



A COMPANION TO  
*IRISH*  
*LITERATURE*  
VOLUME ONE

EDITED BY JULIA M. WRIGHT

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

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*LITERATURE*

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# Introduction

*Julia M. Wright*

This *Companion to Irish Literature* is designed to offer a range of theoretical approaches to the full history of Irish literature, and to provide a guide to a wide, but not encyclopedic, range of key issues and authors within that rich tradition. The essays sketch a literary-historical trajectory from the Middle Ages to the present and are divided according to literary period, but they can also be grouped for genre study (for instance, to consider Irish drama from the early modern period forward to the present or Irish poetry over a thousand years), or to investigate Irish-language literature from the medieval period to the present, or to consider the cultural history of gender, including the literary representation of masculinity from the Middle Ages forward. In both volumes, there are essays that deal with translation, religion, nationhood, gender and sexuality, and literary form, as well as myriad other shared concerns. The selection of topics and authors proceeded on the basis not of a canon in which authors constitute fixed literary coordinates, but rather a motile literary history in which authors are part of an always reflexive and constantly developing understanding of the past; the coverage of authors here is thus topical rather than exhaustive. Hence, both volumes include essays that focus on authors whose importance is newly emerging, others who were more important a few decades ago than now, and others who have been canonical since their work was first circulated. Other essays take a broader sweep of the cultural terrain than an author-centered focus allows and they, along with the author-specific chapters, bring dozens more significant authors into these pages. Together, these two volumes provide a diverse and flexible framework for the study of nearly fifteen hundred years of Irish literature – a companion for a literary journey.

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*A Companion to Irish Literature*, edited by Julia M. Wright

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