T.S. Eliot: The Poet And His Critics

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His mother, Charlotte Champe Stearns Eliot, was a school teacher and poet. She loved to dramatize those events from history, which reflected the struggles of men, dying for their faith. Later in life, she took part in social reforms, providing a house of detention for juveniles. Thomas was the youngest of his parents’ seven children, having five sisters and one brother. During his university years, he was greatly influenced by George Santayana, the philosopher and poet, and Irving Babbitt, the critic. Continuing to write, he made good impression by contributing regularly to Harvard Advocate. T.S. Eliot covered his undergraduate course in three years, instead of four years and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1909. Eliot’s study of the poetry of Dante, of the English writers John Webster and John Donne, and of the French Symbolist Jules Laforgue helped him to find his own style. From 1911 to 1914 he was back at Harvard, reading Indian philosophy and studying Sanskrit. Two other essays, first published the year after The Sacred Wood, almost complete the Eliot critical canon: “The Metaphysical Poets” and “Andrew Marvell,” published in Selected Essays, 1917–32 (1932). In these essays he effects a new historical perspective on the hierarchy of English poetry, putting at the top Donne and other Metaphysical poets of the 17th century and lowering poets of the 18th and 19th centuries. T. S. Eliot, Robert H. Canary, L. S. Dembo. https://doi.org/10.1086/391441. The Poet as Feigned Example in Sidney’s Apology for Poetry. Shifflett, Rajeev S. Patke, Postcolonial Poetry in English.
Few critics have even admitted that Hamlet the play is the primary problem, and Hamlet the character only secondary. And Hamlet the character has had an especial temptation for that most dangerous type of critic: the critic with a mind which is naturally of the creative order, but which through some weakness in creative power exercises itself in criticism instead. In the Greece of Pindar and Sophocles, in the England of Shakespeare, the poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive; and this state of things is the true basis for the creative power's exercise, in this it finds.