

Selected Poems

T.S. Eliot

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Chosen by Eliot himself, the poems in this volume represent the poet's most important work before Four Quartets. Included here is some of the most celebrated verse in modern literature-"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Gerontion," "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men," and "Ash Wednesday"-as well as many other fine selections from Eliot's early work.

Selected Poems Details

Date : Published October 18th 1967 by Mariner Books (first published January 1st 1930)

ISBN: 9780156806473

Author: T.S. Eliot

Format: Paperback 128 pages

Genre: Poetry, Classics, Literature

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Rebecca Foster says

I first read Eliot in college for a survey class appropriately titled The Modern Wasteland. Even though that was nearly 15 years ago, I still remember "Prufrock" and "The Wasteland" itself. We must have also read "Ash-Wednesday," because some of its lines were familiar to me ("Teach us to care and not to care / Teach us to sit still"). On this reading it was that and "Choruses from 'The Rock" that had the strongest impact. I was struck afresh by how Eliot incorporates Christian language and imagery in his often slightly nightmarish visions of modern life, and by how good he is at the level of the individual line – so many phrases have been borrowed for titles of other books. Most of the poems from the 1917, 1920 and 1925 collections just washed over me, but there are some lines from "Ash-Wednesday" and "Choruses from 'The Rock'" that I've marked out to read again (and again and again).

Stef says

"Do I dare Disturb the universe?"

Reading his poetry is such a unique experiance, it is like I know what the next line is going to be before reading it. The ideas and images follow one another so effortlessly, it is so immensely captivating, touching and inspiring.

I had a small piece of paper next to me while reading it, which is now covered in quotes.

E.X.Γ. ? says

"Στα θαλ?σσια δ?ματα πλανι?μαστε στεφανωμ?νοι απ? ξωθι?ς με φ?κια πορφυρ? ?σπου φων?ς ανθρ?πων μας ξυπν?νε, και πνιγ?μαστε."

"Πο? ε?ναι η Ζω? που χ?σαμε εν? ζο?σαμε; Πο? ε?ναι η σοφ?α που χ?σαμε στη γν?ση;"

" Π ? yaive, π ? yaive, ϵ ? $\pi\epsilon$ to π oul?: to and ρ ? π ivo to γ ? voc den thn ant? ceithn π oll? π raymatik? thta."

Ena Rusnjak Markovic says

Best read out-loud for yourself, and remember misogyny and antisemitism does not mean poetry void of beauty and truth. The grimy beauty of Eliot's masterful versification compresses and plants dense metaphysical ideas next to one another which find their expression in a pure and controlled diction. I'm afraid I was often left writhing in some kind of paroxysm of pleasure. This is difficult poetry with an

encyclopedic sprawl of references but very rewarding if you're invested. My favourites comprise the first half of this particular collection.

"I am moved by fancies that are curled Around these images, and cling; The notion of some infinitely gentle Infinitely suffering thing."

Madeline says

"Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow
For Thine is the Kingdom
Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow
Life is very long"

"Because I do not hope to turn again Let these words answer For what is done, not to be done again May the judgement not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly But merely vans to beat the air The air which is now thoroughly small and dry Smaller and dryer than the will Teach us to care and not to care Teach us to sit still"

"And indee there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;

Time for you and time for me, And time yet for a hundred indecisions, And for a hundred visions and revisions, Before the taking of toast and tea."

I'll be honest: I understand about 5% of everything Eliot writes. When I read his poems, I first don't understand it, read it again, think I understand it, read some more, and then forget what it was I thought I understood.

But I still love nearly everything I read by him, so I don't feel too bad about this.

Carly says

**edited 01/29/14

In general, my reading tastes are pulp-press-simple. I can neither appreciate, nor enjoy, nor, I admit, even understand, poetry. But Eliot is different, and I don't know why. I have very little understanding of what is going on in the poems themselves, but the lines that are so seeped in meaning and imagery and are so tangible that I can taste them as I read.

I remember having to analyse the first part of "The Waste Land" in high school, and, for once, hating the ponderous application of reason and logic and inference and analysis to something that, to me, stands outside and in some ways beyond meaning.

So I don't really analyse the poems. I just read them for those evocative lines.

