

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05067-9 - The Cambridge Companion to the Waste Land
Edited by Gabrielle McIntire
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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
THE WASTE LAND

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is often considered the most important poem written in English in the twentieth century. The poem dramatically shattered old patterns of form and style, proposed a new paradigm for poetry and poetic thought, demanded recognition from all literary quarters, and changed the ways in which it was possible to approach, read, and write poetry. *The Waste Land* helped define the literary and artistic period known as modernism. This *Companion* is the first dedicated to the work as a whole, offering thirteen new essays by an impressive group of international scholars on an extensive range of topics. Written in a style that is at once sophisticated and accessible, these fresh critical perspectives will serve as an invaluable guide for scholars, students, and general readers alike.

Gabrielle McIntire is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Queen's University, Canada. She is the author of *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and has published articles on T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Nella Larsen, and James Joyce in journals and collections including *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Modernism/modernity*, *Narrative*, and *Callaloo*. Her poetry has also appeared internationally, and she sits on the editorial boards of *Twentieth-Century Literature* and *T. S. Eliot Studies Annual*.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.

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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107672574

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First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

The Cambridge Companion to the Waste Land / [edited by] Gabrielle McIntire,
 Queen's University, Canada.

pages cm. – (Cambridge companions to literature)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-107-05067-9 (hardback) – ISBN 978-1-107-67257-4 (paperback)

1. Eliot, T. S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888–1965. *The Waste Land*.

I. McIntire, Gabrielle, editor.

PS3509.L43W3635 2015

821'.912-dc23 2014047360

ISBN 978-1-107-05067-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-67257-4 Paperback

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>Contributors</i>	page xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<i>Brief Chronology of Eliot's Life</i>	xvii
Introduction	I
GABRIELLE MCINTIRE	
PART I HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND PERSONAL CONTEXTS	
1 "The World Has Seen Strange Revolutions Since I Died": <i>The Waste Land</i> and the Great War	9
JEAN-MICHEL RABATÉ	
2 Geographies of Space: Mapping and Reading the Cityscape	24
SPENCER MORRISON	
3 "Mixing/Memory and Desire": What Eliot's Biography Can Tell Us	39
LYNDALL GORDON	
4 Religions East and West in <i>The Waste Land</i>	54
BARRY SPURR	
5 Popular Culture	69
DAVID E. CHINITZ AND JULIA E. DANIEL	
PART II POETIC TECHNIQUES AND METHODS	
6 Form, Voice, and the Avant-Garde	87
MICHAEL LEVENSON	

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-05067-9 - The Cambridge Companion to the Waste Land
 Edited by Gabrielle McIntire
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS

7	Dialectical Collaboration: Editing <i>The Waste Land</i> JEWEL SPEARS BROOKER	102
8	Doing Tradition in Different Voices: Pastiche in <i>The Waste Land</i> MICHAEL COYLE	116
PART III CRITICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES		
9	Gender and Obscenity in <i>The Waste Land</i> RACHEL POTTER	133
10	Trauma and Violence in <i>The Waste Land</i> RICHARD BADENHAUSEN	147
11	Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and New Subjectivities EVE SORUM	162
12	<i>The Waste Land</i> as Ecocritique GABRIELLE MCINTIRE	178
	CODA: <i>The Waste Land's</i> Afterlife: The Poem's Reception in the Twentieth Century and Beyond ANTHONY CUDA	194
	<i>A Short Guide to Further Reading</i>	211
	<i>Index</i>	215

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GABRIELLE MCINTIRE is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Queen's University, Canada. She is the author of *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (2008), and she has published articles or chapters on T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and Nella Larsen. Her poetry has also appeared internationally.

