregory Pardlo, <i>Digest</i>	
	National Book Award: Robin Coste Lewis, <i>Voyage of the Sable Venus</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Ross Gay, <i>Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude</i>	
	Juan Felipe Herrera appointed Poet Laureate	
2016	Bob Dylan awarded Nobel Prize in Literature for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”	Solmaz Sharif, <i>Look</i> Brenda Shaughnessy, <i>So Much Synth</i> Douglas Kearney, <i>Buck Studies</i>
	Paris Agreement signed	
	Election of Donald Trump as US president	Stephen Collins, <i>Once in Blockadia</i>
	Protests against Dakota Access Pipeline led by Standing Rock Sioux	Allison Cobb, <i>After We All Died</i> Ocean Vuong, <i>Night Sky with Exit Wounds</i>

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	Mass shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida kills forty-nine people	
	Pulitzer Prize: Peter Balakian, <i>Ozone Journal</i>	
	National Book Award: Daniel Borzutzky, <i>The Performance of Becoming Human</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Ishion Hutchinson, <i>House of Lords and Commons</i>	
2017	Donald Trump sworn in as 45th US president	Tommy Pico, <i>Nature Poem</i> Patricia Smith,
	Kevin Young named Poetry Editor of <i>The New Yorker</i>	<i>Incendiary Art</i> Divya Victor, <i>Kith</i>
	#MeToo movement rises to prominence in wake of sexual assault allegations against producer Harvey Weinstein	Bonafide Rojas, <i>Notes on the Return to the Island</i> Sueyeun Juliette Lee, <i>No Comet, That Serpent in the Sky Means Noise</i>
	“Unite the Right” white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia	John Yau, <i>Bijoux in the Dark</i>
	Mass shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada kills fifty-eight people	Danez Smith, <i>Don’t Call Us Dead</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Tyehimba Jess, <i>Olio</i>	Evie Shockley,
	National Book Award: Frank Bidart, <i>Half-Light: Collected Poems, 1965–2016</i>	<i>semiautomatic</i> Eve Ewing, <i>Electric Arches</i>
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Layli Long Soldier, <i>Whereas</i>	
	Tracy K. Smith appointed Poet Laureate	
2018	US government separates thousands of migrant children and parents at the Mexico border	Jos Charles, <i>feeld</i> Wendy Trevino, <i>Cruel Fiction</i>
	Dr. Christine Blasey Ford testifies in US Senate to sexual assault by	

Chronology

(cont.)

Date	Events/Awards	Publications
	Brett Kavanaugh; Kavanaugh is later confirmed as a Supreme Court Justice	
	Pulitzer Prize: Frank Bidart, <i>Half-Light: Collected Poems, 1965–2016</i>	
	National Book Award: Justin Phillip Reed, <i>Indecency</i>	
	National Book Critics Circle Award: Ada Limón, <i>The Carrying</i>	
2019	President Trump is impeached	Ilya Kaminsky, <i>Deaf Republic</i>
	Pulitzer Prize: Forrest Gander, <i>Be With</i>	Jericho Brown, <i>The Tradition</i>
	National Book Award: Arthur Sze, <i>Sight Lines</i>	
	Joy Harjo appointed Poet Laureate	