

**B.A. Sem. – V**

**Thomas Stearns Eliot**

**Dr. Sagar Vyas**



## **Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)**

**“I cannot think of a critic who has been more widely read and discussed in his own life-time; and not only in English, but in almost every language, except Russian.”**

**- John Hayward**

# Life

- **1888:** he was born in St. Louis, Missouri.
- **1910:** he studied in Paris at the Sorbonne.
- **1915:** he married the British ballet dancer Vivienne Haigh-Wood.
- **1917:** he established himself as an important avant-garde poet.



Thomas Stearns Eliot.

# Life

- **1922:** he edited *The Criterion*, an intellectual magazine. His professions included being a poet, a critic and an editor.
- **1925:** he became director for the publishers “Faber & Faber”.
- **1927:** he acquired British citizenship and converted to Anglicanism.



Thomas Stearns Eliot.

# Life

- **1930**: for the next thirty years he was considered as “the most dominant figure in poetry and literary criticism in the English-speaking world”.
- **1948**: he received the Nobel Prize for literature.
- **1965**: he died in London.



Thomas Stearns Eliot.

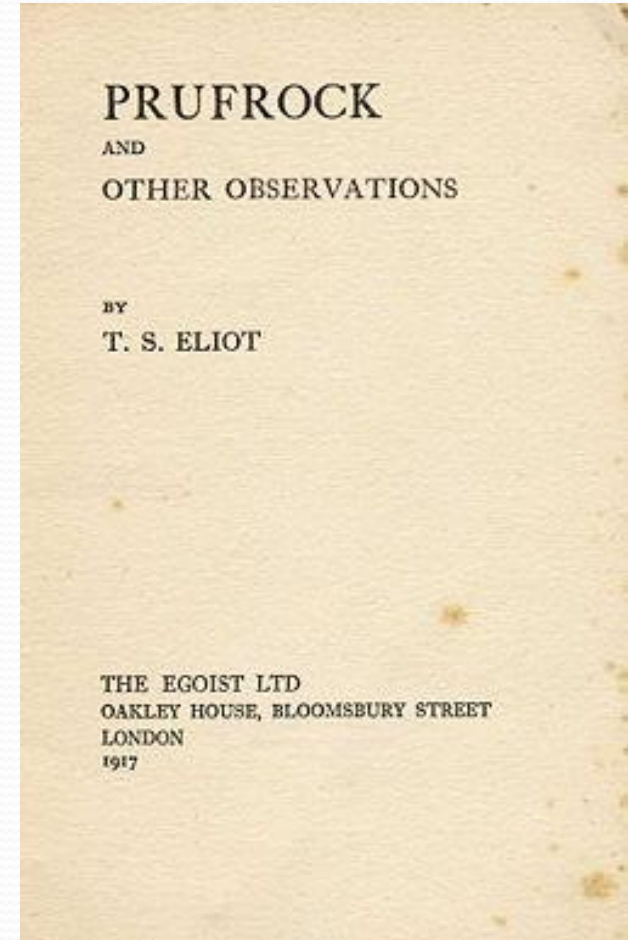
# Works

## Before the conversion

1917: *Prufrock and other Observations*.

1922: *The Waste Land*. It is said to be  
“the single most influential poetic  
work of the twentieth century”.

1925: *The Hollow Men*.



Cover for the first edition of *Prufrock and other Observations*

# Works

## After the conversion

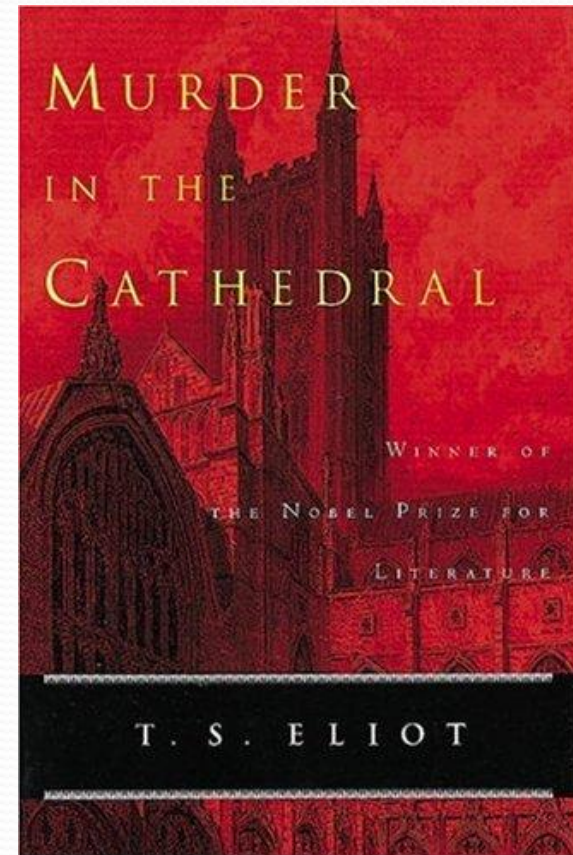
1927: *Ariel Poems*.

