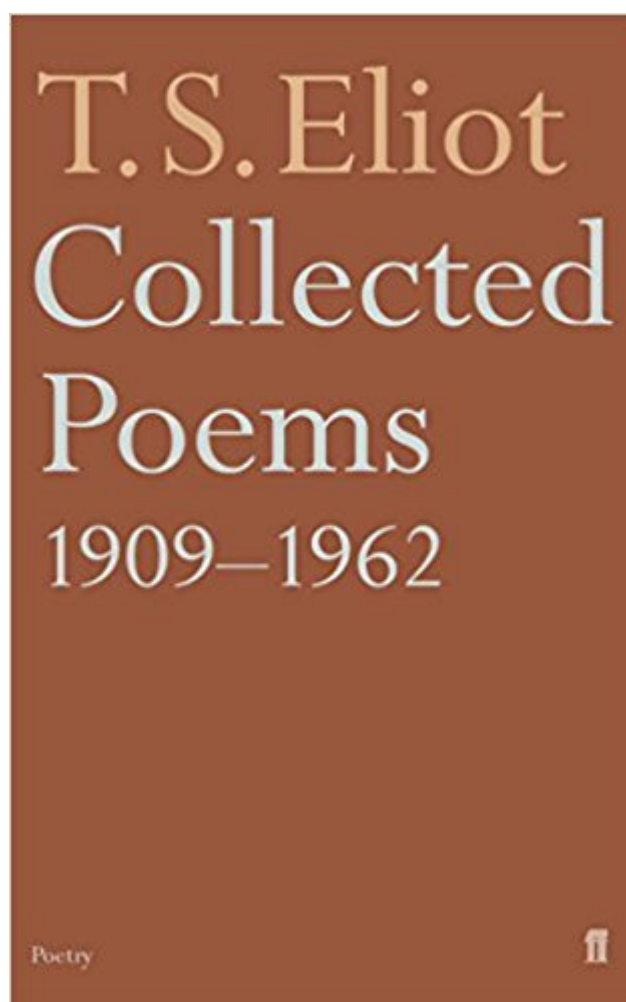


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Collected Poems, 1909–1962



Synopsis

'Each year Eliot's presence reasserts itself at a deeper level, to an audience that is surprised to find itself more chastened, more astonished, more humble.' Ted Hughes 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.

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Customer Reviews

Every now and then certain turns of phrase or glimpses of landscapes in special light or just buried memories of poetic lines surface and send us back to the source for more. So often that source for this reader is TS Eliot and encountering this wondrous collection of his poems written between 1909 and 1962 reinforces the power of this great man of letters. This collection includes the major poems, those works that impacted our philosophy and our art in ways we are only now beginning to appreciate. From the ever fresh LOVE SONG OF J.ALFRED PRUFROCK "I grow old...I grow old.../I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled" and "We have lingered in the chambers of the sea/By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown/Till human voices wake us, and we drown.") to the great FOUR QUARTETS ("In my beginning is my end"), this poet rattled the universe and simultaneously whispered solace in our ears like few others have done. While my own energies are always looking for the new in poets and in writers, finding that the throne of literature has never been so sought after, I am deeply moved by returning to the masters, the source of it all. This is a

fine collection for the Eliot devotees as well as for those who seek to appreciate the great voices of literature. Here are savoury moments in abundance!

Love him or hate him, you cannot deny his power. All arguments for and against Mr. Eliot can be countered easily and each have in them flaws that are substantial. T. S. Eliot cannot be read like most poets. Like the eastern scriptures he so loved, Eliot will take a lifetime for the reader to digest. Read and re-read. Question and re-read again. I became familiar with his works years ago. I have yet to tire of them. Eliot will grow with you, for his poems are the story of a man always growing and always searching. Discount the fighting that academics have over him. Read him for yourself. Immerse yourself in the spiral of darkness and light that is his poetry and judge for yourself. In the end, no matter what you think, you will not be able to deny his effect.

I became familiar with Eliot's work chronologically, learning something new at each step. "Prufrock" introduced me to modern poetical structure, "The Waste Land" showed me how literary allusion can enrich verse, "Ash-Wednesday" refreshed the world of religious poetry, and the supernal "Four Quartets" was for me a metaphysical insight of the greatest beauty. Eliot is without a doubt the finest poet of the 20th century, perhaps the finest poet ever. His contributions to the poets who came after him, and to literature in general, are persistently evident. 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).

Responding to the response to the first review. Kerry Flannery-Reilly was thinking of The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950, which is not complete, because it only includes 2 plays and lacks a few of the poems (including "The Cultivation of Christmas Trees," the last Ariel Poem and the beautiful "A Dedication to My Wife" which Russell Kirk highlights as the capstone of Eliot and His Age). This volume, Collected Poems, contains the complete poems Eliot wrote in his adulthood except for Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats and, of course, the plays (to be found in Collected Plays).

When you think of the best poets ever, T.S. Eliot is one of those that comes to mind. His work is well crafted, intelligent, beautifully written, and has a flow to it that few poets can match. And this is a fine

collection for the Eliot lover or for the reader unfamiliar with Eliot. It's divided into several sections. The first section is his Prufrock section, poems from 1917, which contains probably his finest poems: "Prufrock", "Preludes" "Rhapsody on a Windy Night", "Hysteria", among others. Then there is the Poems 1920 section which also contains many fine poems ("Sweeney Erect" and "The Hippopotamus" being my favorites). Then follows his masterpiece The Wasteland. Then The Hollow Men which is followed by the wonderful Ash Wednesday. Then the Ariel Poems (which contains "Journey of the Magi"). Then there are two unfinished poems, "Sweeney Agonistes" and "Coriolan" which I thought were weak. Maybe they would have been great had he ever finished them. Then there is a section called minor poems followed by the mediocre "Choruses from 'The Rock.'" And then there is what I consider to be his true masterpiece, "Four Quartets." And the book finishes with some occasional verses, one of which is a sweet and touching poem to his wife. This is a great collection of poems.

Certainly this is a valuable and nicely done volume of Eliot's work. But the Centenary Edition of his collected poetry does not contain many of the pieces claimed in the Reilly review. It certainly does not include any of Eliot's plays--as should be expected in a publication titled "Collected Poems." Nor does it include, in entirety or in selection, anything from "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats." I wish I had a copy of the book Kerry Reilly read: it is a volume vastly superior in content to the Collected Poems 1909-1962 published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (cover showing). Perhaps Reilly has mistakenly reviewed Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 instead of Collected Poems 1909-1962. This is an excellent collection, but it bears little similarity to Kerry Flannery Reilly's version of it. Buyer beware.

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