

idea may be expressed. So, the traditional rueful expression “If wishes were horses, then beggars might ride” is matched by an African proverb from Senegal “If you had teeth of steel, you could eat iron coconuts”. So, the traditional “Look before you leap” is now matched by the Chinese saying “Cross the river by feeling the stones”. As an Arab proverb advises “To understand the people, acquaint yourself with their proverbs”. Through proverbs, the reader can enjoy the vigour and creativity of language.

The keyword index at the rear of the book is a vital search tool with each context line representing the opening words of a proverb (with “the” and “a” being omitted). Thus, the proverb will be found in alphabetical sequence in the given section. An example might be “abhors” as found in “Nature abhors a vacuum” under the Nature section of proverbs. So “actions” as in “Actions speak louder than words” can be found under the Words and Deeds heading and so on.

This is a delightful little book which at £9.99 (US\$16.99) is worth every penny and not only useful in a reference library but also on the shelves of anyone who writes and/or teaches. To conclude with the words of Lord John Russell – “A proverb is one man’s wit and all men’s wisdom”.

**Joan Williamson**

*Freelance Reviewer, Hereford, UK*

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## RR 2017/221

### The New Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot

*Edited by Jason Harding*

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Cambridge Companions to Literature

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I was a student in 1965 when my older brother announced, with a suitably mournful face, that T.S. Eliot had died: a somewhat bizarre conversation followed, in which our father

stoutly maintained (tongue firmly in cheek?) that it must be one Tessie Eliot, a little-known music-hall artiste. As a student of English literature, I naturally saw a lot of Eliot – not only the poems but also the ubiquitous references to “Mr Eliot” by literary critics who were, it seemed, nervously looking over their shoulders at the great dictator. As an American fellow-student put it in a parody, “We are the hollow men/We are the stuffed men/Leaning together/Heads stuffed with T.S. Eliot. Alas!” We clearly had something of a love-hate relationship with the poet and his work but it is a pleasure to revisit them now.

This volume replaces the 1994 *Companion*, since when much of Eliot’s prose, letters and uncollected poems have finally been published, accompanied by (the editor claims in his preface) a “seismic upheaval in Eliot scholarship and criticism”. So, what is new in this volume? Like the curate’s egg, it is good in parts. The initial chronology of Eliot’s life and works usefully puts the latter in the context of the former – we realise that in the normal course of events Eliot would have returned to Harvard to defend his doctoral dissertation, probably to become a lecturer in philosophy – and literary history would have been very different. The editor’s excellent introductory chapter on Unravelling Eliot, likewise puts Eliot’s works and their contemporary critical reception into the context of his life and career, while commenting on the changing emphases of Eliot scholarship and biography. It is followed by a general survey, *Eliot: Form and Allusion*, by Michael O’Neill, which I found rather heavy going: it makes many interesting points, but perhaps strains too hard to track down allusions and focus on features of the verse. Professor O’Neill, however, makes the interesting point that, “Whatever their ostensible genre, Eliot’s poems are always a form of modernist lyric drama”.

Chapters 3 to 8 then go through Eliot’s works in chronological order. Anne Stillman’s chapter on *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) begins interestingly by relating *Prufrock* to similarities with Eliot’s prose dialogue of the same year, “Eeldrop and Appleplex” (i.e. Eliot and Pound). Noting Eliot’s debt to Laforgue and Elizabethan drama, Ms Stillman quotes Eliot on this cross-fertilisation: “The serious writer of verse must be prepared to cross himself with the best verse of other languages and the best prose of all languages” (my emphasis) (Eliot, 2014, p. 679). This is a pretty tall order, Mr Eliot, even with your polyglot education, and allowing (I hope) for some translation. Speaking of the 1920 combined volume *Ara Vus Prec* [sic], which contained both *Prufrock* (1917) and *Poems* (1920), Ms Stillman writes that “The strangest thing [. . .] is that *Prufrock* is printed before

*Poems* (1920)”; in fact, the opposite is true, as her subsequent argument makes clear – author or editor should have picked up this error, which is very confusing for the reader.