1930: *Ash-Wednesday*.

1935-1942: *Four Quartets*.

1935: *Murder in the Cathedral*.

1939: *Family Reunion*.

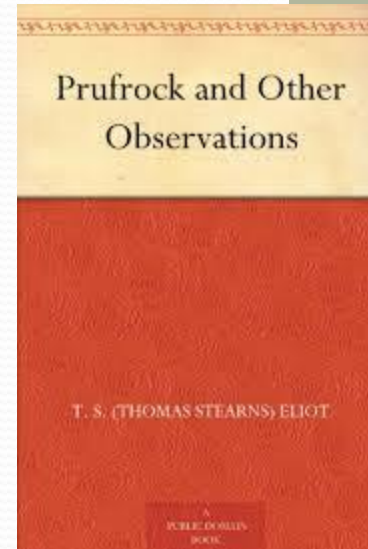
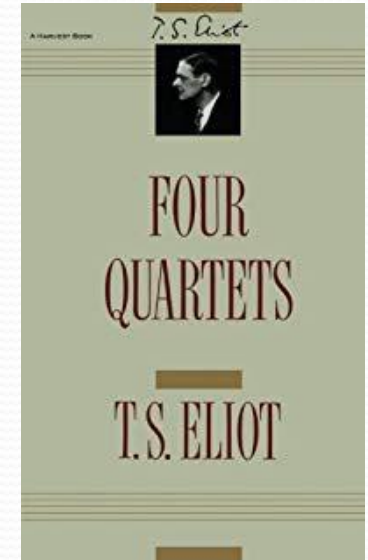
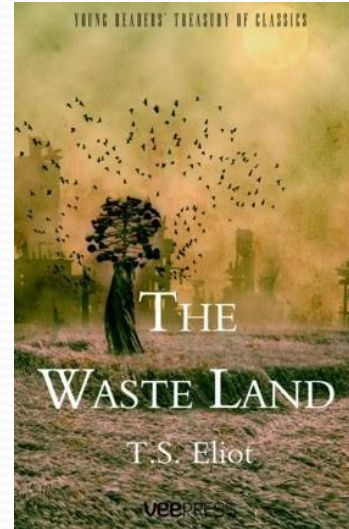


A contemporary edition of *Murder in the Cathedral*

# Literary Outputs

## Poems

- Prufrock and other Observations 1917
- Poems 1919
- Ara Vos Pprec 1920
- The Waste Land 1922
- The Journey of the Magi 1927
- A Songs for Simeon 1928
- Animula 1929
- Ash Wednesday 1930
- Marina 1930
- Triumphal March 1931
- Sweeney Agonists 1932
- Collected Poem 1909-1935, 1936
- Four Quartets 1943
- (“ Burnet Norton” “ East Coker” “ The Dry Salvages”, And “ Little Gidding”)

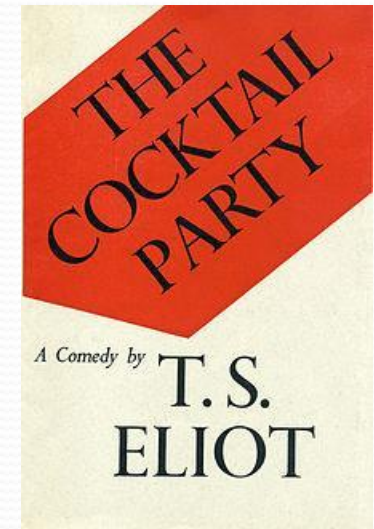
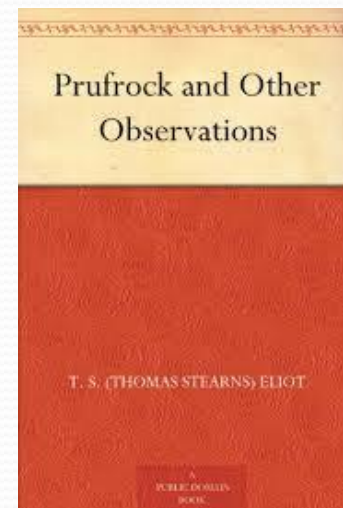
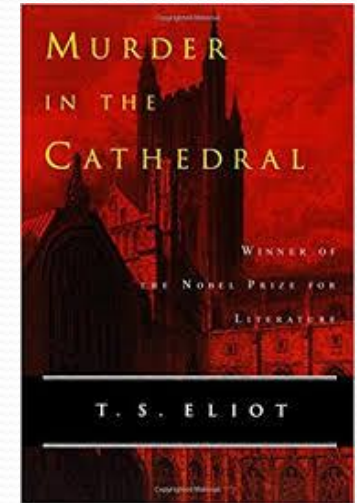
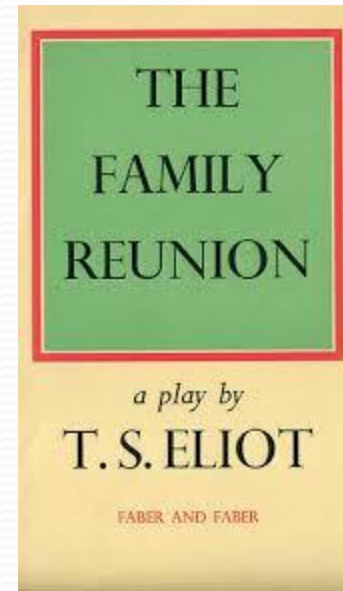




