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MICHAEL DOUGLAS TESSIN

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**T. S. Eliot's use of the 'Other': The pagan as the 'other.'**

By

Michael Douglas Tessin

A Thesis

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This paper will examine the exclusion of certain groups from the poetry and prose of T. S. Eliot. Many studies have been done of his anti-Semitism, but this paper will attempt to document that anti-Semitism is part of a larger world view which excludes all non-Christians from his target audience, with special exclusion for Jewish people and Africans. Specific attention will be paid to his essays, poetic epigrams, and the manuscript of the poem "The Hollow Men."

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## Eliot as metaphysical and literary philosopher

The works of T. S. Eliot are considered some of the seminal poetry of the Modernist movement. He is widely respected as one of the greatest Modernist poets due to his use of language, his multi-layered and challenging classical symbolism, and his breadth of subject matter and insights. He was also a critic of writing par excellence, a rare and unique mixture that changed the poetry of the English language with his poems, and changed the perceptions of his peers and successors about the canon of English literature and poetry through his critical writings. He reevaluated the influence of great poets before him, and left his own indelible mark on the poetry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His own personal philosophy was as complicated and wide-ranging as his poems. His eclectic writing style, quoting from obscure classical sources as well as modernist philosophers and Hindi texts, served not to muddy the waters of his reasoning and symbolism, but illuminate more unusual and precise thoughts. T. S. Eliot the man is also at least as interesting as his works. From his poetry, there is a powerful sense of the need to remake the self, and reconnect men with their passions and roots. What men, though? Eliot was a passionate critic of egalitarian and unitarian philosophies, schools of thought that he was raised in while growing up in New England, then later rebelled against. He found himself becoming more and more the elitist, believing that only a few individuals possessed the necessary ability to become great and elicit real change, be it in the arts, politics, or any field of endeavor. He was a man who kept shifting from one milieu to another, in his personal, religious, and critical life. He who wrote to his contemporary

Ezra Pound in imitation U.S. slave dialect as an amusing diversion while he wrestled with the influence of classical English writers and poets on contemporary poetry and literature; he left his native United States and traveled to England, eventually becoming a British citizen; he left behind his American Unitarian roots to become a convert to, and staunch defender of, Anglo-Catholicism. He championed changing the ideas about his beloved classical canon to distance writers of his own age from simply imitating the great masters of the past. He was a passionate defender of culture and its necessary place in society, so that it could be used to improve society and salve its ills, yet he was an equally passionate advocate of literature when he had adjudged the literature to be of merit. He opposed the censoring of D. H. Lawrence for precisely this reason: while acknowledging that the book "Lady Chatterley's Lover" might be morally reprehensible, he argued against its exclusion because it was a work of great literature, and therefore was more useful than damaging to society. He was a man of his times, however, and held some of the common prejudices of his time and his culture, specifically in excluding the Jew and the non-European from his cultural discourse. Eliot's use of the outsider in his poems, both of the Jew and the native African, in a few specific places within his major works, show an attempt to draw from a culture outside his own in order to analyze his own culture, attempts which both break down the differences between the poet's culture and the other's culture, and yet reaffirm those differences. His philosophy is mostly a sacred one, when one looks at his writings and beliefs, and he finds that much of the writing and culture of the Modernist period is empty and ultimately meaningless. In his critical essays and his poetry, he constantly shows that he believes materialism and rationalism



have no true answers, and only lead to “overwhelming questions(1).” His use of the outsider in his works shows this again, and unfortunately disregards any input they may have in to his culture or his philosophy. The outsider becomes not a disinterested observer, but the reinforcement of both racial and cultural superiority, while still being used to point out the spiritual bankruptcy of man in general, and his adopted British “race”, which he seems to use interchangeable with ‘culture(2).’ The cultural differences between Eliot’s culture and the outsider’s culture in his poetry are finally shown to illustrate not the differences between two equally valuable but different world views, but the problems of the assumed superior culture, critiquing and illuminating them. Even within these cultural disparities, however, there is one common link. Eliot’s views on the improvement of culture and society are those of a metaphysical philosopher, that is, a philosopher who believes that the nature of man and reality can never be fully understood without including the role of the divine and the sacred. As such, his use of the other takes on additional meaning, for the other is not only a culturally separate entity; it must be a religiously separate entity to be a true ‘other’ in Eliot’s poetry and critical writings.

