

## **Spiritual and Emotional Sterility**

### **In T.S .Eliot's "The Hollow Men"**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Alienation, uncertainty, and complexity of the modern age drive its writers to do something in one way or another .T.S. Eliot (1888–1965), one of the most influential modernist poets of his time, dedicates major of his poetry to expose the modern individual's inability that he sees in himself and in his society. According to some critics, "The Hollow Men" (1925), is one of Eliot's most difficult poems. It is a dramatisation of a state of spiritual and emotional sterility, in which Eliot tragically presents a group of men aware of the shallowness of the society which they conform.

This study is an attempt to convey Eliot's mood and theme through "The Hollow Men" to discuss specifically the state of spiritual and emotional sterility. Accordingly, the study starts with an introduction which sheds light on the poet's thought and the poem, and revolves around the insignificance of the individual in the modern age. Then, it traces Eliot's themes of emptiness, hollowness, and spiritual and emotional sterility. Finally, the study summarizes the reasons of spiritual and emotional sterility, and its results on the modern individuals. The study ends with notes and bibliography.

Thomas Stearns Eliot ( 26 Sept. 1888 - 4 Jan. 1965 ), poet, critic, and editor, was born in St. Louis, Missouri. He is considered one of the well acknowledged representative figures of the twentieth century whose literary talent speaks of itself so boldly and vividly through his remarkable and distinguished poetry. His literary career extended over a period of forty-five years. He dominated the English literary scene with a wide poetic authority and influence. He tried his hand at poetry, at drama, at criticism, both literary and

social, and at journalism. He achieved eminent success in each of these fields. His greatness is a recognized fact which no longer requires any assertion. F.R. Leaves remarks:

“Eliot’s genius is that of the great poet who has a profound and acute apprehension of the difficulties of his age”.<sup>1</sup>

Eliot is quite different from any other modern English poet and is held as the most influential literary person of 20th century not only for his uniqueness in his style and subject matter of his poetry but it is the use of philosophy which is the most stunning feature in his poems. Eliot’s poetry has always portrayed the crude, harsh war-torn world, where humanity has reached the zenith of its sterility.<sup>2</sup>

In all his poems, Eliot made an attempt to express the bitterness of modern and materialistic life. The spiritual degeneration of man can be seen in his poems. Eliot is a true writer of his age. The fact is that he was a spokesman of his age. Eliot’s view on the Modern Man as depicted in "The Waste Land" which is, according to F.R. Leaves, “great and positive achievement” is the best depiction of modern human’s life. Modern people’s problems especially after the World War, have become extremely intricate. As the natural world has become barren outwardly because of massive death and destruction, the internal state of humans has become complex as well as perverted. They are going through a life-in-death situation, always in fear of death. Moral values have lost dignity. Perverted sex has become a part and parcel in their daily lives. In fact, innocence is considered as perversion. Every modern human is hopeless. Faith in God is overshadowed by the power of money and personal enjoyment.<sup>3</sup> “The Hollow Men” also is a shorter but still a nice portrayal of modern people. Modern men suffer from spiritual paralysis, spiritual decay: “Shape without form.../ Paralysed force” . Man suffers an impoverishment of emotional vitality. He lives according to the rules of the empty social conventions and those of a decadent culture. Man’s life is partly sordid and sensual. He feels himself entangled in a corrupt, decaying, ugly Society. The duplicity of man, lack of communication among men, and man’s isolation are three basic predicaments of man, making him more and more alienated, although, these motifs are common to Eliot’s poetry.<sup>4</sup>

T. S. Eliot was one of the most important poets of the twentieth century; as literary critic and commentator on culture and society. His writing continues to be profoundly influential. Every student of English must engage with his writing to understand the course of modern literature. John Xiros Cooper explains how Eliot was influenced by the intellectual climate of both twentieth-century Britain and America, and how he became a major cultural figure on both

sides of the Atlantic. The continuing controversies surrounding his writing and his thought are still addressed. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1948 for his outstanding pioneer contribution to present day poetry.<sup>5</sup>