# Literary Outputs

## Plays

- The Rock : A Pageant Play 1934
- Murder in the Cathedral 1935
- The family Reunion 1939
- The Cocktail Party 1949
- The Confidential Clerk 1953
- The Elder Statesman 1959



# Literary Outputs

## Prose

- Ezra Pound : His Mentric and Poetry 1917
- The Sacred Wood 1920
- Home to John Dryden 1924
- Dante 1929
- John Dryden : The Poet, The Dramatist , The Critic 1932
- The List of Poetry and Use of Criticism 1933
- Elizabethan Essays 1934
- The Idea of a Christian society 1939
- The Music of Poetry 1942
- The Classis and the Man of Letters 1942
- Notes Toward the Definition of Culture 1948
- Poetry and Drama 1951
- The Three Voices of Poetry 1954
- On Poetry and Poets 1957
- To Criticise the Critic 1965

# Literary Outputs

## Essays

- ❑ Traditional and Individual Talent - 1919
- ❑ The Perfect Critic – 1921
- ❑ The Function of Criticism - 1923

## Tradition and Individual talent -T.S. Eliot

- The essay is divided into three parts.
  1. Concept of tradition
  2. Theory of Depersonalization
  3. conclusion

Tradition  
and the  
individual  
talent



T. S. Eliot

# T.S. Eliot as a Critic

- Belongs to the tradition of Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold in being Poet and Critic.
- Eliot's criticism offers both reassessment and reaction to earlier writers.
- He called himself "a classicist in literature".
- His vital contribution is the reaction against romanticism and humanism which brought a classical revival in art and criticism.
- He rejected the romantic view of the individual's perfectibility, stressed the doctrine of the original sin and exposed the futility of the romantic faith in the "Inner Voice".
- Instead of following his 'inner voice', a critic must follow objective standards and must conform to tradition.

- A sense of tradition, respect for order and authority is central to Eliot's classicism.
- He sought to correct the excesses of "the abstract and intellectual" school of criticism represented by Arnold.
- He sought to raise criticism to the level of science.
- In his objectivity and logical attitude, Eliot most closely resembles Aristotle.
- A. G. George says:
  - "Eliot's theory of the impersonality of poetry is the greatest theory on the nature of the process after Wordsworth's romantic conception of poetry."

# Against the Romantics

- ❑ Poetry was an expression of the emotions and personality for romantics.
- ❑ Wordsworth said that poetry was an overflow of powerful emotions and its origin is in “Emotions recollected in tranquility”.
- ❑ Eliot rejects this view and says that poetry is not an expression of emotion and personality but an escape from them.
- ❑ The poet is only a catalytic (assistant) agent that fuses varied emotions into new wholes.
- ❑ He distinguishes between the emotions of the poet and the artistic emotion, and points out that the function of criticism is to turn attention from the poet to his poetry.

# Theory of Impersonality of Poetry

## □ A Classicist in Literature

In 1928 Eliot declared himself to be “a classicist in literature, a royalist in poetics and an Anglo-Catholic in religion.”

- Strong supporter of order and discipline, of authority and condition and of organization and pattern
- Eliot condemned the Romantic School and praised highly the classical school.
- The difference between the romantic and the classical schools is that between “the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic”

□ The Function of Criticism

# The Romantic Creed

- ❑ Romantics strongly believed that man was basically and essentially good.
- ❑ Rousseau said; “man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him.”

## Influence on Eliot

- ❑ Ezra Pound, Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More T.E. Hulme
- ❑ Eliot believes that human nature is essentially impure and finite.
- ❑ More influenced by Hulme