Kristian Smidt, in Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot, goes back to the roots of Eliot’s upbringing and explores the conflicts that arise between Eliot, the Unitarian faith, and the culture he is raised in. Smidt describes the general state of American society at the onset of the twentieth century as one being predicated on deep paradoxes, referring to ideas and beliefs about religion, race, culture, and freedom. Tolerance and democracy are the ideals, while everywhere, very difficult real-world problems challenge even the possibility that these ideas can be fulfilled. The United

States of America had fought a civil war and ended legal slavery over forty years before Eliot's birth, but had established the "Jim Crow" laws that would keep African-American people from voting or holding office. The United States was to encounter some of its largest waves of immigration ever, but was still bitterly divided by cultural lines, especially in its large cities. Legislation was used in every state to restrict the rights of the latest immigrants, from the California laws prohibiting citizenship for Chinese and other Asian immigrants, to the signs common in every quarter of northern urban areas - "We don't hire \_\_\_\_\_ (Irish, Italian, et. al)." While the ideal of "the great melting pot" was being touted in political circles, different immigrant groups and religious groups kept separate lives and spaces in the United States, from the cities on the coasts to the towns of the frontier. Workers are needed for the railways in the western half of the country, but the Asian workers who answered the call were forbidden by law from becoming American citizens.

The dichotomy also extends itself to the evaluation of culture. In Robert Crawford's "The Savage and The City in T. S. Eliot" he writes "The 'savage' was everywhere in vogue,(3)." Crawford points to the newspaper and magazine writings of the time, trumpeting the exploration of "savage lands," with "tribes of savages" found untouched by modern culture. He traces some of the popular novels that Eliot may have read as a boy, even invoking anecdotes about the struggles that Eliot had with his parents over pleasure reading. The Unitarian faith at the turn of the century was an austere and spare religion, seeking to return to Puritan practices with no artistic adornments in places of worship and extremely strict rules governing personal behavior. No drinking, no

cursing, no frequenting of certain places, and various other strictures were laid upon Eliot as a young man. These did not chafe him so much as the rules about his reading. He was encouraged to read the classics, but his parents forbade the reading of books which were judged to have no artistic or literary value. Still, it was precisely these books which talked about the adventures in foreign lands, at the edge of the British Empire or in the American wild west, that were all the bestsellers as Eliot was growing up: Haggard and his peers.

The Unitarian faith that Eliot was raised in was not even, in the strictest sense, a Christian church. It did not espouse faith in Jesus or in the Holy Spirit, although it recognized them as entities which were wise and deserved respect. It had been founded on an ethos of diversity and equality. Like the early Puritans, it was concerned with the life of works rather than the life of faith, but that was married with the peculiarly fatalistic dogma of predestination. Therefore, the life of faith must be carried out in the real world, doing real things and affecting people and places, but predestination authorized a certain knowledge that the fate of the elect and the unsaved had already been determined. The doing of good works could therefore be seen as simply expressing that which had already been set in place: salvation.

The modernist periodical *Blaze*, coming out with Lewis, Pound, and Eliot all offering contributions, showed a true conflagration of modernist poetry in 1914, just before World War I contributed to the spiritual chaos the modernists seemed to prophesy. Eliot's family was very involved in the Unitarian church, and he rebelled against that, intellectually. The egalitarian ideals of the Unitarians emphasized the need to have all

people treated equally and given equal opportunity to realize their own desires and potential, but at the same time took with absolute certainty the view that God's plan was already set, in place, and immutable. T. S. Eliot took a different view of things. He was already writing, and corresponding with many of the other writers of the Modernist movement.

Modernism as a movement had many literary standards and numerous philosophical stands. Some of the most succinct interpretations, which illuminate Eliot's own objections to the philosophy and problems of his time, are stated in Georg Lukacs Meaning of Contemporary Realism. In the first section, "Ideology of Modernism," Lukacs dissects some of the ontology of Modernism. When dealing with reality, Modernist and Realist writers seem to take the stance that the idea of a single objective reality is an illusion, and that there will always be subjective elements to reality, and there will always be parts of reality entirely inexplicable by objective or even subjective examination. This does not adhere entirely to a Platonic ideal, however, because the Modernists and the Realists are much more concerned with man and his interaction with reality, than with the nature of reality itself. "For this kind of awareness is characteristic precisely of the artist's apprehension of reality. A work of art may be unequivocal in content and structure and yet open to differing, even contradictory interpretations(4)." This is what made the Modernist movement new: "all divergences apart, a common social attitude does indeed exist(5)." Lukacs makes a distinction between Modernist writers and Realist writers of the time in the way they approach these views and the way they interpret human relationships. He quotes Thomas Wolfe to illustrate his point: "My

view of the world is based on the firm conviction that solitariness is by no means a rare condition, something peculiar to myself or to a few specially solitary human beings, but the inescapable, central fact of human existence.(6)” This is the new Modernist point of view, adhering to a somewhat idealist Platonic model that holds human beings essentially separate since they cannot form or interact truth between them, or true reality, because such things are impossible in the concrete physical world. The Realists, in Lukacs view, take on the more Aristotelean view of man as “*zoon politikon*, a social animal(7).” In the previous movement of Realism, the isolation of man is something created by his actions and environment, not an underlying reality: “In a word, their solitariness is a specific social fate, not a universal *condition humaine*(8).”