A few of my favourites:

~~~~ "The Hollow Men" ~~~~~ (Probably my favorite poem, incidentally, possibly because it is both haunting and interpretable.)

'This is the way the world ends Not with a bang but a whimper.'

'Remember us--if at all--not as lost violent souls, but only as the hollow men'

'Shape without form, shade without colour Paralysed force, gesture without motion'

'Eyes I dare not meet in dreams'

'in that final meeting In the twilight kingdom' 'The supplication of a dead man's hand Under the twinkle of a fading star'

'Lips that would kiss Form prayers to broken stone'

'In this valley of dying stars In this hollow valley'

'The hope only Of empty men'

'Between the essence And the descent Falls the shadow'

•••

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.

# Erica Zahn says

Surprise, surprise, Mr. Eliot has a way with words.

Somehow I had managed not to read any Eliot until now, but he is obviously pretty great. He clearly has a lot of value in an objective sense as a modern classic poet (and is hardly unrecognised in this regard) but I would definitely have to read more to see if he is 'my' sort of poet, though I think I have engaged pretty well with what I found here and would definitely still like to read his poetry in full as well as exploring his other contributions.

A few things that stood out to me were the juxtaposition of the cosmic and the mundane, the way established images can be used and developed to create entirely new ones, and the use of ideas in combination to express a greater idea about their relationship without any further need for explanation. I also noticed that the last line is often the best. My main concern with this collection is that I am sure there is plenty of subtext and deeper symbolic meaning that I have missed (and would probably need some sort of annotated edition to help me in this regard), but other reviewers have noted this problem and yet still said that this knowledge didn't impair their enjoyment (and thus given the collection five stars anyway), so although it bothered me a bit and the thought distracted me and stopped me from being immersed in my reading I suppose it shouldn't bother me as much as it actually does.

## **Dolors says**

That a poet who rejected modernity because it separated men from God wrote in a contemporary, ground-breaking style that defied classic understanding is not only ironic, but also a prodigy. Eliot's creative output is a case of study on its own because the words that compose his verses transcend literal sense through structural frame and allocation. It's not until one feels the irresistible pull to recite Eliot's poems out loud that the perplexing repetition, the echo of recurrent expressions, placed and misplaced, lost and recovered, in stillness and movement, form a whole unit of sound that possesses an incantatory, almost karmic effect that *Seamus Heaney* describes as "soundscape", that Eliot's verses acquire indomitable meaning.

Take these stanzas in *Ash-Wednesday* as examples:

"Because I know that time is always time And place is always and only place And what is actual is actual only for one time And only for one place"

Or

"If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard.
The Word without a word, the Word within"

The wordplay goes deeper than presenting an ambiguous, fragmentary aspect that obscures its possible interpretation, it speaks of an extraordinary feverish state that moves from spiritual barrenness towards resignation, passing through loss and angst that converge in the last section of the poem with a flicker of hope achieved through exhaustion.

The protagonists of the early poems, Mr. Alfred Prufrock, with his unfulfilled yearning and carnal desire, and Mr. Sweeney, the opposite of the former with his directness in addressing basic and more lascivious appetites; get easily entangled with the voice of the poet creating a dramatic pulse that blends with the confessional tone of an inner monologue delivered in rhyme. Still, the numerous literary references to Dante, Shakespeare, the French symbolists and of course, the Bible, enable endless connotations to the poems; satire, parody, paean or ode; all coexist in the polysemic verses that are united by the common musicality of Eliot's delivery.

Even though I admired the architectural device of the philosophical meditation on death and self-denial confronted through the prism of Eastern vs. Western aestheticism that permeates "The Waste Land" or the hypnotic moralizing of the Choruses from "The Rock", my heart leapt, my soul soared with "Marina" and the most comforting bleakness tinted my spirit with black emptiness of "The Hollow Men". The first is an allegoric tribute to The Bard and his tendency to present truth as craziness, using the most vivid imagery related to the sea; and the second is a fugue to the inherent isolation that consumes man's soul when confronted with its artificial, superficial needs.

In the end, like the yews that offer ominous shade to Eliot's poetic landscape, words represent the secret depths of the human ethos, but they will always elude stationary definitions. Their worth is merely symbolical, ethereal, straddling reality and appearance, eternal life and mortality. Them words linger and become more solid when they reverberate in the dark cavities of our consciousness.

"I made this, I have forgotten

And remember.

The rigging weak and the canvas rotten
Between one June and another September.
Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own."

#### Included in this selection:

- Prufrock and other observations
- Poems 1920, a selection.
- The Waste Land
- The Hollow Men
- · Ash-Wednesday
