

A Concise Companion to
Postwar British and
Irish Poetry

Edited by Nigel Alderman and
C. D. Blanton

WILEY Blackwell

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Jahan Ramazani is the Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English and Department Chair at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *Yeats and the Poetry of Death: Elegy, Self-Elegy, and the Sublime* (1990), *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994), which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2001), and *A Transnational Poetics* (2009). He co-edited the third edition of *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry* (2003) and the eighth edition of *The Twentieth Century and After* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (2006). He is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, an NEH Fellowship, a Rhodes Scholarship, and the MLA's William Riley Parker Prize.

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Chronology

1945

German surrender; (UK) dissolution of War Cabinet under Winston Churchill, Prime Minister; Labour government: Clement Attlee, Prime Minister; Japanese surrender; United Nations (UN) chartered; beginning of Nuremberg trials; foundation of World Bank; beginning of wide-scale nationalization; Family Allowances Act.

Philip Larkin, *The North Ship*

1946

Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech; National Insurance Act; National Assistance Act; National Health Service Act; nationalization of the Bank of England; nationalization of coal industry; formation of British Arts Council.

Edwin Muir, *The Voyage and Other Poems*; Dylan Thomas, *Deaths and Entrances*

1947

Withdrawal of military aid to Greece and Turkey; announcement of Truman Doctrine; India and Pakistan become independent (partition); Jawaharlal Nehru becomes Prime Minister of India; UN partition of Palestine; Transport Act (nationalization of road and rail transport); nationalization of electrical industry; nationalization of Cable & Wireless.

1948

(Ire.) Éamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil government falls in Éire: first Inter-Party government, John A. Costello, Taoiseach; bread rationing ends in Britain; arrival of *Empire Windrush*, rise in West Indian immigration; launch of European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan); Burma (Myanmar), Sri Lanka (Ceylon) become independent; end of colonial rule in Trans-Jordan (Jordan), British Palestine, Egypt (excluding Suez); British Citizenship Act; beginning of Berlin blockade, airlift; assassination of Gandhi.

T. S. Eliot wins Nobel Prize for Literature; W. H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety*; T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*; Ezra Pound, *The Pisan Cantos*

1949

Republic of Ireland established, withdraws from Commonwealth; North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); apartheid instituted in South Africa; India adopts constitution; nationalization of gas industry; devaluation of pound sterling.

1950

"Mother and Child Scheme" for public health care in Ireland fails; Britain recognizes People's Republic of China, Israel; London dock strike; nationalization of iron and steel industry; end of fuel rationing; British troops sent to Korea.

David Gascoyne, *A Vagrant, and Other Poems*

1951

(UK) Conservative government: Winston Churchill, Prime Minister; (Ire.) Fianna Fáil government: Éamon de Valera,

Taoiseach; Festival of Britain; Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean defect to Soviet Union.

Keith Douglas, *Collected Poems*

1952

Death of George VI; Britain produces atomic bomb.

David Jones, *The Anathemata*

1953

Coronation of Elizabeth II; death of Stalin; London Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers.

Death of Dylan Thomas; D. J. Enright, *The Laughing Hyena and Other Poems*; Louis MacNeice, *Autumn Sequel*

1954

(Ire.) Second Inter-Party government: John A. Costello, Taoiseach; end of food rationing in Britain; Independent Television Authority established.

Thom Gunn, *Fighting Terms*; Jon Silkin, *The Peaceable Kingdom*

1955

(UK) Churchill resigns: Anthony Eden, Prime Minister; formation of European Union; Ireland joins United Nations, declines to join NATO; Bandung Conference; railroad and dock strikes.