Eliot often comes back to a sense of something missing from these basic interpretations. Eliot is a sacred philosopher at his core. There is no view of the world of society that can be complete without making room for the sacred and mystical. “Notes on a Christian Society” explores the emptiness he sees within cultural and political movements that try to offer meaning and completion for people and societies. “In the nineteenth century, the Liberal Party had its own conservatism, and the Conservative Party had its own liberalism; neither had a political philosophy(9)...Thus, what I mean by a political philosophy is not merely even the conscious formulation of the ideal aims of a people, but the substratum of collective temperament, ways of behaviour and unconscious values which provides the material for the formulation(10)...Our choice now is not between one abstract form and another, but between a pagan and necessarily stunted culture, and a religious, and necessarily imperfect culture(11).” Coupled with that is

Eliot's belief in the value of culture, in the Arnoldian sense of the word: the necessity for transmitting values and high aesthetic ideals within society. He says, later in the same notes, speaking of one of the gravest problems to face industrialized Western European nations: "And the tendency of unlimited industrialism is to create bodies of men and women—of all classes—detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words, a mob. And a mob is no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well disciplined(12)."

In "A Romantic Aristocrat," Eliot states his view on the relationship between the artist and society: "The Arts insist that a man shall dispose of all that he has, even of his family tree, and follow art, alone. For they require that a man be not a member of a family or of a caste or of a party or of a coterie, but simply and solely himself(13)."

This is a powerful idea. Rather than the true equality of egalitarianism, it is saying that only by shedding the burdens of interconnected responsibilities can a person rise to greatness, at least in the arts. The universal loneliness and separation of humanity is not a barrier to artistic achievement, rather, it can be used to further the artist's goals. Not through equality is this goal realized, but by a certain intellectual isolationism. The person who can rise to that intellectual purity has been given various titles: Arnold's intellectual, Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, et. al.. All these things refer to an individual who can somehow be outside of the society that he is already a part of. It can be seen in the works of Nietzsche, who's *Übermensch* must rise above all common ideas, since "that which is common can have no value(14)," and define himself solely with his own definitions, and then define his morality and values solely in relationship to that self. It

coincides with Herder's idea of the alien and Arnold's idea of the intellectual or the 'genius': that extraordinary individual who must stand outside all of society in order to be the only one who can objectively analyze it and begin to produce cures for its ills.

Eliot is saying that the artist may not consider himself part of any levels of society. He may not be part of a family, with its ties of kinship, those personal bonds that are often the foundation for most societies. He may not identify with a caste, with a social class, so he must reject the hierarchy of classes in his society. He must not cleave to a party, so he must separate himself from the purely political viewpoints of his society. Last, he must not be part of a coterie. He is not even allowed to cleave to fellow artists with similar views. The ideology of individualism is not so contrary to Eliot's Unitarian upbringing as it might seem at first glance, for Unitarianism preached that all people deserve to be treated and respected equally, though it did not preach that all people should, or even would, achieve equally. The true conflict comes in the theoretical underpinnings of the idea of equality, and Eliot rebels against the idea of the possibility of true equality.

In his critical writings, Eliot shows an elitism in common with Arnold, Herder and Nietzsche; proposing that there must be an elite which offers not political and economic guidance, but moral leadership and inspiration for the mass of citizens. They must re-institute personal responsibility to those who are unable to handle such. He wrote, in Notes Toward the Definition of Culture: "It may be argued that complete equality means universal irresponsibility. A democracy in which everyone had an equal responsibility in everything would be oppressive for the conscientious and licentious for the rest(15)." He

seems to argue there that no truly equal society would have true equality, because those who were responsible and acted responsibly would bear the burden unequally. There would always be people who were not interested in their civil, moral, or social duties and obligations, and this would overburden the rest. So again, there must be a group which is outside of the rest of society, who shows the other part of society what is necessary for them to live moral and upstanding lives.

