

*A Concise Companion to*

# POSTWAR BRITISH AND IRISH POETRY

*Edited by Nigel Alderman and C.D. Blanton*



 WILEY-BLACKWELL

A Concise Introduction to  
Postwar British and  
Irish Poetry



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C. D. Blanton



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# Notes on Contributors

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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.

## Chronology

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*

## Chronology

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 Offenses 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.