D. J. Enright (ed.), *Poetry of the 1950s*; W. H. Auden, *The Shield of Achilles*; Austin Clarke, *Ancient Lights*; W. S. Graham, *The Nightfishing*; Elizabeth Jennings, *A Way of*

Looking; Philip Larkin, *The Less Deceived*; Hugh MacDiarmid, *In Memoriam James Joyce*; R. S. Thomas, *Song at the Year's Turning*

1956

Suez crisis; beginning of the Border Campaign in Ireland; Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow: Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech"; Soviet invasion of Hungary.

Robert Conquest (ed.), *New Lines*; Norman MacCaig, *Riding Lights*

1957

(UK) Eden resigns: Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister; (Ire.) Fianna Fáil government: Éamon de Valera, Taoiseach; Treaty of Rome (Formation of European Economic Community); Ghana, Malaya become independent; Wolfenden Report (on homosexuality and prostitution); Britain tests hydrogen bomb.

Donald Davie, *A Winter Talent and Other Poems*; Thom Gunn, *The Sense of Movement*; Ted Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain*; Stevie Smith, *Not Waving But Drowning*

1958

Formation of West Indies Federation; Notting Hill race riots; London bus strike; opening of Preston bypass (M6, first motorway).

1959

(Ire.) de Valera resigns, elected President: Séan Lemass, Taoiseach; Singapore becomes independent; first section of M1 opened.

Geoffrey Hill, *For the Unfallen*; Elizabeth Jennings, *A Sense of the World*

1960

Cyprus, Nigeria become independent; *Lady Chatterley* trial.

Austin Clarke, *The Horse-Eaters*; Ian Hamilton Finlay, *The dancers inherit the party*; Ted Hughes, *Lupercal*; Charles Tomlinson, *Seeing Is Believing* (1958 in US)

1961

Construction of Berlin Wall; South Africa withdraws from Commonwealth.

Roy Fisher, *City*; Thom Gunn, *My Sad Captains and Other Poems*; Jon Silkin, *The Re-Ordering of the Stones*

1962

Commonwealth Immigrants Act; end of postwar National Service.

A. Alvarez (ed.), *The New Poetry*; Brian Coffey, *Missouri Sequence*; Thomas Kinsella, *Downstream*; Christopher Middleton, *Torse 3*

1963

(UK) Macmillan resigns: Alec Douglas-Home, Prime Minister; France blocks British entry into EEC; Kenyan independence; Profumo affair.

Death of Louis MacNeice; death of Sylvia Plath; Louis MacNeice, *The Burning Perch*; Charles Tomlinson, *A Peopled Landscape*; Rosemary Tonks, *Notes on Cafés and Bedrooms*

1964

(UK) Election of Labour government: Harold Wilson, Prime Minister; Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Congo, Malta become independent.

Donald Davie, *Events and Wisdoms*; Elizabeth Jennings, *Recoveries*; Philip Larkin, *The Whitsun Weddings*

1965

Gambia becomes independent; unilateral secession of Rhodesia; Death of Winston Churchill.

Death of T. S. Eliot; George Barker, *The True Confessions of George Barker*; Basil Bunting, *Loquitur*; Sylvia Plath, *Ariel*

1966

(Ire.) Lemass resigns; Jack Lynch, Taoiseach; wage and price controls; England wins World Cup.

Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts*; Austin Clarke, *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*; Roy Fisher, *The Ship's Orchestra*; Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist*

1967

Sexual Offences Act (repealing laws against homosexuality in Britain).

Death of Patrick Kavanagh; death of John Masefield; Cecil Day Lewis becomes Poet Laureate; Eavan Boland, *New Territory*; Andrew Crozier, *Loved Litter of Time Spent*; Veronica Forrest-Thomson, *Identikit*; Thom Gunn, *Touch*; Ted Hughes, *Wodwo*; Tom Raworth, *The Relation Ship*; John Riley, *Ancient and Modern*; Rosemary Tonks, *Iliad of Broken Sentences*

1968

Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; students and workers riot in Paris; Race Relations Act; Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech against immigration.