Eliot takes this philosophy to heart in his art as well as his personal and political views. He believes that the intellectual should stand apart from society, and the artist should stand apart even from his own works. Smidt gleans the views of Eliot on the art of poetry through personal interviews and careful readings of Eliot's critical prose. There, Eliot is found upbraiding those who present themselves too much in their own works. In Dante, Eliot himself states his belief that the poet's own views should not be too much in his works, in a discussion about Dante's beliefs and his work The Divine Comedy. He ranges even further, beginning with: "...that is, Dante, qua poet, did not believe or disbelieve the Thomist cosmology or theory of the soul: he merely made us of it, or a fusion took place between his initial emotional impulses and a theory, for the purpose of making poetry(16)." He then continues: "With Goethe, for instance, I often feel too acutely 'this is what Goethe the man believed', instead of merely entering into a world which Goethe has created(17)." Eliot values two contradictory ideas. On the one hand, there must be leadership from the artist, since society at large requires extraordinary individuals that will provide moral examples and inspire the rest of civilization. This is the very definition of the 'alien,' the 'intellectual,' the 'genius.' On the other hand, the



artist must step back from any such responsibilities and, whatever his personal ideas, create a world within his works that analyzes problems logically and dispassionately, without the imprint of the poet's personal viewpoints. The poet should not reveal or espouse too much of himself in his own poetry.

Eliot has set himself an impossible task in such things. The world that he has created in his poetry is a world bounded and defined by Eliot's beliefs and experiences, like the work of any artist. He oversteps this the most when he slips in the reference the culture of the outsider or the other. When there is the rare intrusion of the non-European into Eliot's poetry, it comes as a disparaging barb, such as the line from "Dirge": "the Jews under the piles(18)." Any reference to the outsider shows both the outsider's innate inferiority, and serves to illuminate not the separate poetic world that Eliot has created, that he strives to bring into being in his work and chides others for not striving toward, but Eliot's own views on non-European cultures and their value.

Eliot's works often deal with the malaise of urban society of his time. His poems are rooted geographically in cities, although the cities become symbols, like all concrete objects in his poetry, that compress multiple symbolism and imagery. The time period of his cities is fluid, ranging from "Coriolan, Part I: Triumphal March," with its echoes of ancient Rome in the images of eagles and trumpets, and the "stone, bronze, stone, steel(19)," which bring both ideas of horses' shod hooves ringing against stone but also the jump through the civilized ages of man's history: Stone Age, Bronze Age, etc. up to the modern age when they tally up counts of guns and trucks in the same parade. Eliot thus moves forward to the turn-of-the-century industrialized London also evoked in the

images of “yellow smoke”, “narrow streets”, and “men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows” within “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock(20).”

Eliot writes in his essays The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism that Matthew Arnold’s writings give him hope that he can accomplish something with his art, referring to a work about Arnold: “We shall ... be thrown back, as Matthew Arnold foresaw, on poetry. Poetry is capable of saving us(21).” Eliot then comments on Richards, who is commenting on Arnold: “I am sure ... that salvation by poetry is not quite the same thing for Mr. Richards as it was for Arnold; but so far as I am concerned these are merely different shades of blue(22).” Richards, according to Anthony Julius in T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and literary form, finds in Eliot a redemptive quality because he illustrates the problems and malaise of the modernist time clearly and brilliantly. Offering solutions to problems is not Eliot’s goal, rather the firm and clear-eyed depictions of them. Here, the artist is not necessarily one of the moral and intellectual elite, leading the rest of society to a better existence, but one of the critics, able to rise above the morass of modern life to show others what is wrong with it.

Poetry is capable of saving us. Note that it is not guaranteed to save us. Nor is it predicted that it will save us for certain. How precisely that shall occur is left to the reader, for Eliot does not venture into specifics. It remains, however, a powerful and idealistic quote. Eliot is not one for utopian works or treatises. His faith is still in the otherworldly, the sacred. Unfortunately, there are still those excluded from this saving, from the great culture he hopes to preserve and assist.

## Eliot's Poetry and the Other

Within Eliot's works are a wealth of traditional poetic devices, that he uses in new and interesting ways. One of his strengths is the use of the epigram. In this, he illustrates using the voice of the outsider, and recreating the role the outsider within his poetic world.

Eliot's epigrams often use only the narrative of other works. Before his first major published work, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," there are six lines from Dante's Divine Comedy, a work Eliot cites as a great influence. After all, Eliot lauds Dante for simply using the cosmology and theology of the Divine Comedy as a framework for his poetry and ideas, without seeming to reinforce or show whether or not the poet actually believes in such things. Prufrock's epigram is as follows:

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
Senza tema d'infamia ti respondo.(23)

Translated by the editors of the Norton Anthology of English Literature, the quote is :

"If I believed that my reply /  
[to you] would ever return to the world/  
this flame would stay without further movement. /  
But because none from this depth /  
has ever returned alive, if what I hear is true /  
without fear of infamy I answer you.(24)"