Eliot died of emphysema in London on January 4, 1965, and according to his own instructions, his ashes were interred in the church of St. Michael's in East Coker. A commemorative plaque on the church wall bears his chosen epitaph--lines chosen from "Four Quartets": "In my beginning is my end. In my end is my beginning".<sup>6</sup>

"The Hollow Men" is one of Eliot's most difficult poems. It is a dramatisation of a state of spiritual and emotional sterility. The poem is pervaded by feelings of guilt, remorse and anguish, and by intensely personal experience which could not properly be articulated or resolved. "The Hollow Men" is not unified poem, it is a sequence of many fragments. It is the reader who must trace various meanings with the help of the references symbols and images the poet refers to.<sup>7</sup> The poem was first published in its present form in 1925. It consists of five sections which contain the poet's meditations; "on the subject of human nature in this world" and on the relationship of this world to another, the world of death, or eternity". Its language and imagery are disarmingly simple, but richness and complexity result from its web allusions and references. The title of the poem is drawn from three different works : The first is a poem titled "The Hollow Land" by William Morris, and the second is Rudyard Kipling's "The Broken Men" . Critics also mentioned Brutus's speech in Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar".<sup>8</sup>

Eliot has provided two Epigraphs to the poem, and these epigraphs indicate its basic theme. The first epigraph, 'Mistah Kurts\_ he dead' comes from Conrad's novel "The Heart of Darkness" . Mistah Kurts has met death knowingly, with direct eyes; he is one of the 'lost violent souls' referred to in line sixteen of the first section of the poem, and in this respect he is different from the hollow men are incapable of action and decision. The second epigraph, "A Penny for the Old Guy", is a historical reference from the history of England. The Guy referred to in this epigraph is Guy Fawkes, a zealous Roman Catholic. He was one of the rebels who were angered by king James I . They conspired against king James, and accumulated gunpowder in a cellar on the night of 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1605. The plot was unearthed, and the conspirators hanged. It is customary in England to make effigy of Guy Fawkes and burn it in every 5

Nov., and the children beg pennies for this purpose. The two epigraphs run throughout the poem hinting at the hollowness of the men in present day world. Men in this world are either hollow like Mistah Kurts, or they are stuffed effigies like Guy Fawkes. So, they are embodying the real sterility, and the poem is bitter satire against them.<sup>9</sup>

In Eliot's philosophy it is better to do evil than to do nothing at all, it is better to be dead than to be deadened like the hollow men in the poem. The poem is anti\_ romantic in its tone which subtly hints at the truth\_ 'not to expect from human beings more than they can give' . The world in "The Hollow Men" is a gray world, featureless and nameless. The hollow men are living in death or they are dead in their lives. They are stuffed men, scare crows, and straw effigies. The land in which they live is cactus land where fertility is out of the question. The men are mere stony images, frustrated by shadow of fear lingering on the 'Beach' of the 'Tumid River'. The poem is loaded with a series of images that go on telling us the purposeless of the empty men live in the forsaken land. The poem alludes to the new generation of Europe in general and more particularly of London. Nonetheless, it stands as a discourse addressing the hollowness of the 20<sup>th</sup> century generation throughout the world .<sup>10</sup>

The text of "The Hollow Men" by T.S. Eliot (1925), has been taken from The Complete Poems and Plays of T S Eliot (1975) :

Mistah Kurtz -- he dead.  
A penny for the Old Guy

I  
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.

## II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams  
In death's dream kingdom  
These do not appear:  
There, the eyes are  
Sunlight on a broken column  
There, is a tree swinging  
And voices are  
In the wind's singing  
More distant and more solemn  
Than a fading star.  
Let me be no nearer  
In death's dream kingdom  
Let me also wear  
Such deliberate disguises  
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves  
In a field  
Behaving as the wind behaves  
No nearer  
Not that final meeting  
In the twilight kingdom

## III

This is the dead land  
This is cactus land  
Here the stone images  
Are raised, here they receive  
The supplication of a dead man's hand  
Under the twinkle of a fading star.  
Is it like this  
In death's other kingdom  
Waking alone  
At the hour when we are

Trembling with tenderness  
Lips that would kiss  
Form prayers to broken stone.