Geoffrey Hill, *King Log*; Derek Mahon, *Night-Crossing*; Thomas Kinsella, *Nightwalker and Other Poems*; Edwin Morgan, *The Second Life*; J. H. Prynne, *Kitchen Poems*; C. H. Sisson, *Metamorphoses*; R. S. Thomas, *Not that He Brought Flowers*

1969

Riots in Derry; British troops sent to Northern Ireland; beginning of the Troubles.

George Mackay Brown, *The Year of the Whale*; Donald Davie, *Essex Poems*; Douglas Dunn, *Terry Street*; Seamus Heaney, *Door into the Dark*; Thomas Kinsella, *The Táin*; Michael Longley, *No Continuing City*; J. H. Prynne, *The White Stones*; Charles Tomlinson, *Way of a World*

1970

(UK) Election of Conservative government: Edward Heath, Prime Minister; dock strike, state of emergency declared; British Petroleum announces North Sea oil discovery; Tonga becomes independent.

W. S. Graham, *Malcolm Mooney's Land*; Tony Harrison, *The Loiners*; Ted Hughes, *Crow*; Peter Porter, *The Last of England*; John Riley, *What Reason Was*

1971

Currency reform: decimalization of British and Irish pound; beginning of detentions without trial in Northern Ireland; Commons votes to join EEC; Qatar independent.

Death of Stevie Smith; Fleur Adcock, *High Tide in the Garden*; Elaine Feinstein, *The Magic Apple Trees*; Veronica Forrest-Thomson, *Language Games*; Geoffrey Hill, *Mercian Hymns*; J. H. Prynne, *Brass*

1972

"Bloody Sunday," thirteen killed by British troops in Northern Ireland; British Embassy in Dublin burned; Parliament of Northern Ireland suspended; pound sterling allowed to float on open market; miners' strike.

Death of Cecil Day Lewis; John Betjeman becomes Poet Laureate; Donald Davie, *The Shires*; Seamus Heaney, *Wintering Out*; Thomas Kinsella, *Butcher's Dozen*; *Notes from the Land of the Dead and Other Poems*; Derek Mahon, *Lives*; John Montague, *The Rough Field*; R. S. Thomas, *H'm*

1973

(Ire.) Fine Gael government: Liam Cosgrave, Prime Minister; Britain and Ireland enter EEC; World oil crisis; IRA bombing campaign begins; Sunningdale Agreement for power-sharing in Northern Ireland (collapses 1974); beginning of coal miners' strike; Bahamas independent.

Death of W. H. Auden; D. J. Enright, *The Terrible Shears: Scenes from a Twenties Childhood*; Michael Longley, *An Exploded View*; Edwin Morgan, *From Glasgow to Saturn*; Paul Muldoon, *New Weather*; Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, *The Hermaphrodite Album*; John Riley, *Ways of Approaching*

1974

(UK) Labour government: Harold Wilson, Prime Minister; Local Government Act reforms administrative map; Prevention of Terrorism Act; Grenada independent; Ireland allows sale of contraceptives to married couples.

Death of Austin Clarke; death of David Jones; Allen Fisher, *Place*; Veronica Forrest-Thomson, *Cordelia: or, "A Poem Should Not Mean, But Be"*; Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Voices of the Living and the Dead*; Philip Larkin, *High Windows*; C. H. Sisson, *In the Trojan Ditch*; Anne Stevenson, *Correspondences: A family history in letters*

1975

Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act come into force.

Brian Coffey, Advent; Ulli Freer, *Rooms*; Seamus Heaney, *North*; Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Dread, Beat, and Blood*; Derek Mahon, *The Snow Party*; John Montague, *The Great Cloak*; F. T. Prince, *Drypoints of the Hasidim*; R. S. Thomas, *Laboratories of the Spirit*

1976

(UK) Wilson resigns: James Callaghan, Prime Minister.

