



Collected Poems, 1909-1962

T.S. Eliot

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There is no more authoritative collection of the poetry that Eliot himself wished to preserve than this volume, published two years before his death in 1965.

Poet, dramatist, critic, and editor, T. S. Eliot was one of the defining figures of twentieth-century poetry. This edition of Collected Poems 1909-1962 includes his verse from *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) to *Four Quartets* (1943), and includes such literary landmarks as *The Waste Land* and *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*.

Collected Poems, 1909-1962 Details

Date : Published 1963 by Harcourt Brace

ISBN : 9780151189786

Author : T.S. Eliot

Format : Hardcover 240 pages

Genre : Poetry, Classics, Literature



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Joe says

Way too much here for a real review, but I had to write something about the volume that's been my tattered, marked-up, much-loved companion for twelve years now. I feel Eliot's ache for transcendence, his paralyzing frustration at the limitations of language to communicate the depths of our souls. And yet he did it better than anyone ever has. It's intellectual, yes, but it's from an intellectual perpetually pushing across into the visceral, never quite unifying it all fully, and knowing that the action itself, not the getting there, is the blessing.

Less floridly, in general the most famous stuff is the best. The Four Quartets are my favorite poem(s) of all time, and Ash-Wednesday is nearly as good. (For some reason The Waste Land has never resonated deeply with me except in parts, though.)

Komal Grandhi says

These are the poems I want to wallow in.

Georgia Bell says

I appreciate T.S. Eliot as a influential and significant writer of classic literature. However, I find it difficult to understand the truest meaning of his words. Truthfully that is a fault of mine, but poetry has never been something I am drawn to. In saying that, I'm willing to look deeper into his poetry to better understand it.

Laura Cunha says

<http://leiturasdelaura.blogspot.com.br...>

Mais um livro de poesia da leva que terminei no início de outubro! O hábito de ler poesia todos os dias de manhã tem esses efeitos... além de outros muito agradáveis, como começar o dia bem.

T.S.Eliot é um autor americano que morou boa parte de sua vida fora dos Estados Unidos, e que ganhou o prêmio Nobel de literatura em 1948. Infelizmente essa coletânea não possui toda a sua obra, e eu fiquei babando por causa disso... mas ao mesmo tempo ela mostra o crescimento do autor, o que é muito legal de perceber.

Boa parte dos poemas iniciais desse livro mostram um autor querendo mostrar o seu conhecimento intelectual, o que para mim soou um tanto quanto arrogante, depois ele se aprofunda mais na questão religiosa, que perpassa por toda a obra, o que de vez em quando me incomoda e de vez em quando eu gosto. Lá pela metade do livro fiquei com a sensação que ele finalmente se achou, e aí sai de baixo, o trabalho de

Eliot é realmente de cair o queixo, ele não ganhou o Nobel a toa, mesmo. Meus poemas favoritos dele infelizmente são absurdamente longos, divididos em partes diferentes mas que tratam do mesmo tema, e por isso era complicado de colocar algum como exemplo em cima dessa resenha.

Agora vou precisar procurar outras coisas dele, como seus romances e peças (alguns pedaços de peças estão até nesse livro, e eu curti), para ver suas outras facetas. Virei fã.

Brandon says

Eliot was the first poet that I was drawn to as I began my intellectual and artistic maturation. My high school English teacher showed us "The Hollow Men", and "Preludes". I fell in love with them on first reading, and there is something about Eliot's style that is so affecting; he places words in an order that, from a more objective point of view is quite odd, but create such a vivid mood or atmosphere that you can't help but be moved. This is especially true of his later work, like the infamous "The Wasteland" and "The Four Quartets".

I come back to Eliot, out of fondness for my first experiences with his work, but also out of a continuing insight I find there. His religious themes do not resonate with me as they would with other believers, but they do resonate with me in that they are evocative of a man searching for meaning amid post-industrial modernism, even as he is embracing modernist literary style.

"Do I dare to eat a peach?"

