

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot

John Xiros Cooper

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*The Cambridge Introduction to
T. S. Eliot*

T. S. Eliot was not only one of the most important poets of the twentieth century; as literary critic and commentator on culture and society, his writing continues to be profoundly influential. Every student of English must engage with his writing to understand the course of modern literature. This book provides the perfect introduction to key aspects of Eliot's life and work, as well as to the wider contexts of modernism in which he wrote. John Xiros Cooper explains how Eliot was influenced by the intellectual climate of both twentieth-century Britain and America, and how he became a major cultural figure on both sides of the Atlantic. The continuing controversies surrounding his writing and his thought are also addressed. With a useful guide to further reading, this is the most informative and accessible introduction to T. S. Eliot.

JOHN XIROS COOPER is Professor of English and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot
John Xiros Cooper
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cambridge Introductions to Literature

This series is designed to introduce students to key topics and authors. Accessible and lively, these introductions will also appeal to readers who want to broaden their understanding of the books and authors they enjoy.

- Ideal for students, teachers, and lecturers
- Concise, yet packed with essential information
- Key suggestions for further reading

Titles in this series:

Bulson *The Cambridge Introduction to James Joyce*

Cooper *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot*

Dillon *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*

Goldman *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*

Holdeman *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*

McDonald *The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett*

Peters *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad*

Scofield *The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story*

Thomson *The Cambridge Introduction to English Theatre, 1600–1900*

Todd *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot

John Xiros Cooper

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot

JOHN XIROS COOPER



Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot
John Xiros Cooper
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521547598

© John Xiros Cooper 2006

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2006

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13 978-0-521-83888-7 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-83888-6 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-54759-8 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-54759-8 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot

John Xiros Cooper

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Kelly

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	page ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
Chapter 1 Life	1
Early life, 1888–1914	1
A bohemian life, 1915–1922	5
Man of letters, 1923–1945	12
The sage, 1945–1965	19
Chapter 2 Contexts	22
Early influences	22
France	23
England	25
Religion	26
Philosophy	27
Culture and society	29
Romanticism and classicism	31
A sense of the past	35
Chapter 3 Works	37
Early poems	41
“Portrait of a Lady”	46
“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”	48
“The Hollow Men”	55
“Gerontion”	56
<i>Poems 1920</i>	59
<i>The Waste Land</i>	62
The Ariel poems and <i>Ash-Wednesday</i>	80

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot
John Xiros Cooper
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
	Plays	88
	Cultural criticism	89
	<i>Four Quartets</i>	92
	Reevaluation	107
	Chapter 4 Critical reception	109
	<i>Notes</i>	117
	<i>The works of T. S. Eliot</i>	120
	<i>Further reading</i>	121
	<i>Index</i>	124

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot

John Xiros Cooper

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

Walk into any university or college library, look up T. S. Eliot in the catalogue, and you will be confronted with many shelves and banks of books by and about him. Most of the books about Eliot, however, are scholarly studies looking at specific aspects of his work. Many of these are written for specialists. This *Introduction*, on the other hand, is written for readers who are, perhaps, new to Eliot but would like an overview of the life and work in order to know more about the man and understand something about his poetry, his ideas, and his place in twentieth-century literary history.

There is as much interest in Eliot now as at any time in the past seventy or eighty years, yet what today's community of readers and critics has to say about him reflects current issues and concerns. Past introductions and companions have helped readers in previous generations to come to grips with a poet whose work can be difficult, but from perspectives that are grounded in their time. This book owes a great debt to those earlier scholars and critics who have contributed so much to our knowledge of the poet. We can say of our understanding of this wealth of scholarship and commentary what Eliot said about a poet's relationship to the writers of the past. We know more than they do, but they are what we know. This *Introduction* rests on the work of those who have thought and written about Eliot over the years. Some distinguished literary critics have in fact themselves offered introductory commentaries. George Williamson's *A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot* (1953) still has much to offer in the way of particular analyses of the key poems. Northrop Frye's small book on the poet, *T. S. Eliot* (1963), provides a compelling, but acerbic, reading of Eliot's ideas. Perhaps the most popular short introduction for students has been B. C. Southam's *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot* (1969) and it is still a very useful guide. There are also a number of casebooks and A. D. Moody's essential *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot* (1994) for those who would like to pursue the work in more detail.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-54759-8 - The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot

John Xiros Cooper

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x *Preface*

The current book has been written to introduce a great poet to a new generation of readers, students as well as the general reader. It tries to capture the complexity of a difficult man and poet but in a language and approach that will not alienate the nonspecialist. An introduction, however, is no substitute for direct knowledge of the work. If you are encouraged by what you read here to acquaint yourself more fully with T. S. Eliot, then this little book will have achieved its primary goal.

Abbreviations

- ASG *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*. London: Faber and Faber, 1934
- CP *Collected Poems: 1909–1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 1968
- FLA *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order*. London: Faber and Faber, 1928
- Idea *The Idea of a Christian Society*. London: Faber and Faber, 1939
- Notes *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. 1948; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1988
- PP *On Poetry and Poets*. London: Faber and Faber, 1957
- SE *Selected Essays*. 1932; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1951
- SW *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. 1919; rpt. London: Methuen, 1957
- Use *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. 1933; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1964