- Choruses from "The Rock"

# Cvi \* says

# Jo (An Unexpected Bookish Geek) says

I have came across T.S Eliot's work before, in the format of the poem "The Wasteland" I rather enjoyed this, and I have always been eager ever since to read more of his works.

I love the sheer complexity of Eliot's poetry, and the level of thought and construction that has gone into the writing, is simply amazing. I liked this collection, but I didn't love it. There were a few poems that particularly stood out for me, and there were some I didn't care for in the least.

There were some poems that focused strongly on religion, and this made it difficult for me to access or relate to them.

Overall, it is worth the time to read, even if it's a book just to dip into every now and again.

#### aya says

Understanding can come with growth and/or maturity, but how do we know when our dislike of something comes from lack of understanding rather than a simple matter of taste? Eliot lays himself bare, his insecurities and lowest parts offered. He is his audience, he is his reader--the root of the truth in his words. Genius and honesty combined is daunting, but there is beauty to carry you through.

## **Eve Kay says**

My life is light, waiting for the death wind, Like a feather on the back of my hand. Dust in sunlight and memory in corners Wait for the wind that chills towards the dead land.

These selected poems were excellent. Such skill but also a lot of profoundness. Also very insightful, I could relate and found myself in many of these.

In addition to my old favourites - The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and Wasteland - I found many many others such as Ash-Wednesday and Ariel Poems. Also, reading aloud Choruses from 'The Rock' is fun.

## Ana says

I haven't read poetry in a long time, and I'm happy I started my journey through it again with T. S. Eliot. One of my favourite lines of my life is from one of his poems: "I will show you fear in a handful of dust". "Portrait of a Lady" has been very close to my heart for some years now. I enjoy his writings a lot because I can always sense loss and doom on the other side of their meaning, just as well as I can see some rays of hope. He is not one of the greats for nothing...

### Pavle says

Virdžinija Vulf u stihu – na to me podse?a Eliot. Stilski savršen, snažan, ponekad malo isuviše zahtevan; po mom mišljenju ostaje najpotpuniji ako se osoba mane tuma?enja, ve? prepusti toku misli i slikama u prolazu. Nekim zbirkama sam se malo više bavio (*The Wasteland, Prufrock and Other Observations*?ija je naslovna definitivno jedna od boljih), nekima malo manje, ali više mi je ostao ose?aj nego neki poseban citat: mra?ne ulice pune dima i slabih, zagasitih svetiljki i ljudi poput njih, lepi ljudi, lepe ulice, putevi, ?ak i u svojoj

# Jacqueline says

"1, 111111 ?? 1 ????, 111111 ?? 111 ???????? 1111."

("???????????????????????"/ "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock")

\*\*\*

II

 (...)

???????? ?? ???? ???? ???????????.

(...)

(...)

("?????????????"/ "Portrait of a Lady")

\*\*\*

IV

777777 ?? 77777 ??????,
77777 ???? 7?? ?????
777 ???????? ???????;
777777, 7?? ?????, ?????? ??????

?????????????????,????????;

(...)

("?????"/"Preludes")

# Benji says

I've been thoroughly reading my copy of T.S Eliot's *Selected Poems* in the past day or two, and I must say I really do love his writing. I confess; for the most part his referencing is so obscure that 90% goes right over my head, but as I'm going to be actually studying the poems in detail and university, I've been doing some research as I go along (hence making me understand them and appreciate them a lot more).

His poems are, in essence, right up my street: often dark and melancholy; reminiscent of years past, rather than filled with optimism of the present and the future. I myself frequently write dark, negative poetry, rather than happy positive verse. For this reason then, something in Eliot's poetry certainly strikes a cord with me. *The Waste Land in particular*; although littered with references which can at times disrupt the flow, the language is beautiful in its darkness.

The more I read and re-read these in the coming months, and I start to understand more clearly the layered meanings and metaphors, I'm sure my appreciation of T.S. Eliot's works will grow even more. For now, though, I would certainly recommend to anyone wanting to discover some marvellous verse. Just one request: if you're going to read these, you will only do them *true* justice, by reading aloud.

## mwpm says

This selection contains poems from *Prufrock and Other Observations*, *Poems 1920*, and *Ariel Poems*; choruses from his play "The Rock"; and the full texts of *The Waste Land*, *The Hollow Men*, and *Ash Wednesday*,

From Prufrock and Other Observations ...

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time

To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —

(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")

My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —

(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")

Do I dare

Disturb the universe?

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

[...]

- The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock, pg. 11-13

From *Poems 1920...* 

The broad-backed hippopotamus Rests on his belly in the mud; Although he seems so firm to us He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh-and-blood is weak and frail, Susceptible to nervous shock; While the True Church can never fail For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err In compassing material ends, While the True Church need never stir To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach
The mango on the mango-tree;
But fruits of pomegranate and peach
Refresh the Church from over sea.

At mating time the hippo's voice Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd, But every week we hear rejoice The Church, at being one with God.

The hippopotamus's day
Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts;
God works in a mysterious way-The Church can sleep and feed at once.

I saw the 'potamus take wing Ascending from the damp savannas, And quiring angels round him sing The praise of God, in loud hosannas.

Blood of the Lamb shall wash him clean And him shall heavenly arms enfold, Among the saints he shall be seen Performing on a harp of gold.

He shall be washed as white as snow, By all the martyr'd virgins kist, While the True Church remains below Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.

- The Hippopotamus, pg. 40-41

From The Waste Land ...

April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain. Winter kept us warm, covering Earth in forgetful snow, feeding A little life with dried tubers. Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade, And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten, And drank coffee, and talked for an hour. Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch. And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's, My cousin's, he took me out on a sled, And I was frightened. He said, Marie, Marie, hold on tight. And down we went. In the mountains, there you feel free. I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust
[...]

## - I. The Burial of the Dead, pg. 51-52

#### From The Hollow Men ...

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass

In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour, Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us-if at all-not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

- The Hollow Men, I, pg. 77

From Ash-Wednesday ...

Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)
Why should I mourn
The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know again
The infirm glory of the positive hour
Because I do not think
Because I know I shall not know
The one veritable transitory power
Because I cannot drink
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are and
I renounce the blessed face
And renounce the voice
Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice

And pray to God to have mercy upon us And pray that I may forget

These matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain
Because I do not hope to turn again
Let these words answer
For what is done, not to be done again
May the judgement not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly But merely vans to beat the air The air which is now thoroughly small and dry Smaller and dryer than the will Teach us to care and not to care Teach us to sit still.

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

- Ash Wednesday, I, pg. 83-93

#### From Ariel Poems...

'A cold coming we had of it, Just the worst time of the year For a journey, and such a long journey: The ways deep and the weather sharp, The very dead of winter.' And the camels galled, sorefooted, refractory, Lying down in the melting snow. There were times we regretted The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces, And the silken girls bringing sherbet. Then the camel men cursing and grumbling and running away, and wanting their liquor and women, And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters, And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly And the villages dirty and charging high prices: A hard time we had of it. At the end we preferred to travel all night, Sleeping in snatches, With the voices singing in our ears, saying That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley, Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation; With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness, And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

## - Journey of the Magi, pg. 97-98

## From Choruses from "The Rock"...

The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven, The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit. O perpetual revolution of configured stars, O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons, O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying! The endless cycle of idea and action, Endless invention, endless experiment, Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not of silence; Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word. All our knowledge brings us nearer to death, But nearness to death no nearer to God. Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries Brings us farther from God and nearer to the Dust. [...]

# **Bethany says**

Dear T. S. Eliot,

I had never read your poetry before. But from the first stanza of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" you captivated me and I was spellbound by your words.

I find now you hold a place in my heart as one of my favourite poets.

I only regret that this selection of your poems is so short, being less than 100 pages. Also, I did not understand the poems in French very well. Translations would have been appreciated since my personal translations were rather shoddy, not to mention choppy. (Though my attempts did make me laugh.) Other than that, I have no complaints.

Much love from your newest admirer, Me

# Alice says

T. S. Eliot's poetry might just be what made me fall in love with poetry in the first place. It is out of this world, and I might write a review of this book one of these days.

# Temz says

http://knijno.blogspot.bg/2016/02/t.html?