Carly says

****edited 02/02/14**

In general, if there's some sort of sliding scale of poetic appreciation, I'm somewhere near $-\infty$. The first forewarning of a couplet makes me cringe, and other than the subject matter, I can't really distinguish Longfellow from a limerick. One of my few--very few-- exceptions is T.S. Eliot. He embeds incredibly evocative phrases within a bewildering twisting medley of free verse. His poems use assonance and alliteration to twine disparate commonplaces with sudden poignant truths so that the whole is somehow imbued with the tones and significance of alien moods. This particular collection contains several gems that didn't make it into the various books of "selected poems."

Some of phrases from these excluded (if I remember correctly) poems:

"Whispers of Immortality":

*[He] was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin*
...
*He knew that thought clings round dead limbs
Tightening its lusts and luxuries.*
...

*No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.*

...

Due to my disapproval of GR's new and highly subjective review deletion policy, I am no longer posting full reviews here.

The rest of this review can be found on Booklikes.

ilknur a.k.a. iko ? says

neden can?m eliot çevrilmiyor bu memlekette?

Leslie says

While I love some of the poems, others I didn't care for at all. So it is hard to rate the book as a whole... These poems were selected by Eliot himself just a few years before he died as the best of his work and it certainly contains all of his most famous work EXCEPT for the fact it doesn't even have one poem from "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats". With that in mind, I cannot whole-heartedly recommend it as a single sole volume of Eliot's poetry.

I am not much of a modernist, so it is perhaps not surprising that I found many of the so-called "minor poems" more enjoyable than the more serious (and to me often more obscure) verses. My favorites:

- The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock
- Portrait of a Lady
- The Waste Land (*reviewed separately*)
- Ahe-Wednesday V (*If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent*)
- Five-finger Exercises (esp. I *Lines to a Persian Cat*)
- Landscapes (esp. V *Cape Ann*)
- Burnt Norton from *Four Quartets*
- To the Indians Who Died in Africa

Jacob Aitken says

Good theology can be iconic. And being iconic it is poetic. It is an icon put in words. It is like faithful hermeneutics. The Patristics were accused of Platonizing and allegorizing. Not so. Despite all their excesses, they saw (better than the academic professor today) that the Bible yearns to break through with new meaning and simple, surface level interpretations are not enough.

Not to diminish literal interpretation, but not to exalt it either.

T.S. Eliot is probably the supreme example of a theo-poet. Indeed, his writing is iconic. It is indirect and perhaps jarring at first glance, but the awakened mind sees he reveals depth. Like the icon, we see in Eliot another dimension.

Decadence or Neo-Medievalism: Initial Thoughts on the Poetry of T. S. Eliot

Or perhaps Decadent Medievalism. Is it a conjunction or a disjunction? Probably both. Eliot's life, particularly his marriage, wasn't enviable. I must preface this admitting I am very new to the poetry of Eliot. People told me I would love him, for we yearn for the old days of Christendom but must (as of now) settle for decadent materialism.

I couldn't get interested at first. I guess I was let down. His poetry seemed chaotic and rambling while I was expecting castles and fairies, though a few poems like "Macavity" were quite charming. Then I realized that Eliot is supposed be chaotic because modernity is chaotic. Eliot's indirect argument for medievalism, if indeed he is making such an argument, is the decadence of today.

Can this be Evangelistic?

Sometimes. Indirect attacks can often get behind the armor.

Safa Fatima says

This is the best poem collection I've ever read. After I was done reading it I was telling my mother, "It kills me. It kills me."

T.S. Eliot paints a picture so vivid you can't help but see it, it forms on its own, it penetrates your soul, it speaks to your mind, it fills your eyes. Eliot is what a poet ought to be, the complete embodiment. He reaches deep into you and pulls on your heart strings. He shows you what poetry can be, what it can do, how high it can reach.

I just loved every, really every, bit of this book and I know for sure I want to read it again. Actually, I was a little melancholic reaching the end and I felt like I wanted to read more. It is a great great piece of art and if you haven't read Eliot, you don't know what you're missing.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Collected poems 1909 -1962, T.S. Eliot

This edition of Collected Poems 1909-1962 includes his verse from Prufrock and Other Observations (1917) to Four Quartets (1943), and includes such literary landmarks as The Waste Land and Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats.