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank first of all my contributors, whose careful work and deep commitment to ongoing explorations of *The Waste Land* have been inspiring throughout the process of making this book. Each contributor has been a marvelous interlocutor, and I will always be grateful for their patience, good humor, exciting new perspectives, and meticulous attention to the details. Special thanks, too, to the contributors who went beyond the call of duty and provided important feedback on overall concepts or on other individual chapters – I appreciate your collegiality immensely. Great thanks, too, go to the anonymous readers of the proposal for this project whose insights helped shape and nuance the aims of the *Companion* long before the volume had come into existence. This *Companion* also owes an enormous debt to Ray Ryan at Cambridge University Press, whose wisdom, acumen, and sheer common sense are unfailing. Thank you, Ray – we could not have done any of this without you. Both Louis Gulino and Caitlin Gallagher at the Press have also been delightful in every exchange, and I am grateful for their good spirit and care with the manuscript. Patrick Moran gave a thorough final read-through of my own chapter on ecocritique in *The Waste Land*, and I want to acknowledge the extraordinary helpfulness of his commentary. A number of colleagues and friends also encouraged me through the incarnation of this *Companion*, either directly or indirectly. For their thoughtfulness, insights, and friendship, I want to mention especially Hortense Spillers, Molly Hite, Linda Hutcheon, Benjamin Hagen, Eduardo Cadava, Dominick LaCapra, John Whittier-Ferguson, Daniel Schwarz, Frances Dickey, Vincent Sherry, Patricia Rae, Edward Lobb, Marta Straznicki, Andrew Bingham, Adriana Hetram, Jodie Medd, Daniel Brayton, Antonia Losano, Greg Stork, Brian Bitar, Kelly Drukker, Claire Boudet, Craig Walker, Farah Cimafranca, Rahul Sapra, John Sutton, and Lee Zimmerman. Each of you gave your time, energy, wisdom, and support at important moments in the book's evolution, and I want to express much gratitude for your presence in my life personally as well as professionally.

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks, too, go to the Department of English at Queen's University for continuing to provide me with a place to feel at home intellectually and collegially. During the making of this *Companion* I had the good fortune of teaching a graduate and an undergraduate seminar devoted in large part to T. S. Eliot. Both groups were exceptional and I was touched by the passion and dedication among those students, some of whom were coming to Eliot for very nearly the first time. The poet and actor John Farrell recited Eliot's entire *Four Quartets* from memory at Queen's during the final stages of editing, and the event infused a new kind of visionary stimulus into the project of always learning how to reread Eliot. During the summer of 2014, my colleagues and students at the T. S. Eliot International Summer School at the University of London, who came from all over the world just for the love of Eliot, gave a final boost of energy and excitement. In London I want especially to thank Gail McDonald, Wim Van-Mierlo, and Christopher Adams for their gracious hospitality and for fostering such a rich intellectual environment. Jeffrey Dzogola helped me prepare the manuscript for submission, and I greatly appreciate his willingness to be another pair of eyes on the material. And through the project I had generous support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), for which I am profoundly grateful. Finally, I could not have done any of this without the care and love of my family: Olivia, Matthias, Eliot, Céline, Madeleine, Isabelle, Thomas, Rebekah, Harley, Mary Carolyn, and little Clara, I thank you from the bottom of my heart – you mean the world to me.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ELIOT'S LIFE

- 1888 On September 26 Thomas Stearns Eliot is born to Henry Ware Eliot and Charlotte Champe Stearns Eliot in St. Louis, Missouri. He is the youngest by nine years of seven children, one of whom had died in infancy. In his adult years Eliot was especially close to his brother Henry, born in 1879.
- 1898 Eliot enrolls at Smith Academy, St. Louis. His grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, had founded the academy in 1854 and was its first chancellor.
- 1905 Eliot publishes several poems in the *Smith Academy Record* and graduates from high school. Moves to Massachusetts to attend Milton Academy, a prestigious preparatory school founded in 1798.
- 1906 Begins his first year at Harvard College, though does not initially excel academically. He studies broadly in the humanities, languages, and literatures, taking courses in the history of ancient art, philosophy, French, German, Greek, Latin, and English literatures.
- 1907 His poem, "Song," appears in the *Harvard Advocate*. He continues to publish in the *Advocate* through his college years and takes up a position on the editorial board in 1909.
- 1909 Graduates from Harvard with an A.B. and begins his M.A., again taking a wide range of courses, especially in English literature, philosophy, and art history. He studies with Irving Babbitt and George Santayana.
- 1910 Creates a poetry notebook titled *Inventions of the March Hare*. Drafts portions of "Portrait of a Lady." In the fall he leaves for Paris to study at the Sorbonne, where he attends

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ELIOT'S LIFE

lectures by Henri Bergson at the Collège de France and lives at 151 bis rue St. Jacques, near the Pantheon and the Sorbonne. He receives private language tutoring with Alain-Fournier and befriends Jean Verdenal.