#### IV

The eyes are not here  
There are no eyes here  
In this valley of dying stars  
In this hollow valley  
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms  
In this last of meeting places  
We grope together  
And avoid speech  
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river  
Sightless, unless  
The eyes reappear  
As the perpetual star  
Multifoliate rose  
Of death's twilight kingdom  
The hope only  
Of empty men.

#### V

Here we go round the prickly pear  
Prickly pear prickly pear  
Here we go round the prickly pear  
At five o'clock in the morning.  
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  
Between the desire  
And the spasm  
Between the potency



And the existence  
 Between the essence  
 And the descent  
 Falls the Shadow  
 For Thine is the Kingdom  
 For Thine is  
 Life is  
 For Thine is the  
 This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 Not with a bang but a whimper.

In "The Hollow Men", T.S. Eliot has expressed the intellectual and spiritual emptiness of his age and also the conflicts in modern men. This poem completely mirrors the Twentieth century. It is the modern men's inaction that leads to their conflict which is artfully brought out by T.S. Eliot in this poem. T.S. Eliot belonged to the modern age, particularly to the inter-war period. During that period, poetry became the vital literary form and it was closely in touch with life. Poems written during that period reflect the tragic gloom and despair of the post war worlds. "The Hollow Men" by T.S. Eliot made a tremendous impact on the post-war generation. It was believed that the immediate sense of the ugliness, the emptiness and the aimlessness of man's spiritual state during post-war years was responsible for the genesis of "The Hollow Men". It expressed the sense of hopeless drift which afflicted the generation after the world wars. It centres on the emptiness, futility and misery of modern life. It is also a reflection on the problems involved in human communication and on the meaning to life. All these hopelessness, discontent and despair in the modern man's life, is due to the conflicts in them, and their failure to find the cause and solution to it.<sup>11</sup>

The two epigraphs to the poem is itself a conflict: one of heroism and the other of the mimicry of heroism. "Mistah Kurtz – he dead", and "A penny for the Old Guy" : The first epigraph is taken from Conrad's novel "Heart of Darkness". This line refers to Mr.Kurtz who was a European trader who had gone into the heart of darkness by travelling into the central African jungle, with European standards of life and conduct. He differs from the hollow men as he is not paralyzed as they are. Kurtz is one of the lost violent souls. Eliot next continues with "A penny for the Old Guy". This is a reference to the cry of the English children soliciting money for fireworks to commemorate Guy Fawkes Day, 5<sup>th</sup> November which commemorates the gun powder plot of 1605. On this day, to commemorate the failure of the explosion, the likes of Fawkes are

burned in effigy and mock explosions using fireworks are produced. Apparently, these two epigraphs suggest that this age is not at all heroic; the old heroes are now dead and forgotten, and if one is remembered, it is for the sake of fun. The modern man stuck between several conflicts. The main conflict in them is their intense longing for a state of 'Edenic purity' and the contradictory search for a more lasting form of order through 'denial and alienation'. "The Hollow Men" mainly focuses on this conflict. It may also be noticed that the first and last part of the poem indicates a church service, and the ritual service. The spirit of the man, on whose behalf the poet is speaking- faintly utters the first signs of hope in the shape of spiritual regeneration. But there is also a relapse into cynicism and disillusionment, and the poem ends on a terrible note of aimlessness and futility. The mood of the poem oscillates feverishly between disbelief and intense desire for belief. This shows the idea of conflict among the modern men. The hollow men are referred as "Shape without form, shade without colour Paralyzed force, gesture without motion" (lines 11-12).<sup>12</sup>