Rick de Villiers’ chapter on *Poems* (1920) is based on his postgraduate thesis on the quatrain poems, so he knows whereof he speaks. It also touches on the Sweeney play-fragments, and deals with *Gerontion*, which began the 1920 volume rather than forming a prelude to *The Waste Land* – Ezra Pound dissuaded Eliot from the latter course. But it would have been interesting to consider also the long-suppressed wedding-night *Ode* from *Ara Vos Prec*, not to mention the four poems in French, which are (as usually) ignored here. Apart from that, this chapter sheds a useful light on these intriguing and baffling poems: Mr de Villiers points out that “‘Whispers of Immortality’ stands in many ways a terse exemplum of the poetry Eliot would praise three years later in ‘The Metaphysical Poets’”. But Mr de Villiers should surely have mentioned the obvious anti-Semitism that mars these often-unpleasant poems, as the editor does in his introductory chapter.

A very interesting chapter is that by Lawrence Rainey on *The Waste Land*: one might have thought that there was not much left to say on the subject, but Professor Rainey provides fascinating analyses of the beginning, middle and end of the poem. He looks at the problem of the number of voices speaking at the start of *The Waste Land* (original title *He do the Police in Different Voices*) by analysing the grammar and the gender of the speakers. He suggests that the first voice (*April is the cruellest month* [. . .]) must be masculine because it sounds “threatening” and “minatory speech [. . .] is conventionally spoken by a masculine voice” – not an argument that I find terribly convincing, whether one thinks of some literary divine figures or some real women. (Gail McDonald, author of a later chapter on gender, might have a view on that). Right in the middle of the poem is the seduction of the typist by the young man carbuncular, and Professor Rainey usefully locates the situation of the typist among both her real-life originals and characters in novels of the time (as he has elsewhere). Finally, he explicates the half-dozen quotations (and Eliot’s single original line, *These fragments I have shored against my ruins*) at the end of the poem. One wishes that he could have covered the whole poem in such interesting detail.

Sarah Kennedy makes a determined and subtle effort to make *Ash Wednesday* and the Ariel poems interesting, for example, by usefully looking at the “allusive undercurrent in *Ash Wednesday*”: it is a pity, perhaps, that Eliot did not append notes to this poem, as he did with *The Waste Land* – unless we are blessed with his

erudition, much of the significance is lost to us. But, as she says, “*Ash Wednesday* brims with the insubstantial”, and not all her efforts, nor the approaches of eminent critics that she refers to, make it seem (to me) a work of substance. One is tempted, on a first reading at least, to dismiss it as a rather flimsy farrago of phoney mysticism, although Barry Spurr’s later chapter persuades one to be more charitable. Ms Kennedy seems to be rather fond of words such as aphotic, deliquescent and plangent – or, as we might say of Eliot’s poetry of this period, dark, drippy and doleful.

Steve Ellis’s chapter provides a useful guide to the more substantial topic of the *Four Quartets*, on which he has published a book, *The English Eliot* (Ellis, 1991). I do not have that book to hand, but one thing that struck me on re-reading *The Dry Salvages*, was how American it is in many details, not just in the title and its location, in this respect differing from the English locations and London references of the other *Quartets*: Eliot himself wrote that “in its sources, in its emotional springs, [my poetry] comes from America”. Professor Ellis cites John Xiros Cooper (author of a later chapter) to the effect that the *Four Quartets* “encourages an inwardness and self-communing perfectly suited to the recoil from social and political engagement we see among many intellectuals in the more cautious Cold War climate of the late 1940s and 1950s [. . .] becoming indeed a kind of foundational document of post-war quietism –” for good or ill.

The final chapter in the survey of Eliot’s work is by Anthony Cuda on Eliot’s verse dramas, from the early experiments, to the wailing choruses of the overtly Christian *The Rock* and *Murder in the Cathedral*, to the polished final plays that, based on ancient Greek models, integrate together Eliot’s preoccupation with personae and his moral message, in “limpid verse” and sound stagecraft. The perhaps surprising commercial success of the later plays was greatly indebted to the direction of Martin Browne and the production of Henry Sherek.

Chapters 9 to 13 focus on Eliot’s literary criticism and social criticism, the aspects of gender and sexuality (new to this volume), his philosophical studies and his Anglo-Catholic Christianity. It might have been preferable to have had most of these last five chapters earlier, before those focusing on specific poems and plays (as I notice the 1994 *Companion* had), or perhaps mixed in with them, as they deal with formative influences on his creative work; as it is, they may tend to be left unread at the back of the book.