- 1911 Graduates from Harvard with his M.A. after another trip to Europe where he visits London, Munich, and Northern Italy. Eliot returns to Boston, commencing the doctoral program in philosophy at Harvard where he studies Indian philosophy and Sanskrit. He finishes his first major poems, including "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Portrait of a Lady," "Prelude" [*sic*], and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night."
- 1912 Meets and begins a romantic relationship with Emily Hale. He is appointed assistant in philosophy at Harvard.
- 1913 Reads F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, which becomes the subject of his doctoral dissertation.
- 1914 Meets Bertrand Russell, a visiting professor at Harvard. Travels to London, England, and then Marburg, Germany, en route to taking up a one-year fellowship at Merton College, Oxford. Germany declares war on Russia and invades Luxembourg and Belgium while Eliot is in Marburg; he only manages to reach England several weeks later. Within a week of his arrival in London, he meets Ezra Pound, who is deeply impressed with "Prufrock" and sends it to *Poetry* magazine.
- 1915 Meets Vivien Haigh-Wood in April. Jean Verdenal is killed in the Dardanelles in May. *Poetry* publishes "Prufrock" in June, and in October "The Boston Evening Transcript," "Aunt Helen," and "Cousin Nancy" are also printed in *Poetry*. Eliot marries Vivien Haigh-Wood at the Hampstead Registry Office, London, on June 26. His father stops all financial support. Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* publishes "Preludes," and "Portrait of a Lady" appears in *Others*. Eliot travels to Massachusetts to visit his family and decides not to move back to Boston. Upon his return to England he takes up a teaching post at the High Wycombe Grammar School, established in 1550.
- 1916 Takes up a teaching position at Highgate Junior School in London, founded in 1565. Completes his doctoral thesis, which is accepted by Harvard, but with ocean passage delayed for several days he decides not to return to Boston for his oral

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ELIOT'S LIFE

- defense. Moves with Vivien to Crawford Mansions, London. Starts publishing reviews in *The Monist* and begins lecturing on French and English literature.
- 1917 Gives up teaching at the preparatory school level, though he continues lecturing. Takes up a position with the Colonial and Foreign Department of Lloyd's Bank, London. In April the United States enters the war; Eliot tries to enlist but is declined due to a congenital hernia. The Egoist Limited publishes his first volume of poetry, *Prufrock and Other Observations*. Eliot becomes assistant editor of *The Egoist* magazine.
- 1918 Eliot is still trying to enlist with the U.S. Navy against Vivien Eliot and Ezra Pound's wishes; despite Eliot's ill health the U.S. Military Service sends him an Order of Induction in November but he never sees service. He continues to lecture on Elizabethan literature in London.
- 1919 Eliot's father, Henry Ware Eliot, dies on January 7. Eliot is offered an assistant editorship at the *Athenaeum* but declines. Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press issues *Poems*, his second volume of poetry. Eliot reads and is impressed by James Joyce's *Ulysses* in its serial publication. He lectures on "Poetry" in London, and publishes "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *The Egoist*.
- 1920 Publishes *Ara Vos Prec* in England, and Knopf issues *Poems* – including the addition of "Gerontion" – in the United States. In August Eliot meets James Joyce in Paris and takes a cycling tour in northern France with Wyndham Lewis. *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot's first collection of essays, is published by Methuen.
- 1921 Begins to draft *The Waste Land*. From June to August Eliot's mother, his sister Marian, and his brother Henry visit from the United States. In the fall Eliot suffers a breakdown, seeks medical help, and receives a leave from Lloyd's Bank. He goes to Margate, Kent, by the sea to recuperate, and then to Lausanne, Switzerland, where he is treated by Dr. Roger Vittoz. In November, Eliot shows Ezra Pound drafts of *The Waste Land*.
- 1922 Eliot's health is still unstable, but he decides to found and edit a new journal, the *Criterion*, which he edits until he closes it down in 1939. He finishes *The Waste Land* and publishes it in

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ELIOT'S LIFE

the first issue of the *Criterion* in October. The *Dial* publishes *The Waste Land* in the United States, and Eliot receives the *Dial* prize. Boni and Liverwright publish *The Waste Land* in book form.