?New York?: ?Harcourt Brace and Company?, ?1991, 221 Pages, Isbn 0151189781?

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Szplug says

That's all the facts, when you come to brass tacks:

Birth, and copulation, and death.

I've been born and once is enough.

You don't remember, but I remember,

Once is enough.

Well here again that don't apply

But I've gotta use words when I talk to you

When you're alone like he was alone

You're either or neither

I tell you again it don't apply

Death or life or life or death

Death is life and life is death

I gotta use words when I talk to you

But if you understand or if you don't

That's nothing to me and nothing to you.

I always find it curious how much Eliot—quite conservative in character and anxious about what he regarded as a modern cultural evolutionary tendency, abetted by the dry rationalism of an increasingly technical society, towards pressing everything downwards unto the lowermost tier of the coarse, the vulgar, the profane, the commonplace—embraced a modernist grasp of language, with all of its form-fluid possibilities and permutations, in order to work his utterly unique manner of lyrical genius. And it *is* genius, at the very least by any aesthetic measure; combining words into lines and phrases that leap off of the page in all of their graceful poignancy and grab the reader by the soul, pierce the superficial layers of the memory to embed themselves within the selfsame chambers that house such perduring residents as the framed vista of supernally brilliant swathes of colour that suffused with flowering existence a memorable, cloud-garbed sunset; mayhap an instant when, flush with the harmonious pressure of musical gales, impaled and frozen upon a hook sonically plunged in an arc through the soul, your breath seized-up in a drawn interval balancing between the explosion and implosion of life; or perhaps the roseate, winsome, heart-punching smile of a youthful beauty that captured the entirety of your pubescent heart and cranked the inner thermostat to fluttering scorch; or even the first moment when, still as a statue in the midst of a world in constant motion, that sense of limpid, fulsome connexion with the cosmos in its entirety—with its subtle divine pressure to drive you down upon your knees—hummed through every fiber of your being with a tellurian energy ultimately derived from cosmogonic fuel of the most primordial lineage. And when you can, through the application of diligent reasoning and intuitive sleuthing, discern the implicit meaning behind the elegantly moving textual façade, you realize that Eliot truly belongs in that first-tier of twentieth century poets, masterfully forging personal commiserations by means of linguistic elements invariably held at somewhat of

a remove—the better to penetrate the obfuscations of an age engaged in the shedding and shoring-up of beliefs—that it might seize and squeeze your spiritual nuts. An early favourite of mine, and this collection contains one marvel after another from the lengthy span of his versified creativity.

John Hughes says

Eliot was certainly a profound thinker and poet. This father and Fabre edition is the perfect introduction to his poetry, opening with the more raw Eliot of Prufrock through his sculpting as an artist with The Hollow Men, The Wasteland, Ash Wednesday, Choruses from the Rock and Four Quartets.

Hollow Men remains the most solidified poetic experience that Eliot can give. Though I enjoyed Choruses from the Rock and Ash Wednesday immensely.

I read this quickly after Ezra Pound's Personae, and, if push came to shove, I would side with Pound being the better poet. Eliot is still in modernity, half recoiling in horror, half looking upward for salvation. Pound has already left - his salvation arrived in Greece.

James Murphy says

I've spent my life reading Eliot. When I was a high school junior I had a teacher who turned me on to poetry. She showed me the truth in Sandburg, but I soon discovered Eliot on my own. A story I still love to tell is how I spent the summer of my 17th year walking around with a library copy of Eliot's poems under my arm. A cousin asked me, "You're not reading that stuff, are you?" Well, I was and still am.

My copy of Collected Poems was the second hardcover book I ever bought, after Sandburg's Collected Poems. Eliot has followed the arc of a man's reading life. A sun moving through a sky. From the boy walking summer with Eliot tucked under his arm to the much older man still reading for the umpteenth time, that volume now full of notes and underlinings indicating an understanding if not quite yet the understanding. I'll keep coming back because I'll never be able to complete that understanding. Conrad Aiken famously said of The Waste Land that it succeeds because of its ambiguities. I think that's true. I think that each reader gets his own meaning from Eliot because he wrote the poetry everyone needs. Sooner or later you come to it. I know he gave me something I could carry with me my whole life. It's lasted that long.

