Canadian First World War Poetry Monographs, 1914-1918:

A Bibliography

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LIS 597

December 9, 2016
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Abstract

This bibliography collates poetry written about and during the First World War by Canadian poets. Its focus is on monographs - that is, books of poetry - published between 1914 and 1918. It does not include unpublished works or poems published in serial publications; nor does it record the books of poetry published post-war. Its purpose is to provide a resource to researchers interested in the subjects of Canadian poetry and poets, and of the First World War, by facilitating the discovery of the poetry and poets recorded herein. It is the first bibliography written about Canadian First World War poetry.

The poets and their poetry recorded in this bibliography were discovered using both online and print sources. Names were drawn from anthologies of First World War poetry and Canadian poetry. Author and subject field searches were conducted in the international online catalogue, WorldCat, and in the University of Alberta’s local online catalogue, NEOS. Results were limited to works published between 1914 and 1918. A total of 98 Canadian poets were discovered to have published 140 monographs between 1914 and 1918 that contain poetry written about the First World War.
Introduction

In almost every book of literary criticism about First World War poetry that I have read, Catherine W. Reilly’s *English Poetry of the First World War* is referenced. It is a seminal work, published in 1978, and still relevant today. It is a bibliography of poets from the UK and Ireland who wrote and published about the First World War. I have referenced it in my own theses (both Honour’s and Master’s) about English First World War poetry, and it is the primary inspiration for this bibliography of Canadian First World War poetry.

Despite the fact that one hundred years have passed since the outbreak of the First World War, not much has developed in the way of bibliographies about First World War literature, let alone poetry. In addition to Reilly’s work, I have found only two other bibliographies on the subject: John M. E. Carroll’s PhD dissertation in 1970, which is entitled, “A Checklist of British Poetry of the First World War,” and Sharon Ouditt’s annotated bibliography of women writers of the First World War, published in 2000 (though this latter publication does not include poetry). On the other hand, many anthologies and works of literary criticism have been published on First World War poetry in general and on that written by Canadians. (See “References” for anthologies consulted in the development of this bibliography.) While these anthologies are useful reference sources for researchers interested in the topic of First World War poetry, they do not (and cannot) cover the entire span of publications produced on this subject. This is where bibliographies shine. They provide a comprehensive overview of publications on a particular topic, within a particular time period, by a particular author, or any other such criteria. By developing this bibliography of Canadian First World War poetry monographs, I hope to produce a resource that will facilitate the discovery and improve the findability of Canadian poets who
published books of poetry on this subject, thereby contributing to the field of First World War poetry research and literary criticism.

In developing this bibliography, I began with Reilly’s index of English poets outside the UK and Ireland, drawing from it a list of Canadian poets’ names. In order to confirm the veracity of this list, I searched the Library of Congress (LC) and Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Authorities for each name. This way, I could disambiguate authors with similar names, determine if they were likely to publish during the war (rather than post-war), and confirm that they were, indeed, Canadian. I determined poets’ nationalities quite loosely - whether they were born in or immigrated to Canada at any point in their life, I considered them to be Canadian. Using the LC and LAC Authorities, I was also able to determine birth and death dates for many poets, which helped me determine if the records I found in my catalogue searches matched these poets. I recorded the full names, pseudonyms (where applicable), and LC and/or LAC Authorities (also where applicable) for each poet I discovered in a spreadsheet, along with biographical notes and sources where I found them. (See Appendix, Table 1 for a list of poet names and their associated authority records.)