A certain Guido de Montefeltro, shut up in flame for giving false counsel, says that he

may speak honestly of his evil life because he believes Dante will never get out to repeat what he says. These lines give the frame of “Prufrock,” implying that whatever Prufrock is telling us, he is reasonably sure that it will never be told to the outside world, so he may speak plainly of his desires and despairs. The epigram for this poem is once again the spoken words of the poem’s character. None of the description of the circle of hell is included, or the poet’s introduction to Guido by his guides. In “Prufrock,” this epigram frames the poem as the private thoughts of its narrator, given to the page for the same reason Guido’s experiences are related to Dante; both narrators expect that no one will hear these words again, and feel free to express themselves honestly. The implication that Prufrock is expressing his most private thoughts, confident they will remain private, allows the narrator to be much more forthright, and thus his words should be trusted and taken at face value by the reader. Given Eliot’s use of complex symbolism and continual references to a wide range of classical literature, this conceit becomes another layer of symbolism and meaning. The poet plays a game of meaning within meaning with the reader, right from the start. Eliot frames his poem with an epigram that implies that the narrator is being as honest and forthright as possible, for reasons of his own, while constructing a poem with meaning and symbolism that comments on everything from old age and frustration to the loneliness of the human condition and the frailty of human relations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The voice of the count in Dante, however, is a voice from the classical canon, from a work that Eliot situates as one of the great ancestors of his own epic poetry. This is not the voice of the ‘other,’ but of a classical figure within a greater work. The use of

the claim of veracity, a trope of venerable tradition, also sets the work and the figures within the work as part of a long-standing tradition within Eliot's culture. More importantly, it is a voice that is situated within one of the most creative uses of religious orthodoxy in classical literature: the divisions of the afterlife according to Catholic doctrine. Therefore, it includes the mystical and the divine, explicitly. A work of literature could hardly be considered more explicitly religious.

Michael North, in The Dialect of Modernism, examines the use of vernacular African-American speech by modernist novelists and poets. It was shown in the collected letters of Eliot that Eliot and Ezra Pound would occasionally address each other in dialect taken almost directly from the stories of Uncle Remus, and even used nicknames for each other such as Brer Fox and Tarbaby. North also brings to light an interesting set of facts about Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men." Eliot's poem begins with a peculiar epigram, put in what Eliot or any other modernist might have considered as the black vernacular of the time: "Mistah Kurtz - he dead(25)." This is a line from Heart of Darkness, by Joseph Conrad. It shows the poem beginning with a death, and the first line of the poem proper shows how this death is merely an echo of empty life: "We are the hollow men(26)," But this death is unique. This is the death of the man who is the object of search and question in the entire book, one of the most vivid and thought-provoking works about the effects of colonialism and the downfall of civilization ever produced. On the one hand, Heart of Darkness becomes a vehicle for British imperialist superiority. It is set in the Belgian Congo, and its hero is able to look around at any time and see the insane disorder which has taken over the area, and attribute it not just to colonialism gone awry, but to

specifically non-British colonialism at work. Belgium was infamous, of course, for its poor treatment of native Africans in the Congo river valley region, and the immense wealth in the form of rubber and other trade goods that this colony produced for them. In the text of Heart of Darkness, the protagonist, Marlow, comes across prisoners left languishing by the side of the road because no one remembers why they were chained in the first place, and that is on his first day. But cannot the British claim that this is not just because of imperialism, but because of a specifically uncaring Belgian imperialism? The book goes further, as Kurtz, the agent, who is praised time and time again by the other British representatives as being of exceptional talent and great skill in his job, is revealed to have assumed an entirely amoral existence, neither regretting nor enjoying the role he has assumed as the de facto ruler of the indigenous people around him. Even the best British man may be corrupted by those dark colonial worlds that lie far across the globe, away from civilization and its ordering cities. In more recent studies, the work is used to exemplify the horrors and oppression of 'the other', as Jacques Lacan describes outside cultures and people. Lacan states that we attempt to define ourselves by what we are not, and all the things we are not are attributed to the 'other'. This poem shows Eliot's attempt to use outside voices, or even be an outside voice himself, there is the use of a quote that comments simply, but with enormous ramifications, on the state of colonialism, a system of enslaving the 'other'. Mister Kurtz is dead, and the colonial power in that small part of Africa has died with him. The 'other' is freed, at least temporarily. But then again, the possibility of reordering has occurred. With Kurtz dead, perhaps Marlow can impart a new order and a better British imperial civilization to the

savages of darkest Africa. North reveals that in Eliot's original rough draft of "The Hollow Men", the last lines of the entire poem were to be "The horror, the horror(27)." The quote is again from Heart of Darkness, being Kurtz's last quote. These lines have been discussed and analyzed by various critics over the years, trying to conclude the meaning of such an enigmatic deathbed utterance. Is it a plea for deliverance or a confession? Is he horrified by his own acts or is he horrified specifically because he no longer finds any of his actions horrific or even objectionable? Regardless of the answers to these questions, the choice by Eliot not to include these words in his final version of The Hollow Men is telling. That he even considered bracketing the entirety of his poem with these two quotes is tremendously interesting.