As long as he can set me vibrating like a tuning fork I'll never become insensitive to his poetry. His work is comfort. It's the honey made in season that you have to taste and taste.

Seth Woodley says

Eliot writes some beautiful poetry, particularly "The Wasteland" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." I also like "The Hippopotamus," "The Hollow Men," "The Four Quartets," and "Ash Wednesday." There are other poems that I don't really understand (some of them are not written in English). Nevertheless, it is nearly always evident that Eliot is a careful, master craftsman. He is a master of figurative language, and he has a clear depth of knowledge that he is able to weave into his works. It is somewhat difficult to rate a whole collection of poetry. However, there are some excellent and wonderful poems in this collection. There are

some that are not so great. There is a lot to learn and to enjoy in Eliot's writing.

April says

A breathtakingly rich collection of classic poems, with masterpieces such as 'The Hollow Men' and the classical 'Waste Land' resounding triumphantly through the pages. Eliot's fragmentary texts are beautiful; lush in a brilliant, burning way, with lines such as '*Ash on an old man's sleeve / Is all the ash the burnt roses leave*' proving his lyrical gift for making music with words. It's as Eliot himself describes in part V of 'Little Gidding':

**'And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together).'**

His words always plunge me deep into a sort of mental 'labyrinth,' where I prod here and there to decipher his inner meaning in his sentences. His paradoxical nature has always both frustrated and delighted me for years, and I love him for it.

*"The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms."*

I purchased more of Eliot after finishing his delightful 'Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats' and finding it quite heartwarming. I was fortunate enough to discover this book not long after, and have thoroughly enjoyed each moment spent with it. I imagine it'll be one of those poetry books I always rummage about for on ill, uninspiring days, or days when I'm just in need for a good 'mellow'. My favourites are compacted with both new and old; I discovered little gems here and there, but works such as 'The Hollow Men' have always been a favourite of mine for years. Eliot treasures from this book include: 'La Figlia Che Piange,' the tragically unfinished 'Sweeney Agonistes,' 'Little Gidding,' 'A Note on War Poetry,' the short 'Death by Water,' and 'To Walter de la Mare;' a tribute to another of my favourite poets.

*'Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnet roses leave
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended
Dust inbreathed was a house
The walls, the wainscot and the mouse'*

The death of hope and despair
This is the death of air.'

All sorts of beautiful. A five, in every way.

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."

Taka says

Don't really know--

I have a mixed feeling about Eliot's poems. I found his *Prufrock* impenetrable, *The Wasteland* annoying, frustrating, and mostly incomprehensible, *Ash Wednesday* somewhat interesting in parts but too heavily religious. His *The Hollow Men*, however, resonated with me in all its haunting and chilling overtones. *Ariel Poems, Minor Poems, Unfinished Poems* were all meh (and can anyone explain to me what the hell's going on in his eerily Beckett-esque *Sweeney's Agonistes*?!?!?). *Four Quartets* was quite interesting in its own light, but I wasn't exactly sure what he was trying to say or describe. I did underline some particularly good lines from it, though:

"Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden. My words echo / Thus, in your mind" ("Burnt Norton," I)

"Words, after speech, reach / Into the silence..." ("Burnt Norton," V)

"What we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning. / The end is where we start from" ("Little Gidding," V)

Overall, I probably have to spend more time absorbing them. A lot of things do get lost on the first read and it is in the slower second read that we can hope to gain a deeper understanding. Poetry is different from fiction, and I'm still an amateur reader of the verse.

The "Occasional Verse" section had some cool, charming poems, and let me quote a section from it:

"The enduring is not a substitute for the transient. / Neither one for the other. But the abstract conception / Of private experience at its greatest intensity / Becoming universal, which we call 'poetry', / May be affirmed in verse" ("A Note on War Poetry").

Overall, Eliot's poems taught me how important it is to spend time with each poem and how difficult is to read poetry in general. It seems the reader is looking for poems that best describe their "private experience at its greatest intensity," which means the reader blatantly reads meaning into the text (who doesn't?). To the extent that I came away with a poem I liked (*The Hollow Men*), I'd say the reading was fruitful.