Helen Thaventhiran’s chapter on Eliot as a literary critic notes how “Eliot [. . .] formed our canons, both literary and critical”, during his rise from little magazines, to working for the *TLS* and editing the *Criterion*, and finally to presiding

as “the Pope of Russell Square” at Faber. At first, he wrote under pseudonyms or masks, such as T.S. Apteryx and Crites, and, she suggests, created “a large-scale carapace for his self-consciousness”. During his critical career, he introduced those concepts half-understood by students, such as the objective correlative and the dissociation of sensibility. She amusingly shows how many of Eliot’s peers found Eliot, despite his imposing persona, to be a less than perfect critic; writing of the essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, F.R. Leavis excoriated “its ambiguities, its logical inconsequences, its pseudo-precisions, its fallaciousness, and the aplomb of its equivocations and its specious cogency” (Leavis, 1967, p. 179) – otherwise OK, though? While Eliot saw himself as a poet-critic, Thaventhiran points out that Eliot was “in many ways a very *practical* critic, performing the various tasks of [ . . . ] editor, journalist, copy-editor”, lecturer, blurb-writer and so on – but he was not a programmatic critic, and produced no critical *magnum opus*.

John Xiros Cooper’s chapter on Eliot’s social criticism notes how, after 1927, “Eliot took as his starting-point the idea that religion was the socio-historical basis of a society and its culture descended from and was shaped by the religious life of its people [ . . . ] n sharp contrast to his reputation as a modernist poet [ . . . ] [s]uch an orientation positioned Eliot within a thoroughly conservative tradition”, one that was indebted – among others, but “most importantly” – to the French proto-fascist Charles Maurras, who espoused monarchism, Catholicism, classicism and anti-Semitism: any of this ring a bell? “We cannot understand Eliot’s own social criticism without understanding the influence Maurras exerted on his thinking”. Both in England (Burke, the older Coleridge and Arnold) and in France (de Maistre, Renan and Taine), this tradition goes back to a reaction against the excesses of the French Revolution, “the political Original Sin” which was a manifestation of theological original sin. Maurras’s influence (and Pound’s?) led Eliot to say “what sounds very much like prejudice against the Jews” in a lecture at the University of Virginia in 1933 (a fateful year): “Those who want to demonstrate Eliot’s putative anti-Semitism have usually cited it”. I do not think there is anything putative about it, as the poems mentioned above also give ample evidence. Eliot continued to develop his idea of a Christian society, but this, as Professor Cooper says, “was largely ignored [ . . . ] after the cataclysm of the Second World War”.

Unlike in the previous *Companion*, there is a chapter on Gender and Sexuality, by Gail McDonald, who points out that “Along with charges of anti-Semitism, accusations of

misogyny have been among the most powerful forces employed in the project of repudiation” in the reaction against Eliot. She writes that “there are several reasons [why] investigations of gender and sexuality still matter to Eliot studies. First, one cannot read the poetry without a sense that sexual relations [ . . . ] are uneasy, unfulfilling, or painful [ . . . ] Second, [recent] critical theory [ . . . ] was dedicated to understanding the power relations [ . . . ] shaped by sex and gender [ . . . ] Third, Eliot [ . . . ] wrote about women with apparent misogyny [ . . . ] Fourth, questions of sexuality and gender are fundamental to the humanities [ . . . ]”. But while accusations of misogyny can be supported by reference to the poems, so too (she shows) can charges of misanthropy, and while we may think of Eliot as a conservative, patriarchal and repressive modernist (in Rado’s terms) (Rado, 1994, p. 8), a decade later Laity noted “Eliot’s largely unexplored engagement with various public and private worlds of women, eroticism, and the feminine” (Laity and Gish, 2004, p. 2). While disposing of the simplistic and unlikely theory that Eliot was gay, McDonald also rejects “the usual binaries underpinning sex and gender criticism that came to seem inadequate”.