The actual epigram is the words of the African, without the descriptive text that immediately follows. This is another interesting choice on the part of Eliot. He wants the reference to the European man, the British man, but he leaves out the speaker, while leaving in the inflection of the speaker. The previous line of the text that Eliot quotes makes reference to the fact that the speaker is an African, one of the tribes people Kurtz has taken over; part of Kurtz's insane little world in the midst of the uncivilizing jungle. The line is spoken, with the text just previous reading "said, in a tone of scathing contempt(28)." Savagely. What a multi-layered word in this context. The adverb contains both the implication of the uncivilized African who has been the corrupting agent of the British representative of imperialism, the violent emotion associated with powerful feelings, and the uncivilized persons who feel free to express such emotions as opposed to the civilized British people who feel, like the Greeks, express that moderation

must be observed in all things. Does the African feel anger toward Kurtz for dying and leaving them leaderless in the tiny authoritarian kingdom that Kurtz created? Or is the nameless tribesman angry at Kurtz for the havoc that he caused in their lives, uprooting their previous existence and replacing it with his own bizarre rules and governance? We are left only with the musings of Marlow and the other British men, no hint of how the Africans reacted to the demise of Kurtz.

More so, this line is uttered by the manager's boy, who is described earlier in *Heart of Darkness*: "He [the manager] allowed his 'boy'—an overfed young negro from the coast—to treat the white men, under his very eyes, with provoking insolence.(29)" Here is a figure of savagery, who has been brought to heel as the servant of a powerful white figure. He is allowed to step out of his place, out of the proper respect and gentility a native is due to the colonizers, by virtue of the power of his master. This lends another layer of meaning to his words. He is perhaps angry as well that the great agent has died before he has a chance to serve the Empire further, since the manager's boy has adopted a place of relative privilege in the empire, like the house slave on the plantation. The manager is another peculiar figure, another 'hollow man.' Here is how Conrad describes him: "He was of middle size and of ordinary build....He was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect. He inspired uneasiness....His position came to him—why? Perhaps because he was never ill . . . He had served three terms of three years out there . . . Because triumphal health in the general rout of constitutions is a kind of power in itself....Perhaps there was nothing within him. Such a suspicion made one pause—for out there there were no external checks. Once when various tropical diseases



had laid low almost every ‘agent’ in the station, he was heard to say, ‘Men who come out here should have no entrails(30).’” A ‘hollow man’ indeed. The manager is such an enigma, such a cipher of a person, that he leads to superstitious musings as to whether or not he is even a real person, or a construct of some type, built by the empire and sent out to govern its workers, hollow and empty on the inside as the tin woodsman of Oz.

Whereas Conrad seems to feel that these men have lost their ideals and their sense of purpose out in the wide world of empire, Eliot’s beliefs and writings would lead us down a more metaphysical road. The hollowness is a spiritual one, not to be filled with materialism or building of empire. The making of money, commerce, and industrialization are false gods to Eliot. He asserts that without acknowledging the spiritual aspect of society, there will be no improvement. Religion alone cannot do it: look at the previously quoted remark of a ‘flawed religious society’ that he refers to in his lectures and essays. Art must assist. The aesthetic must help in raising and preserving culture, which in turn will raise and preserve culture.

Framing a poem with an epigram becomes a recurring device for Eliot. More than half of the poems in his collection simply titled Poems (1920) have epigrams, as well as “The Wasteland” and the “Hollow Men” published in later collections. They give a starting point to jump off of when leaping in to the complex symbolism Eliot uses, which he attributes to the influence of the French Symbolists when commenting on his own poetry in his various essays. “The Hollow Men” in first draft could have been his only poem that was bracketed by an opening epigram and final lines that came from the same work, at nearly the same textual moment within that other work. It did not, however. Eliot chose to end the poem with a hymn-like repetition of despair:

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.(31)

Upon reexamination, these could be commenting on Conrad's work. How does Kurtz's life end? Not with a bang but a whimper. A whimper that perplexes us. If it had been used, the lines of: "The horror, the horror" might have taken Eliot from his epigram of the colonized 'other' looking in on the death of the colonial power to a perpetual loop of moving from the death back to the moment before death and moving forward, only to make the journey again.

The first quote tells of Kurtz's death, but it is a native speaking. One of the subjects of imperialism, even though it is a twisted, debauched imperialism that really provides no benefit to the country of the conqueror. Kurtz has created his own colony deep in the equatorial jungles of Africa, but it is completely cut off from his country of origin. England receives no glory, no trade, no benefit whatsoever from Kurtz's insane mini-empire. These wretches, in worshiping Kurtz with their dread, are even more oppressed than the poor natives toiling down river, near the coast, who Marlowe encounters earlier. Eliot starts "The Hollow Men" with the image of the speaking of a death. It is the death of an Englishman. It is the death of an imperial conqueror, someone who went out in to the world in the name of his empire and sought to tame a savage colony. The mind set of colonialism rests partly upon a division of cultures in to those that are civilized, which very often means those that have also become industrialized, and those that are uncivilized. This then allows a certain moral justification of the conquering or annexing of their lands in the name of the empire. With this rule, the empire will civilize them. Rudyard Kipling, writing to U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt,

attempting to convince the president to take the offered control of the Philippine islands from Spain, and thus become another imperial power, writes the now infamous poem of the title and verse: "Take up the white man's burden." Eliot takes this up with a religious aspect added to it, in his "Choruses from The Rock." In Chorus II, he begins to task his fellow citizens to task for resting on their laurels, not continuing the work that is their religious duty to perform. In one line of this chorus, he states "The Church must be forever building, for it is forever decaying / within and attacked from without(32);" That belief, that the church must continue to build and expand, is tied in with the idea of empire several lines previous, where an entire stanza echoes Kipling's sentiment:

When your fathers fixed the place of GOD,  
And settled all the inconvenient saints,  
Apostles, martyrs, in a kind of Whipsnade,  
Then they could set about imperial expansion  
Accompanied by industrial development.  
Exporting iron, coal and cotton goods  
And intellectual enlightenment  
And everything, including capital  
And several versions of the Word of GOD:  
The British race assured of a mission  
Performed it, but left much at home unsure(33)

Here is the tying together of "The White man's Burden" and the fervor of the evangelist.

Not only is the difference between cultures predicated on technological advancement, it is also a racial division. The speech of the native in the quote from Heart of Darkness is not entirely the dialect of the African or the African-American speaking their form of English. Rather, it is the dialect found and used by the white novelist, repeated by the white poet. It bears no relation to actual African-American dialects of the time, any more than the characters of Uncle Rhemus bear relation to actual African-Americans in the

south. Eliot and Pound, it has been mentioned before, are both aware of these dialects, and indeed make use of them to poke fun at each other and to show their rebelliousness against the fears of English old-school grammarians, who lament the downfall of the English language, and even label the United States of America as the greatest danger to real English at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, they are making use of the bastardized Uncle Rhemus dialect, not in touch with any actual uses of African-American language of the day. They attempt to bring in the other, and include his voice, but it is not the voice of the other at all, it is the voice that they have given the other.

To start the poem with the native African speaking is to start with the attempt to view the shifting subjects through the eyes of the other, through the eyes of the native who has witnessed the death of the conquering imperialist, shooting straight in to Eliot's layered symbolism. An interesting parallel could be thought of with "The Wasteland." The Fisher King, the wounded monarch whose physical infirmity causes blight upon his lands, reaffirming the link between ruler and lands, could be Kurtz. His life, in Conrad's work, caused the twisting of the native population in to a group of his fearful servants, who acted out his wishes and whims and therefore became his subjects, and in a fashion, British subjects as well, even there in the Belgian congo. His madness becomes the darkness and malaise which settles across his lands. The breakdown of civilization in this colonial area is the breakdown of Kurtz's moral and intellectual principles. He is the mental and psychological Fisher King rather than the physical one.

The proposed ending quote throws another light on the poem. The Hollow Men could have ended with "The horror, the horror." This would have brought back the specter of Kurtz directly. In a chronological reading, it resurrects Kurtz, since news of his

death begins the poem, and these last words of his life end the poem. On the other hand, this would have become a reverse resurrection, simply replaying his death scene, and leading us full circle, reviewing his previous life throughout the work, leading to his death in the end, then jumping back, because the poem's epigram starts us with the relaying of the news of his death. The poem takes on a circular time line, repeating endlessly the news of Kurtz's death, which leads to the reflection on Kurtz's life, which then leads us up through Kurtz's life to the moment of his death, and then to the subsequent news of his death, which is the beginning of the poem again, and so on, ad infinitum. It becomes a textual and intellectual moebius strip, never ending. The hollow men are trapped in an infinite loop of life and death, both in despair, because their hollow insides can never be filled or satisfied with the missions they are on. Eliot would add the mystical to this argument, perhaps positing that only the touch of the divine, or faith in such, can fill up the hollow men and break the cycle.

Lukacs wrote that modernism was concerned with the break between signifier and signified, between symbolism and the meaning of the sign itself. This alienation he finds specifically in Eliot's "The Hollow Men." Two lines near the beginning of Eliot's poem are repeated by Lukacs to illustrate such an idea: "Shape without form, shade without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture without motion(34);" These could all easily be metaphors for signifier and signified. The modernist poet Eliot is talking about hollow men, men who have no interior; they have lost both their insides and their deeper meanings. This is the same poem which evokes Kurtz as its epigram, its opening framing remark. As Richards points out, there is no simple way to fill the hollow man back up. Indeed, Eliot is once again more concerned with simply pointing out the difficulties, and

trusting that illuminating these problems is the essential beginning of solving them.