Ciaran Carson, *The New Estate*; Thom Gunn, *Jack Straw's Castle*; Trevor Joyce, *The Poems of Sweeny Peregrine*

1977

(Ire.) Fianna Fáil government: Jack Lynch, Taoiseach; (UK) Labour-Liberal pact maintains Labour government; Silver Jubilee.

W. S. Graham, *Implements in Their Places*; Ted Hughes, *Gaudete*; Andrew Motion, *Pleasure Steamers*; Paul Muldoon, *Mules*; Tom Paulin, *A State of Justice*; Denise Riley, *Marxism for Infants*

1978

Beginning of “winter of discontent.”

Death of Hugh MacDiarmid; Tony Harrison, *From the School of Eloquence and Other Poems*; Geoffrey Hill, *Tenebrae*; Ted Hughes, *Cave Birds*; Craig Raine, *The Onion, Memory*

1979

(UK) Conservative government: Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister; (Ire.) Lynch resigns; Charles Haughey, Taoiseach; Irish pound joins Exchange Rate Mechanism; Scottish and Welsh devolution referenda fail; assassinations of Airey Neave and Lord Mountbatten; Warrenpoint ambush.

Fleur Adcock, *The Inner Harbour*; Douglas Dunn, *Barbarians*; Seamus Heaney, *Field Work*; Ted Hughes, *Moortown, Remains of Elmet*; J. H. Prynne, *Down where changed*; Craig Raine, *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*; Jeremy Reed, *Saints and Psychotics*

1980

Steel strike; British Aerospace privatized; Zimbabwe becomes independent.

Eavan Boland, *In Her Own Image*; Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Inglan Is a Bitch*; Paul Muldoon, *Why Brownlee Left*; Tom Paulin, *The Strange Museum*; Jon Silkin, *The Psalms with Their Spoils*; Ken Smith, *Fox Running*

1981

(Ire.) Fine Gael-Labour coalition government; Garret Fitzgerald, Taoiseach; (UK) split in Labour party: formation of Social Democratic Party (SDP); British Nationality Act; Brixton riots; deaths of nine IRA hunger strikers in Maze Prison.

Douglas Dunn, *St Kilda's Parliament*; Tony Harrison, *Continuous: Fifty Sonnets from the School of Eloquence*; Christopher Logue, *War Music*; Andrew Motion, *Independence*

1982

Falklands War; (Ire.) Haughey returns as Taoiseach, succeeded again by Fitzgerald.

Andrew Motion & Blake Morrison (eds), *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*; Derek Mahon, *The Hunt by Night*; Medbh McGuckian, *The Flower Master*; Christopher Reid, *Pea Soup*

1983

(UK) General election returns Conservative government; escape of 38 prisoners from Maze Prison; mass demonstrations in London organized by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp.

Jean "Binta" Breeze, *Answers*; George Mackay Brown, *Voyages*; James Fenton, *The Memory of War*; Geoffrey Hill, *The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy*; John Montague, *The Dead Kingdom*; Andrew Motion, *Secret Narratives*; Paul Muldoon, *Quoof*; Grace Nichols, *i is a long memoried woman*; Tom Paulin, *Liberty Tree*

1984

Coal Miners' Strike; Trade Union Act; privatization of British Telecom; bombing of Grand Hotel, Brighton.

Death of John Betjeman; Ted Hughes becomes Poet Laureate; David Dabydeen, *Slave Song*; Seamus Heaney, *Station Island*; *Sweeney Astray*; Medbh McGuckian, *Venus and the Rain*; Grace Nichols, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*; Craig Raine, *Rich*; Peter Reading, *C*.

1985

Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Death of Basil Bunting; death of Philip Larkin; Carol Ann Duffy, *Standing Female Nude*; Allen Fisher, *Brixton Fractals*; Tony Harrison, *v.*; Peter Reading, *Ukelele Music*; Christopher Reid, *Katerina Brac*; Denise Riley, *Dry Air*; Benjamin Zephaniah, *The Dread Affair*

1986

Riots in Brixton and elsewhere; London Stock Exchange deregulated; British Gas privatized.