Jewel Spears Brooker provides a chapter on Eliot’s Philosophical Studies: Bergson, Frazer, Bradley, in which she points out that the essential context of these is temporalization: “The shift from a view of reality consisting of more or less static entities linked in space to a view consisting of fluid entities moving through time is at the heart of nineteenth-century intellectual life”, and led to changes in linguistics and folklore (Muller and then Frazer), geology (Lyell) and biology (Darwin). While philosophers attempted to end the dualism inherited from the past, they remained idealist (Bradley), realist (Russell) or somewhere in between (Bergson). Eliot left Harvard to study in Paris, and was briefly converted to Bergsonism, which promised to heal “the pain associated with the conflict between mind and body, a gap between intellect and feeling” which was “repeatedly dramatized in the early poems”. His disillusionment with Bergsonism was also duly reflected in other early poems and in a lecture to the Harvard Philosophical Club. Professor Brooker looks in detail at Bergson’s philosophy and Eliot’s reaction to it, as well as other philosophers, including of course F. H. Bradley, on whom Eliot wrote his doctoral thesis, begun at Harvard but completed at Oxford. In an essay, he wrote that “The token that a philosophy is true is [ . . . ] the fact that it brings us to the exact point from which we started” (Eliot, 2014, p. 191), which will sound familiar to readers of the *Four Quartets*. Likewise, when Eliot in 1915 described himself

as a relativist, neither idealist nor realist, “for to reduce the world into a set of formulae is to let it slip through our fingers in a fine dust”, (Eliot, 2014, p. 192) his words recall a well-known line in *The Waste Land*.

Barry Spurr’s chapter on Eliot’s Christianity, although marooned at the back of the book, sheds an interesting light on the literary works. He clarifies what Eliot’s Anglo-Catholic Anglicanism was, and dispels the notion of a sudden conversion, holding that “The continuities in his oeuvre [. . .] are more remarkable than any striking change [. . .] as the result of a mid-career renunciation”: all his major poems are a sort of journey or quest. Eliot himself said that he was of “a Catholic cast of mind, a Calvinistic heritage, and a Puritanical temperament” (Eliot, 1957, p. 209). Professor Spurr expatiates on what Eliot’s faith entailed – a very “Catholic” practice, a belief in original sin, a faith in the Incarnation and also in the role of the Virgin Mary – and shows how it manifested itself in his poetry, in particular *Ash Wednesday* and the *Four Quartets*, and in his plays.

Compared to some other Cambridge Companions, this is a fairly slim volume for the price: it would have been nice to have included some other aspects, for example, the American-ness of Eliot – the 1994 *Companion*, I notice, had a chapter on Eliot as a product of America, also one on Eliot’s impact on Anglo-American poetry and others of interest. Another additional chapter could have been on the influence of *il miglior fabbro* himself, Ezra Pound, particularly in creating *The Waste Land*; and of several French poets, such as Laforgue, Gautier and others. Eliot’s light verse, and perhaps even his “improper” verse, as Faber coyly calls it in the new collected edition, also deserve scrutiny: as W. H. Auden wrote, “Light verse can be serious”, and takes both skill and the right circumstances to do well: “For poetry which is at the same time light and adult can only be written in a society which is both integrated and free” (Auden, 1937). Perhaps the ideal thing would be to have both volumes – libraries should not discard the 1994 *Companion* if they buy this one, which they should if they want to remain up to date with Eliot studies (without investing in a whole new library of them!).

**David Geall**

*Freelance Reviewer, London, UK*

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## RR 2017/222

### Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism (3rd edition)

*Michael Cart*

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The first edition of Michael Cart’s *From Romance to Realism: 50 Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature* was published in 1996. A lot has changed since then. The late 1990s saw the release of the first *Harry Potter* titles. *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* were still in the distant future. The promise (or threat) of digital books and their impact on the printed page had not yet come to pass. LGBT characters and diverse protagonists with multicultural perspectives were still woefully underrepresented. The second edition, called *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* (2010), addressed many of these issues but, with continued commercial success, the quantity and scope of young adult literature has continued to evolve rapidly, sometimes blurring the lines between genres and audience. In this third edition of the text, larger and longer than the previous edition, Cart demonstrates his expertise in the field as he addresses all of the new trends and titles that have emerged in recent years.

The book is split into two parts, That Was Then and This Is Now. Readers of the previous edition will recognize the chapter headings and content in the That Was Then section as largely unchanged. Those new to the book will discover a clear chronology and contextual explanation of the development of young adult literature as a unique literary category from the 1960s through