The spirits of the hollow men have never been spiritually alive for the lack of the knowledge of good and evil. It almost corresponds to the description of those who are rejected both by heaven and hell. They are utterly incapable of action. For, their self-destruction follows not from any evil deeds: instead, they are like stuffed effigies who behave as the wind behaves without direction or aim. Being inactive, how do they feel the sense of sin? There arises a conflict. Their inability to know clearly, feel vividly and will strongly is described as 'shape without form' which suggests that they resemble beings only externally. In the phrase 'shade without colour' the poet perhaps tries to show that there is absolutely no element of life in their spiritual darkness. It is darkness caused not by an assortment of colours, but by the absence of light. 'Paralyzed force' brings out the failure of their will. "As the perpetual star Multifoliate rose" (lines: 63-64), The hollow men are without any vision, unless their eyes return to the perpetual. The rose is an image of the church an multifoliate, which is a reference to Dante's "Divine Comedy", where the multifoliate rose is a symbol of Paradise, in which the saints are the petals of the rose. But this hope is only for the empty men and not for the hollow men. Then suddenly the poet develops the reality, not the hope of the empty men, but of the hollow men, of the cactus not of the rose. This sudden change in these lines clearly shows the conflict in the minds of the people regarding their desire for belief and disbelief. Eliot speaks of the hopelessness and hope hand in hand. Though the poem ends on a note of tragic despair, there is a slight sign of hope in the body of the poem.<sup>13</sup>

The poem, which is narrated by one of the hollow men, portrays Eliot's concern for a society and culture lacking in faith, morality and humanity. The society is pervaded by a sense of alienation and the breakdown of



communication – both with each other and within their own internal selves. This results in hollow men's loss of purpose and identity. This fragmentary poem is written in fragments to highlight the chaos of modern existence. This poem shows the states in which human beings do not have hope or spirituality in them. Eliot is trying to tell us that many humans are not aware of their own identity and that society is lost in the formation of belief and spirituality.<sup>14</sup>

Eliot has tried to use ethical dilemma in this influential poem. The human values of the human being like wisdom, spirituality (divine quality), and sublime morality based on a staunch faith are nowhere to be found. Modern men's behavior is just like puppets and dolls. The hollow men's efforts to generate collective wisdom and intelligence to promote the cause of humanity have failed miserably. They are given to dream of bright future whereas in reality there is no hope for a better future. Actually modern men have been living in the mania of two mistaken beliefs. First-the scientific developments have made man omnipotent and second- that instant gain is all that matters. In this euphoria, modern men have totally lost balance of judgment. With scientific achievement, they have become so much power drunk that they have stopped thinking about consequences of their impetuous action. Under the existing circumstances, irresponsible individuals keep on repenting for the outcome of their thoughtless misdeeds.<sup>15</sup>

The poem "The Hollow Men" is not an appendage to "The Waste Land". In contrast to "The Waste Land", The Hollow Men is simpler in structure and conception. As we know that The Waste Land represents universal disorder, its structure is episodic and its effect depends greatly on the cumulative effect of the episodes. Audrey F. Cohill Observes "the predicament of The Hollow Men is that of The Waste Landers, they lack the 'courage to be' and they have lost their reality because they have never affirmed it."<sup>16</sup> He further notes that 'their malady lies not in any civil intention but in their evasion of any intention whatever.'<sup>17</sup> It is just based on a religious quest and failure. Actually this poem refers to those men whose value system has been shot to hell by the destruction brought on by technological developments in the early modern era. The man hopes to be remembered not as 'violent soul' but as 'hollow men' i.e. men whose heads are stuffed with straw—a material that has little value and blows in the wind. The poet laments that sunlight can not illuminate the classical teachings; represented by the classical columns- nothing is left but a cultural desert, a 'cactus land.' Religion, the main unifying force in Western culture for almost two thousand years offers no hope. The end is near. At the beginning of this poem it appears that TS Eliot always struggled with spirituality and belief. He always tried to search out a new form of religious knowledge. Some critics

have described his relationship with religion as a ‘process of elimination and rejection’.<sup>18</sup>

The hollow men have no vision and purpose in their life. They have lacks of depth, substance and faith. They are pursuing only material things and their prayer for divine have become blasphemous and corrupted prayer. We can say that this poem is about the Survivors of World War I. They are full of guilt and can not understand why they were the ones who were picked to live. They are hollow men because they have seen a lot and can not get over what happened. Thus, the hollow men are living in the state of dilemma. They are unable to face the divine power (creator) while they want to face the mighty and get salvation. But they have not eyes to dare with God. They want to be a spiritual man but their mind was filled with straw of misdeeds. Actually their activities were not bad but they are in dilemma and in confusion that they shall be listened and accepted by God or not. Such kind of confusion was aroused with the terrible consequence of World War I. Their corrupt thinking and immoral actions make them more undesirable in the society and before God . Heaven to them would be riddled with guilt, as looking into the eyes of God would overwhelm them with that guilt. Hell is not an optimistic outcome for anyone; however they see it as their best choice as they are already living without God and His grace. Their lives that they have spend mulling over their options but never lacking any actions was what they believed purgatory to be. The recurring theme is the doubt in this poem. The Hollow men think over the prospect of faith and Christianity every day, however, their doubt stands in their way. The hollow men, actually, like the idea of divine power but their reality is without Him because of the shadow of doubt coming between them and God. This is continued until the end of the poem. The empty, pointless bodies, the hollow men wander the earth desperately, groping together to avoid death. Death is not something outside of the earth.