Peycho Kanev says

Critics of Eliot damn his work for its difficulties - and one cannot deny that its complicated diversions into technical and structural experimentation, mythical reference and multilingual commentary do initially intimidate. The beauty of Eliot's poetry is that it grows with you. Eliot doesn't always succeed, and many of his poems seem trite and pretentious, but when he succeeds he hits dead on with poetry perfect in form, balance, and sound. There is the man here, the poet as reflected in his own work, but there is also common human experience through looking at history ("The Waste Land") and meditating on Man's relationship with the Divine and the eternal (Ariel Poems, and most of his output after 1928). This collection is a wonderful summary of the poetic works of one of the major literary figures of the twentieth century. For a complete overview of Eliot you should read at least one of his plays (Murder In The Cathedral) and one of his volumes of critical essays.

Geoff says

It's weird. I'm pretty sure I dislike reading T.S. Eliot's poetry. I was trying to find some words to explain this, and here's what I came up with. They remind me of the monuments in good old Washington DC. The first time you see them, there they are, all towering stone and wrought figures, some very human, some quite abstract representational polygons, full of whatever amount of symbolic subtext. Mighty. Intimidating. White. Symmetrical. Immovable. Seemingly there from the outset of time, meaning all of these *things* that they will forever embody. Important things. But if you live here, if you see them often enough, they just kind of start feeling... monumental, and monumental only. That is massive, imposing, built to last, with all that historical significance. But in many ways dull, never-changing, never showing new sides or varying interiors. The interiors are always the same with every visit. Lincoln's bearded visage over time starts to become a pretty tedious stone representation of Lincoln's bearded visage. After a little more time, the monuments become background and are incapable of being seen at all, and then when you do revisit them, to try to see them again, they evoke very little in terms of inspiration or feeling. Then what are they but artfully arranged stones? That's how I think of Eliot's poems, even the best ones, which in my opinion are The Hollow Men and The Four Quartets. I understand their formal perfection. I understand their magisterial harmony. But I can't come back to them and keep digging things out of them with pleasure. After awhile they aren't *elusive*. Once their secrets are disclosed they immediately enter stasis. I think Frank O'Hara is a better poet than T.S. Eliot. I expect this will enrage a few people. But O'Hara's work possesses elements that I find fundamentally lacking in Eliot's: humorous melancholy, strange language that manages to stay alive beyond multiple readings, amateurishness (which is important), willingness to sound ridiculous, or even superfluous at times, in the search of the oblique sentiment that is inexactly, perfectly human. There is nothing superfluous in Eliot, and that is a flaw. O'Hara produced thousands of poems, on lunch breaks, on the subway, on walks, on napkins at restaurants, on postcards, probably on toilet paper. When I think of Eliot writing I think of him *in a three-piece suit* seated at a mahogany desk with a candle burning! And I am fully aware that he lived in an era of abundant electrical lighting! This is a problem. Eliot is for the universities, and we needed him to exist, if for nothing else to write "The Wasteland" when the world needed "The Wasteland". But it's O'Hara's collected poems I keep by the bedside.

Paul Bryant says

What the hell does this mean? Anybody?

SWEENEY AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate giraffe.

The circles of the stormy moon
Slide westward toward the River Plate,
Death and the Raven drift above
And Sweeney guards the hornèd gate.

Gloomy Orion and the Dog
Are veiled; and hushed the shrunken seas;
The person in the Spanish cape
Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees

Slips and pulls the table cloth
Overturns a coffee-cup,
Reorganised upon the floor
She yawns and draws a stocking up;

The silent man in mocha brown
Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes;
The waiter brings in oranges
Bananas figs and hothouse grapes;

The silent vertebrate in brown
Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;
Rachel née Rabinovitch
Tears at the grapes with murderous paws;

She and the lady in the cape
Are suspect, thought to be in league;
Therefore the man with heavy eyes
Declines the gambit, shows fatigue,

Leaves the room and reappears
Outside the window, leaning in,
Branches of wistaria
Circumscribe a golden grin;

The host with someone indistinct
Converses at the door apart,

The nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud,
And let their liquid siftings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud
