

The Hollow Men by T.S. Eliot

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 this 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 with a whimper.

Influence: Received and Gained

The *Heart of Darkness* was written and said to be referenced to several pieces of works in literature, but the first two lines in the poem directly allude to Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness* and to Guy Fawkes, an attempted arsonist of the English house of Parliament, "Mistah Kurtz - he dead" and "A penny for the Old Guy" respectively. The entire poem resembles that exactly of Kurtz, Marlow, and the other characters portrayed in the novella. It states much of the same themes and messages of the book, and the question of moral seems to be the common theme among the film, book, and the poem. The poem is timeless and is still referenced to today's society of men working in the corporate industry.

In a scene in *Apocalypse Now*, Kurtz is reading Eliot's work towards the end of the film along with his other books ranging from the *Holy Bible* to *The Golden Bough*. Besides the adaptation from the novel, Coppola uses the idea of incorporating the poem into the film not just as a theme, but using the physical prose as a line in the film. This shows not only the importance of the poem to the film, but the personal level of relatability that was able to be had on Colonel Kurtz from the film. Indeed, the poem is about his character portrayed from the version of the book.

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

"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 with a whimper"

T.S. Eliot

An American-born English poet and writer that was immensely influential in 20th century English literature. Eliot is best known for his poems entitled *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *Gerontion*, and *The Waste Land*. He was part of the modernist movement of other poets and authors during that time, and in 1948 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. A couple of verses from *The Hollow Men* were quoted in *Apocalypse Now* and the poem's most famous line, "Not with a bang, but with a whimper," has become a well-known passage, and referenced in media and culture quite frequently.

<https://msu.edu/~jungahre/transmedia/the-hollow-men.html>