Fleur Adcock, *The Incident Book*; Roy Fisher, *A Furnace*; Christopher Middleton, *Two Horse Wagon Going By*; Jon Silkin, *The Ship's Pasture*

1987

(Ire.) Fianna Fáil government: Charles Haughey, Taoiseach; Single European Act; British Airways privatized.

Andrew Crozier & Tim Longville (eds), *A Various Art*; Ciaran Carson, *The Irish for No*; Carol Ann Duffy, *Selling Manhattan*;

Seamus Heaney, *The Haw Lantern*; Kathleen Jamie, *The Way We Live*; Edwin Morgan, *Themes on a Variation*; Blake Morrison, *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper and Other Poems*; Paul Muldoon, *Meeting the British*; Tom Paulin, *Fivemiletown*

1988

SDP merges with Liberal Party to form Social and Liberal Democratic Party; SAS shoot three unarmed IRA members in Gibraltar; transatlantic flight bombed over Lockerbie (Scotland).

Gillian Allnutt et al. (eds), *The New British Poetry*; Jean "Binta" Breeze, *Riddym Ravings and Other Poems*; David Dabydeen, *Coolie Odyssey*; Medbh McGuckian, *On Ballycastle Beach*; Jo Shapcott, *Electroplating the Baby*

1989

Opening of Berlin Wall; Release of Guildford Four; Iran places *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie.

Death of Samuel Beckett; Simon Armitage, *Zoom!*; Gillian Clarke, *Letting in the Rumour*; Selima Hill, *The Accumulation of Small Acts of Kindness*; George Macbeth, *Collected Poems 1958-1982*; E. A. Markham, *Towards the End of the Century*; Grace Nicholls, *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman and Other Poems*; Iain Crichton Smith, *The Village, and Other Poems*

1990

(UK) Margaret Thatcher resigns: John Major, Prime Minister; Poll Tax riots; pound sterling joins Exchange Rate Mechanism; Nelson Mandela released from Robben Island; reunification of Germany.

Eavan Boland, *Outside History*; Ciaran Carson, *Belfast Confetti*; Robert Crawford, *A Scottish Assembly*; Carol Ann Duffy, *The Other Country*; Paul Durcan, *Daddy, Daddy*; Elaine Feinstein, *City Music*; Thomas Kinsella, *Poems from Centre City*; Glyn Maxwell, *Tale of the Mayor's Son*; Paul Muldoon, *Madoc: A Mystery*

1991

Gulf War; release of Birmingham Six; Poll Tax replaced by Council Tax; official end of South African apartheid; dissolution of Soviet Union; Ireland agrees to sign Maastricht Treaty.

Lavinia Greenlaw, *The Cost of Getting Lost in Space*; Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things*; Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Tings an' Times*; Jackie Kay, *The Adoption Papers*; Liz Lochhead, *Bagpipe Muzak*; Michael Longley, *Gorse Fires*; Mebdh McGuckian, *Marconi's Cottage*; Andrew Motion, *Love in a Life*; Sean O'Brien, *HMS Glasshouse*

1992

(Ire.) Haughey resigns; Albert Reynolds, Taoiseach; Maastricht Treaty signed; sterling crisis; Britain withdraws from European Exchange Rate Mechanism; Irish voters approve a loosened abortion law, guaranteeing access to information and travel abroad

Simon Armitage, *Kid; Xanadu*; Jean "Binta" Breeze, *Spring Cleaning*; U. A. Fanthorpe, *Neck-Verse*; Thom Gunn, *The Man with Night Sweats*; Glyn Maxwell, *Out of the Rain*; Tom Raworth, *Catacoustics*; Peter Reading, *3 in 1*; Denise Riley, *Stair Spirit*; Benjamin Zephaniah, *City Psalms*

1993