The Hollow Men by TS Eliot, the most swaying personality of his literary genre, fashioned his belief about future of the men of this dead land, the Waste Land. This is the most vibrant poem of the age. Eliot has contemplated a new pattern of ‘watching and waiting’. The poet, in his famous essay on “Baudelaire” has written “it is better in a paradoxical way to do evil than to do nothing at least, we exist.”<sup>19</sup> But the situation of Hollow Men is different; they do not exist at all;

“Shape without form, shade without color, Paralyzed force, gesture without motion”<sup>20</sup> T. S Eliot, clairvoyant of modern age, strident personal life, yet his poetics comprises rare flavors of fragment life. Infused with symbol and images. The Hollow Men written in five parts focusing on madness, guilt, remorse and breakdown of humanity. It is a stagnant poetry for repentance which portrays



mans dilemma in turn with spiritually sluggishness. In this poem Eliot encapsulates predicaments of the post World War I generation. It is one of the best touch stone of modern literature that vainly strives for meaning. Eliot believed in the 'impersonal' poetry and said, "Poetry is not turning loose of emotions but escape from emotion, and it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality."<sup>21</sup> Of course, only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape from these things. This poem dissects man's wretched and fearful existence in the world. "The Hollow Men" has an experience describing a very different approach to death and defy an inviting having no past, no present and no future. It is a cold and melancholic in the terms of poetic content.

In this poem, "The Hollow Men", the human beings have been shown devoid of the qualities of faith, moral strength, of personality, determination and that of humanity; they are like empty bodies, lacking all human virtues. By direct and indirect similes and metaphors, the poet has tried to depict a situation which not only the characters in the poem are facing but the readers also face the same feelings while reading the poem. The abstract world of the mind and the concrete and visible shape of the poem are so identical that they truly and objectively represent each other. This kind of masterly skill helps a reader understand the poem in itself – considering, in Eliot's words, the poem a thing in itself – without, again and again, looking into the mind of the poem. The title, the theme and the characters look reinforcing one another to develop the impersonal impression of the poem. However, a number of critics have called "the Hollow Men" a 'personal poem.' For it presents the poet's views on the contemporary life. It is a cry of despair unrelieved by hope.<sup>22</sup>

The poem, although develops personal tone, at many places exhibits objectification of the poet's ideas of impersonality and tradition. The Hollow Men was originally composed as several different poems, which the poet gradually came to think of as sequenced. Part I 'We are the hollow men', was originally published in the winter of 1924. Part III, 'This is the dead land', was published as the third part of 'Doris' dream song' in November 1924. Parts I, II and IV were published together for the first time in March 1925. The whole poem, with part V, the final addition, appeared in 'Poems 1909-1925' later that same year. "The separate composition of each individual part, then marrying them to form one, could be the explanation for the poem's lack of identifiable narrative sequence".<sup>23</sup> "The Hollow Men" holds the same theme as that of "The Waste Land". It contains the poet's reflection on the 'subject of human nature in this world, and the relationship of this world to another, the world of death and eternity. Elizabeth Drew, in this connection, remarks that from psychological point of view, the feelings and experience in "The Hollow Men" is even more

despairing than the same in “The Waste Land”. This poem offers no redemption whatsoever, presenting the unmitigated horrors of modern life. Doct. J. (2002), in his views on the poem, points out the impersonal quality of the poem. He says: “The imagery depicted in T.S. Eliot's poem “The Hollow Men” evokes a sense of desolate hopelessness and lends to Eliot's generally cynical view of civilization during this period in history.” No ray of hope, unlike “The Waste Land” or “The Ash Wednesday”, has been shown in “the Hollow Men”.<sup>24</sup>

