



Young Eliot: From St. Louis to The Waste Land

Robert Crawford

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A groundbreaking new biography of one of the twentieth century's most important poets

On the fiftieth anniversary of the death of T. S. Eliot, the award-winning biographer Robert Crawford presents us with the first volume of a comprehensive account of this poetic genius. *Young Eliot* traces the life of the twentieth century's most important poet from his childhood in St. Louis to the publication of his revolutionary poem *The Waste Land*. Crawford provides readers with a new understanding of the foundations of some of the most widely read poems in the English language through his depiction of Eliot's childhood—laced with tragedy and shaped by an idealistic, bookish family in which knowledge of saints and martyrs was taken for granted—as well as through his exploration of Eliot's marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood, a woman who believed she loved Eliot "in a way that destroys us both."

Quoting extensively from Eliot's poetry and prose as well as drawing on new interviews, archives, and previously undisclosed memoirs, Crawford shows how the poet's background in Missouri, Massachusetts, and Paris made him a lightning rod for modernity. Most impressively, *Young Eliot* reveals the way he accessed his inner life—his anguishes and his fears—and blended them with his omnivorous reading to create his masterpieces "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land*. At last, we experience T. S. Eliot in all his tender complexity as student and lover, penitent and provocateur, banker and philosopher—but most of all, *Young Eliot* shows us as an epoch-shaping poet struggling to make art among personal disasters.

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