- 1923 Virginia and Leonard Woolf publish *The Waste Land* in book form with their Hogarth Press; the poem has already sold 1,250 copies in the United States through the Boni and Liverwright publication. Vivien's health is very poor. Eliot is emotionally and physically taxed by full-time work at Lloyd's Bank, running the *Criterion*, and various personal struggles. The "Bel Esprit" (the "Eliot Fellowship Fund") is launched in an effort by friends and admirers to allow Eliot to leave his job at the bank.
- 1925 Leaves Lloyd's Bank to work with Faber and Gwyer (later Faber and Faber). Publishes *Poems 1909–1925*, which includes "The Hollow Men."
- 1926 Gives Clark lectures at Cambridge University. Publishes *Sweeney Agonistes*. Falls to his knees while visiting Michelangelo's *Pietà* in Rome.
- 1927 Baptized into the Church of England by W. Force Stead at Holy Trinity Church, Bishop's Palace Cuddesdon, near Oxford. He also takes British citizenship.
- 1929 Eliot's mother dies.
- 1930 Publishes *Ash-Wednesday* with Faber and Faber, with print runs in the United States and Britain.
- 1932 Delivers Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard University for several months (through March 1933). Publishes *Selected Essays: 1917–1932*.
- 1933 Separates from his wife, Vivien Eliot. Publishes *After Strange Gods*. Lectures at Johns Hopkins University and at the University of Virginia.
- 1934 Visits Burnt Norton manor in the Cotswolds with Emily Hale.
- 1935 *Murder in the Cathedral* is first performed at Canterbury Cathedral.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ELIOT'S LIFE

- 1936 Publishes *Collected Poems 1909–1935*; the volume includes the first publication of *Burnt Norton*.
- 1938 With her brother, Maurice Haigh-Wood, Eliot commits Vivien Eliot to a mental hospital, Northumberland House, Finsbury Park, London. She will remain there until her death in 1947. Eliot meets Mary Trevelyan.
- 1939 Publishes *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* and *The Family Reunion*. Ceases publication of the *Criterion*, in part due to his growing disillusionment about the possibility for genuine pan-European exchanges of ideas and literatures. The Second World War breaks out. Eliot volunteers as a firewatcher and air-raid warden in London.
- 1940 Publishes *The Idea of a Christian Society*.
- 1943 Publishes all of *Four Quartets*, which had each already appeared in individual pamphlet form. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* appears serially.
- 1945 Visits Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, DC. The war ends.
- 1946 Moves in with the critic, John Davy Hayward, with whom he lives until Eliot marries Valerie Fletcher Eliot in 1957.
- 1948 Eliot is awarded the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize in Literature. *Selected Poems* is published by Penguin, with a run of 50,000 copies. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* is published in book form. He lectures at Princeton University and travels to Andover, Massachusetts, to see Emily Hale.
- 1950 Publishes *The Cocktail Party*, and it is performed at the Edinburgh Festival.
- 1952 *The Complete Poems and Plays* is published by Harcourt in New York. Sees Emily Hale again in Andover, Massachusetts.
- 1953 Travels with Emily Hale and his sister Marian to St. Louis.
- 1957 Eliot marries Valerie Fletcher, his secretary at Faber and Faber since 1949, in secret at St. Barnabus Church, London. Their years together were ones he described as his happiest. Breaks off contact with Emily Hale.

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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- 1961 Delivers his last public lecture, "To Criticize the Critic."
- 1963 After collapsing in December 1962 he spends five weeks in hospital in London in an oxygen tent. *Collected Poems 1909–1962* published by Harcourt in New York.
- 1965 Eliot dies on January 4 in London. Following his wishes, his ashes are later interred in St. Michael and All Angels Anglican Church, East Coker.