Since, the spiritual decay of the contemporary age is the theme of the poem, adequate images and symbols have been employed to represent the situation properly. Doct. J. is of the view that the poet has successfully applied here the technique of first person narration which includes all the readers along the development of the poem. “This establishes Eliot's and the readers relationship to the images and ideas presented” (Doct. J.). By doing this the poet has in fact made the readers feel the hollowness in the individuals and the society which is the theme of the poem. This tragic chant sums up the views of Eliot on the barrenness and decadence of modern society. The writer of Brother Judd notes says that he is so much impressed by the powerful images of the poem. About the auditory image of the rat sounds, he writes, “The comparison of the sound of modern voices to “rat's feet over broken glass” aptly dismisses all of the psycho babble and faux spirituality of the age, all of modernity's futile effort to replace the beliefs that have been discarded.” It conveys that this image does not tell us only of the poet's feeling, but its impact is cast on the outer world also. The poet has aptly used the image to objectify his emotion. “The powerful comparison between the worthlessness of “rats’ feet over broken glass...” (line 9) to their “dry voices” (line 5) illustrates how meaningless they (the Hollow Men) truly are”. “This is a powerful poem that rewards repeated readings, revealing different interpretations and images with each successive return”.<sup>25</sup>

Like “The Waste Land” , the style in “The Hollow Men”, although complicated to detect exactly what is going on in the poem, the reader easily perceives the overall feeling of the hopelessness, despair and misery in just the opening lines:

We are the hollow men .... We are the stuffed men (1-2)

These lines effectively create a bleak and dismal sensation of barrenness emptiness. Images like; This is the dead land / This is cactus land... Under the twinkle of a fading star set up a depressing, dry, desert land surroundings. Comparing the use of literary allusions in “The Waste Land” and in “The Hollow Men”,<sup>26</sup> is of the view that the allusions in “The hollow Men”, though less vital but they do well to depict the theme of the poem. He, about the allusions, states: “They endow the reader with a deeper understanding of Mr.



Eliot's vision but in the end, the poem stands by itself, a work of its own." These allusions aid to the understanding of the meaning in an independent and objective manner. They enhance a reader's capability of appreciating the poem in a way undistorted by the personal emotions and ambitions of the poet himself.

Vianu brings in a number of symbols used in the poem to explicate the theme of "The Hollow Men" in an objective manner. He says: "Within the hollow men there is the darkness, the horror, the kingdom of death, the broken Lord's Prayer. Eliot the poet writes in and about darkness, and feels that an even greater darkness surrounds his very obscure world." To Vianu the use of the images and symbols is indicative of the observation of the outer world and thereby its objective representation in his poem. Vianu is of the opinion that the dark and horrible images of Eliot give a sense of ugliness and depression which truly illustrate the condition of the characters in the poem. "We share his confusion and the darkness of his imagination is welcoming."<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the five sections of the poem, Eliot uses many words and expressions that reinforce an atmosphere of emptiness and decay: 'cactus, stone images, fading star, broken stone, dying star, hollow valley, broken jaw, lost kingdom', etc. Cahill Audery describes the theme and the technique of the poem, he says: "The hollowness of the hollow men is explored in several of the recurring symbols which appear in the poem."<sup>28</sup>

"The Hollow Men" portrays Eliot's concern for a society and culture lacking in faith, morality and humanity. T. S. Eliot belongs to a period which itself was in a dilemmatic state of two worlds –the old and the new; the pre – war and the post war period. The breakdown of the first world war created a complete disillusionment and disintegration and introduced harsh materialism which devastated the moral and spiritual values. As a sensible literature, T.S. Eliot was heavily influenced by this cruciality and chaos that was mirrored in his poems. The pessimism and despair produced by this post war period made thinkers look for a set of values which could point the way for betterment and reform and T. S. Eliot was a pioneering figure of this crusade.<sup>29</sup>

