
Languages and literature

RR 2017/129

The Cambridge Companion to the English Short Story

Ann-Marie Einhaus

Cambridge University Press

Cambridge

2016

xxiii + 232 pp.

ISBN 978 1 107 08417 9 (hbk); ISBN 978 1 107 44601 4

(pbk); ISBN 978 1 316 02878 0 (e-book)

£54.99 \$94.99 (hbk); £18.99 \$29.99 (pbk); \$24 (e-book)

Cambridge Companions to Literature

Keywords English literature, Fiction

Review DOI [10.1108/RR-02-2017-0042](https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-02-2017-0042)

This *Companion* deals with the origins and development of the short story “written in the English language outside of north America” (p. 7). Fourteen chapters cover the Contexts, Periods and Genres of the medium. All of them are extensively footnoted. An introduction by the Editor (who contributes a chapter), a Guide to Further Reading and a Chronology complete the contents.

Part I, Contexts, covers the contemporary scene (and problems) of short story publishing, in Britain today, in Paul March Russell’s contribution. Other chapters deal with social realism, the (British) Empire in “short fiction” (the phrase is used frequently in the book) and the role of “space” in literature. In Part II, Periods, the five chapters deal with the short story developments that occurred during the Romantic and Victorian eras, and the twentieth century. Victoria Stewart’s *Mid-Twentieth-Century Stories* is informative about the medium in Britain during the Second World War. Maebh Long’s article brings the medium into the digital age. For those who wish to know which authors or stories to read, Part III Genres provides coverage of comic, detective, gothic and British science fiction (the latter chapter, by Andrew Butler, contains numerous listings of authors).

Although the volume is presented as an introductory overview of the subject, the density of the prose, at times, makes some of the chapters hard to follow. The animated and informative condemnation of pornography in

Long’s contribution, for example, is counter-balanced in the book by passages of elliptical phrases and obscure terminology, that lead to tendentious (and, at times, tedious) conclusions. Historians and sociologists might quibble with some of the evidence used, and interpretations made, but this is a survey of literary responses to the phenomenon as used in the stories. There are also errors that have slipped through the editing process. An entry for 1868 is placed after 1876 in the Chronology (p. xvi) and a sentence on p. 137 is rendered meaningless by garbled phrasing.

The work is wide-ranging in the use of source material, with websites now becoming a standard reference in citations, but, as with the internet, the danger of obsolescence, for digital media, might give the publication a “dated” feel in the near future, to the younger generation of literary scholars.

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RR 2017/130

The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American West

Edited by Steven Frye

Cambridge University Press

Cambridge

2016

xxx + 255 pp.

ISBN 978 1 107 09537 3 (hbk); ISBN 978 1 107 47927 2

(pbk); ISBN 978 1 316 57870 4 (e-book)

£54.99 \$89.99 (hbk); £18.99 \$29.99 (pbk); \$24 (e-book)

Cambridge Companions to Literature

Keywords Literature, United States of America

Review DOI [10.1108/RR-02-2017-0026](https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-02-2017-0026)

This book treats the word literature in the broadest terms and it deals with it in a way that relates to works both about the American West and/or from the West of America. Thus, it includes comment upon writings in the form of letters, essays, sketches, travelogues, newspaper articles, novels, poetry and drama. Even graphic novels and movies come briefly within its purview.

Since most of the chapters are historical studies, the meaning of the term “west” also has a range of meanings. Within the geography and history of the North American continent, the term has represented the beyond, the frontier, the wilderness and the edge, the boundary of civilisation as the European diaspora moved across the landscape, mainly in an east to west direction but also, on occasion, from north to south and even, to a lesser extent, like a backwash, from west to east. The literature of



Reference Reviews

Volume 31 · Number 5 · 2017 · pp. 18–22

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