Armed with a list of Canadian poets, I searched the international online catalogue, OCLC WorldCat using the author field and limiting results to those published between 1914 and 1918. For each record, I first checked the author name to see if it matched the search term I used; next, I examined the title for relevance and, if the title clearly indicated the publication was about First World War poetry, I copied the record into my spreadsheet database in the corresponding author spreadsheet. If the title did not clearly indicate relevancy, I checked the assigned subject terms - again, if the terms clearly indicated relevancy, I copied the record into my database. If the
subject terms were vague or unavailable, I checked the contents of the item itself, scanning the table of contents for poem titles, searching the text for keywords (such as “war,” “battle,” “soldier,” and so forth), and/or skimming poems themselves for relevancy. In these cases, my background in First World War poetry research was invaluable - knowing what to look for in the poems sped up this process tremendously. For each record that I determined relevant, I searched the publication title in my local consortium catalogue, NEOS, to see if I had access to the item, recording these results in my database along with the item’s medium (print, microfilm, or electronic) and its location in the University of Alberta Libraries (if not electronic). While this information did not make its way into the bibliography, it was useful when I needed to return to an item later.

After searching in WorldCat and NEOS for the Canadian poets indexed by Reilly, I used a pearl-growing method to develop searches using subject headings. I found the subject headings most often ascribed to the results retrieved were “World War, 1914-1918 Poetry” and “Canadian Poetry.” Using both these headings, I conducted searches in WorldCat, again limiting results to those published between 1914 and 1918. Through this method, I discovered more poets - who I searched in the LC and LAC Authorities as well as the NEOS catalogue - and more publications.

In total, I found 98 Canadian poets who published 140 books of poetry between 1914 and 1918 that contain poems on the subject of the First World War. The most frequent publication date appears to be 1917; while the most frequent publication location is Toronto; and the most frequent publisher is McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart. Most poets published in English - only three poets published their work in French, while one poet, John Preston Buschlen, published in both English and French. The majority of poets also appear to be men. (Gender was determined
via LC and/or LAC Authority records and online biographical records, such as *The Canadian Encyclopedia* and *The Canadian Great War Project.*) A total of twenty-one poets are confirmed to have played a role in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) in some capacity, either as an officer or non-commissioned member (NCM), as a combatant or in a support role. My findings are consistent with Reilly’s. She determined that, out of 2,225 English poets, at least 417 served in the armed forces.¹ Likewise, she also determined that the majority of poets she discovered are men.² (See Appendix, Figures 1-3 for graphs representing publication dates and locations, and poet demographics.)

Unfortunately, I was not able to retrieve complete records for each publication. In some cases, I compared the WorldCat record with the NEOS record and was able to combine the two to create a more complete citation; yet, in most cases, missing information could not be found, even by looking at the original or digitized item. Missing frontispieces or copyright information is not uncommon. Therefore, many of the citations recorded in this bibliography are incomplete and/or include information based on the educated guesses of cataloguers. Information in the latter category is indicated in this bibliography by square brackets - so, for instance, if the date of a publication is estimated to be 1917, the citation will read [1917].

This bibliography includes other limitations. It only records poetry published in books (excluding anthologies) between 1914 and 1918 by authors that I could be relatively certain were Canadian. It therefore excludes unpublished poetry and poetry published solely in periodicals (in other words, newspapers and magazines) or in anthologies. It also excludes a substantial amount

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² Ibid.
of poetry published post-war. However, it is a start. Future research can (and should) be done to
discover and compile Canadian First World War poetry published in periodicals, anthologies,
and post-war. Archival work can also be conducted to discover and make findable any
unpublished poetry waiting, hidden, in archival collections. For now, I hope readers of this
bibliography will find something of value herein.
References

Anthologies


Bibliographies


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---. *The Prize is Ours*. [Toronto]: [1917]

---. *Will the Messiah Reign?* [Toronto]: [1917]


---. *Fags*. [St. John's]: Imperial Tobacco Company, [1916]


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### Appendix

**Table 1.** Poet names, pseudonyms, and authority records from LC / LAC.

<table>
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<th>Poet Name</th>
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Fig. 1. Number of Canadian First World War poetry monographs published by year.

![Monographs Published by Year](chart1.png)

Fig. 2. Frequency of publication locations of Canadian First World War poetry monographs.

![Location of Publication](chart2.png)
Fig. 3. Percentage of Canadian First World War poets by gender.