For the critic Edmund Wilson, the poem marked "the nadir of the phase of despair and desolation. It is Eliot's major poem of the late twenties. Similar to other work, its themes are overlapping and fragmentary: post-war Europe under the Treaty of Versailles (which Eliot despised); the difficulty of hope and religious conversion; and Eliot's failed marriage. "The Hollow Men" contains some of Eliot's most famous lines, notably its conclusion: This is the way the world ends This is the way the world ends This is the way the world ends Not with a bang but a whimper."<sup>30</sup>



John Xiros Cooper says; The “Shadow” may fall across philosophical abstractions, “the idea / And the reality”, but it also falls across voices, halting the hollow men and turning them into whimpers, at the world’s end.<sup>31</sup>

The discussions about “The Hollow Men” are usually connected with the life of TS Eliot as the writer, for example the discussion about it in some books like Batra's TS Eliot: A Critical Study of His Poetry (2001), Scofield's TS Eliot: The Poems (first edition 1988), Atkins's Reading TS Eliot (2012), and even there is one book that discusses about the connection between all of TS Eliot's works with his life entitled TS Eliot: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work (2007).

There are two articles written by Joseph Jonghyun Jeon in 2007 entitled “Eliot's Shadows: Autography and Style in „The Hollow Men””, contains the interpretation of “The Hollow Men” as the image of psychological conflicts between the political and artistic view in TS Eliot himself. Jeon uses some quotations from T.S. Eliot's essays to support his interpretation. The second article contains the interpretation of “The Hollow Men” that is focused on similes and metaphors of the poem by using the expressive approach. We must keep in mind that hollow men were living in the age of materialism totally. They were considering themselves to be only a body, assembled with physical senses and mind. Consequently, all their desires, aspirations and actions were confined to their physical body. The roots of all confusion lie when they forgot their own real self and mistakenly identify themselves as merely a physical body. In this confusion, they treat the vehicle (body) as the driver (soul). Thus the hollow men create an environment on this earth for themselves with their own willful perception and outlook. God has created man for spreading the message of love and helpful co- existence and not for belligerence, instigating violence and torturing fellow beings.<sup>32</sup> Eliot tries to seek an identity of the people and their spiritual faith. As we all know that our spiritual identity is defined by our soul.

T. S. Eliot was a poet first and a critic second. We remember Eliot the poet more often in our time because of the steady interest in his poetry. With the evolution of critical thinking, his criticism is studied for its historical importance rather than for its own sake. His critical writings were not limited to the study of literature or literary culture – he was also a social critic and commentator on politics and religion.<sup>33</sup> Some critics and scholars of twentieth-century literature contend that with the passage of time Eliot’s significance in the literary culture of his time needs to be reassessed. A reevaluation of his poetry and criticism needs to be undertaken in the same spirit in which he urged the reevaluation of literary history as he found it in the period of the First World War. The personal

crises that shaped his life – a bad marriage, the sense of lost traditions and community, the search for a spiritual solution in a secular world – still resonate with many people in the twenty-first century. The importance of his poetry needs no emphasis, but perhaps, today, the radical nature of his literary criticism does. No one needs reminding that Eliot was the moving force behind the reorientation of Anglo-American literary criticism in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>34</sup>

Today's man has got degenerated morally, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically as well as mentally. And the root causes behind this degeneration in him are numerous like his lack of faith in religion, lack of inclination towards moral values, lack of mutual affection, lack of the sense of brotherhood, lack of kindness and sympathy towards his fellow beings. About the condition of modern world Charles Gore observes: "The World in which we live today can only be described as chaotic in the manner of religious beliefs."<sup>35</sup> T.S. Eliot famous poem "The Hollow Men", could be read as a bitter satire, in which Eliot attacks the sterility and lifelessness of modern men and the modern age which he associates with . According to Eliot, the modern age is the vast panorama of sterility , futility, and anarchy .