Anthony Julius wrote an exhaustive and brilliant critique of Eliot's anti-Semitism in T. S. Eliot, anti-Semitism, and literary form, finding it directly, implicitly, and tacitly throughout Eliot's work. Julius traces some of the tropes of anti-Semitism within Western literature and culture, and shows how Eliot alternatively imitates and expands upon them, consciously and unconsciously. Herder set the Jews as aliens in Europe, outside the cultures of the countries and the 'Volk': the sum of all the people or citizens. This is even after saying that he did not believe in racial differences: "notwithstanding the varieties of the human form there is but one and the same species of man throughout the whole earth(35)." Eliot follows in this fashion, talking about the necessity of a Christian society, and the problems of an industrialized culture. He later specifically excludes Jews from this society. He expresses admiration for Kipling and expounds how Kipling was both a champion of empire, and yet still found a universal human quality in all the denizens of India and other colonies, from Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh to the smaller cults of the colonists, and even the pagans of other parts of the world. Eliot uses the term pagan and unbeliever to be specific in referring to people who are both not Christian, and not part of western societies implicitly based upon Christianity.

Julius writes "There is missing from Eliot's poetry of anti-Semitism any characterization of the skeptical and unattached intellectual of Jewish origin, that is, the 'free-thinking Jew.'...By contrast, this is precisely the theme that Eliot's prose exploits...the anarchic, intellectually subversive Jew(36)." Here is an interesting contradiction. Eliot follows in an Arnoldian tradition, upholding culture as a thing which needs to be passed on and preserved for the sake of the society that contains it. He speaks

in his poems themselves of the malaise of industrialized life, likening its champions and explorers to hollow men who are left unfulfilled and unfinished. The Wasteland is a wasteland of urban problems and modern disillusionment. The fundamental separation of man from his fellow man is too real and profound to be overcome by art and genius. It needs the divine, the metaphysical, the grace of God to be overcome. The Jewish intellectual he portrays as somehow divorced from religious roots, cleaving only to a liberalism which Eliot finds insufficient. They may question everything and promote change for the better, but ultimately they are promoting only material and economic change, which will not fill the hollow men. Eliot treats the Jewish intellectual as a useless figure, synonymous with the most extremes of liberalism, divorced even from their own religious underpinnings. Julius expresses this as part of a tradition which creates the Jewish intellectual as a useless figure, stuck between two worlds: “no longer of one, incapable of belonging to the other, just as the free-thinking Jew has abandoned his or her own faith while rejecting the Christian faith(37).”

### Conclusion

T. S. Eliot writes in his prose of the necessity of simply trying to create a world within poetry, that the reader merely steps into. This will elevate poetry to a higher place, where it can exist as an example of possibility rather than just an expression of current problems. He writes of the need for society to have a sacred element, implying that human relationships and reality itself are always incomplete without including the divine, or the need for the divine. His poetic characters and quotes explore the problems and

malaise of the Modernist character.

Within that framework, those who are excluded from culture, from the fabric of society, not even allowed to assist in its improvement, are the non-Christians. The 'other' of Eliot's writings, the figure upon whom are projected the fears and frustrated desires of the hollow men of Modernism is the pagan, the non-Christian figure, whether Jew, African, or unnamed colonial native. He follows in traditions of anti-Semitism and imperialism, but his ultimate philosophical motivations remain religious in nature.



## NOTES

1. Eliot 1971, p.3
2. Julius, p.158
3. Crawford, p. 8
4. Lukacs, p.15
5. *ibid.*, p.15
6. *ibid.*, p.20
7. *ibid.*, p.19
8. *ibid.*, p.20
9. Eliot 1982, p. 12
10. *ibid.*
11. *ibid.*
12. *ibid.*, p. 53
13. Eliot 1920, p. 32
14. Nietzsche, p. 204
15. Eliot 1949, p.46
16. Eliot 1932, p.219
17. *ibid.*
18. Julius, p.15
19. Eliot 1971, p. 86
20. *ibid.*, p.5
21. Eliot 1932, p.19
22. *ibid.*
23. Norton Anthology of English Lit. II, p. 2140
24. *ibid.*
25. Conrad, p. 71
26. Eliot 1971, p. 56
27. Conrad, p. 71
28. *ibid.*
29. Conrad, p. 22
30. *ibid.*
31. Eliot 1971, p. 59
32. *ibid.*, p. 101
33. *ibid.*, pp. 100-101
34. Lukacs, p. 25
35. Herder, p. 36
36. Julius, p. 146
37. *ibid.*

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