Eliot dedicates major of his poetry to expose the modern individual's inability that he sees in himself and in his society. The poem is pervaded by feelings of guilt, remorse and anguish , in which Eliot tragically presents a group of men aware of the shallowness of the society which they conform. In this poem, Eliot acts as a representative of hollow mankind in general. In "The Hollow Men", T.S. Eliot has expressed the intellectual and spiritual emptiness of his age and also the conflicts in modern men. This poem completely mirrors the Twentieth century. It marks the nadir of the phase of despair and desolation. It is Eliot's major poem of the late twenties .The poem alludes to the new generation of Europe in general and more particularly of London. Nonetheless, it stands as a discourse addressing the hollowness of the 20<sup>th</sup> century generation throughout the world. It is believed that the immediate sense of the ugliness, the emptiness and the aimlessness of man's spiritual state during post-war years is responsible for the genesis of "The Hollow Men".

The poem expresses the sense of hopeless drift which afflicted the generation after the world wars. It centres on the emptiness, futility and misery of modern life. It is also a reflection on the problems involved in human communication and on the meaning to life. All these hopelessness, discontent

and despair in the modern man's life, is due to the conflicts in them, and their failure to find the cause and solution to it. Eliot perhaps tries to show that there is absolutely no element of life in their spiritual darkness. He made an attempt to express the bitterness of modern and materialistic life. The spiritual degeneration of man can be seen in this poem.

Actually, modern people's problems especially after the World War I, have become extremely intricate. As the natural world has become barren outwardly because of massive death and destruction, the internal state of humans has become complex as well as perverted. They are going through a life-in-death situation, always in fear of death. Moral values have lost dignity. Man suffers an impoverishment of emotional vitality. He lives according to the rules of the empty social conventions and those of a decadent culture. Man's life is partly sordid and sensual. He feels himself entangled in a corrupt, decaying, ugly Society. The duplicity of man, lack of communication among men, and man's isolation are three basic predicaments of man, making him more and more alienated. This poem portrays Eliot's concern for a society and culture lacking in faith, morality and humanity. The society is pervaded by a sense of alienation and the breakdown of communication – both with each other and within their own internal selves. This results in hollow men's loss of purpose and identity. The corrupt thinking and immoral actions of the hollow men make them more undesirable in the society and before God.

Eventually, the world in "The Hollow Men", is a gray world, featureless and nameless. As we all know that our spiritual identity is defined by our soul. So, Eliot tries to seek an identity of the people and their spiritual faith. Through the study, I have tried to survey the reasons for the sterility in "The Hollow Men", which could be summarised by religious, cultural, political and social reasons. In this poem, the human beings have been shown devoid of the qualities of faith, moral strength, personality, determination and that of humanity; they are like empty bodies, lacking all human virtues. So, I could conclude that the spiritual and emotional sterility has been depicted boldly and vividly by Eliot in his poem "The Hollow Men", which can be read as a cry of despair unrelieved by hope.

## NOTES

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### العقم الروحي والعاطفي في قصيدة "الرجال المجوفون" لتوماس ستيرنز اليوت

#### الخلاصة

العزلة ، الحيرة ، وتعد العصر الحديث تقود الكتاب لعمل شيء ما بطريقة أو بأخرى . تي أس اليوت ( 1888 – 1965 ) أحد أكثر الشعراء المؤثرين في عصره، يكرس معظم شعره ليكشف عن عجز الفرد العصري الذي يراه في نفسه وفي مجتمعه . "الرجال المجوفون" (1925) ، أحد قصائد اليوت الأكثر صعوبة ، فهي تضخيم لحالة العقم الروحي والعاطفي ، يقدم فيها اليوت وبشكل مأساوي مجموعة من الرجال المدركين لضحالة المجتمع الذي يتوافقون معه.

الدراسة محاولة لنقل مزاج اليوت وفكرته الرئيسية من خلال قصيدة "الرجال المجوفون" ، ومناقشة حالة العقم الروحي والعاطفي بشكل خاص . ووفقاً لذلك ، تبدأ الدراسة بمقدمة تسلط الضوء على فكر الشاعر وقصيدته ، وتدور حول تفاهة الفرد في العصر الحديث . بعد ذلك ، تتعقب الدراسة أفكار اليوت عن الفراغ والتجوف والعقم الروحي والعاطفي . أخيراً ، تلخص الدراسة أسباب العقم الروحي والعاطفي ونتائجه على الأفراد المعاصرين . تنتهي الدراسة بقائمة الهوامش وقائمة المصادر .

