

# Modernist Poetry

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# T. S. ELIOT (1888-1965)

## **The Hollow Men (1925)**

*Mistab 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.*

## Ezra POUND (1885-1972)

### **In a Station of the Metro (1913)**

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

## William Carlos WILLIAMS (1883-1963)

### **The Young Housewife (1916)**

At ten A.M. the young housewife  
moves about in negligee behind  
the wooden walls of her husband's house.  
I pass solitary in my car.

Then again she comes to the curb  
to call the ice-man, fish-man, and stands  
shy, uncorseted, tucking in  
stray ends of hair, and I compare her  
to a fallen leaf.

The noiseless wheels of my car  
rush with a crackling sound over  
dried leaves as I bow and pass smiling.

### **The Red Wheelbarrow (1923)**

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

**This Is Just to Say (1934)**

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

**A Sort of a Song (1944)**

Let the snake wait under  
his weed  
and the writing  
be of words, slow and quick, sharp  
to strike, quiet to wait,  
sleepless.

—through metaphor to reconcile  
the people and the stones.  
Compose. (No ideas  
but in things) Invent!  
Saxifrage is my flower that splits  
the rocks.



## Wallace STEVENS (1879-1955)

### **Anecdote of the Jar (1919)**

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

## Gertrude STEIN (1874-1946)

### Tender Buttons (1914)

#### OBJECTS

##### A CARAFE, THAT IS A BLIND GLASS.

A kind in glass and a cousin, a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing. All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading.

##### GLAZED GLITTER.

Nickel, what is nickel, it is originally rid of a cover.

The change in that is that red weakens an hour. The change has come. There is no search. But there is, there is that hope and that interpretation and sometime, surely any is unwelcome, sometime there is breath and there will be a sinecure and charming very charming is that clean and cleansing. Certainly glittering is handsome and convincing.

There is no gratitude in mercy and in medicine. There can be breakages in Japanese. That is no programme. That is no color chosen. It was chosen yesterday, that showed spitting and perhaps washing and polishing. It certainly showed no obligation and perhaps if borrowing is not natural there is some use in giving.

##### A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION.

The change of color is likely and a difference a very little difference is prepared. Sugar is not a vegetable.

Callous is something that hardening leaves behind what will be soft if there is a genuine interest in there being present as many girls as men. Does this change. It shows that dirt is clean when there is a volume.

A cushion has that cover. Supposing you do not like to change, supposing it is very clean that there is no change in appearance, supposing that there is regularity and a costume is that any the worse than an oyster and an exchange. Come to season that is there any extreme use in feather and cotton. Is there not much more joy in a table and more chairs and very likely roundness and a place to put them.

A circle of fine card board and a chance to see a tassel.

What is the use of a violent kind of delightfulness if there is no pleasure in not getting tired of it. The question does not come before there is a quotation. In any kind of place there is a top to covering and it is a pleasure at any rate there is some venturing in refusing to believe nonsense. It shows what use there is in a whole piece if one uses it and it is extreme and very likely the little things could be dearer but in any case there is a bargain and if there is the best thing to do is to take it away and wear it and then be reckless be reckless and resolved on returning gratitude.

Light blue and the same red with purple makes a change. It shows that there is no mistake. Any pink shows that and very likely it is reasonable. Very likely there should not be a finer fancy present. Some increase means a calamity and this is the best preparation for three and more being together. A little calm is so ordinary and in any case there is sweetness and some of that.

A seal and matches and a swan and ivy and a suit.

A closet, a closet does not connect under the bed. The band if it is white and black, the band has a green string. A sight a whole sight and a little groan grinding makes a trimming such a sweet singing trimming and a red thing not a round thing but a white thing, a red thing and a white thing.

The disgrace is not in carelessness nor even in sewing it comes out out of the way.

What is the sash like. The sash is not like anything mustard it is not like a same thing that has stripes, it is not even more hurt than that, it has a little top.

#### A BOX.

Out of kindness comes redness and out of rudeness comes rapid same question, out of an eye comes research, out of selection comes

painful cattle. So then the order is that a white way of being round is something suggesting a pin and is it disappointing, it is not, it is so rudimentary to be analysed and see a fine substance strangely, it is so earnest to have a green point not to red but to point again.

#### A PIECE OF COFFEE.

More of double.

A place in no new table.

A single image is not splendor. Dirty is yellow. A sign of more in not mentioned. A piece of coffee is not a detainer. The resemblance to yellow is dirtier and distincter. The clean mixture is whiter and not coal color, never more coal color than altogether.

The sight of a reason, the same sight slighter, the sight of a simpler negative answer, the same sore sounder, the intention to wishing, the same splendor, the same furniture.

The time to show a message is when too late and later there is no hanging in a blight.

A not torn rose-wood color. If it is not dangerous then a pleasure and more than any other if it is cheap is not cheaper. The amusing side is that the sooner there are no fewer the more certain is the necessity dwindled. Supposing that the case contained rose-wood and a color. Supposing that there was no reason for a distress and more likely for a number, supposing that there was no astonishment, is it not necessary to mingle astonishment.

The settling of stationing cleaning is one way not to shatter scatter and scattering. The one way to use custom is to use soap and silk for cleaning. The one way to see cotton is to have a design concentrating the illusion and the illustration. The perfect way is to accustom the thing to have a lining and the shape of a ribbon and to be solid, quite solid in standing and to use heaviness in morning. It is light enough in that. It has that shape nicely. Very nicely may not be exaggerating. Very strongly may be sincerely fainting. May be strangely flattering. May not be strange in everything. May not be strange to.

## DIRT AND NOT COPPER.

Dirt and not copper makes a color darker. It makes the shape so heavy and makes no melody harder.

It makes mercy and relaxation and even a strength to spread a table fuller. There are more places not empty. They see cover.

## NOTHING ELEGANT.

A charm a single charm is doubtful. If the red is rose and there is a gate surrounding it, if inside is let in and there places change then certainly something is upright. It is earnest.

## MILDRED'S UMBRELLA.

A cause and no curve, a cause and loud enough, a cause and extra a loud clash and an extra wagon, a sign of extra, a sac a small sac and an established color and cunning, a slender grey and no ribbon, this means a loss a great loss a restitution.

## A METHOD OF A CLOAK.

A single climb to a line, a straight exchange to a cane, a desperate adventure and courage and a clock, all this which is a system, which has feeling, which has resignation and success, all makes an attractive black silver.

## A RED STAMP.

If lilies are lily white if they exhaust noise and distance and even dust, if they dusty will dirt a surface that has no extreme grace, if they do this and it is not necessary it is not at all necessary if they do this they need a catalogue.

## A BOX.

A large box is handily made of what is necessary to replace any substance. Suppose an example is necessary, the plainer it is made the

more reason there is for some outward recognition that there is a result.

A box is made sometimes and them to see to see to it neatly and to have the holes stopped up makes it necessary to use paper.

A custom which is necessary when a box is used and taken is that a large part of the time there are three which have different connections. The one is on the table. The two are on the table. The three are on the table. The one, one is the same length as is shown by the cover being longer. The other is different there is more cover that shows it. The other is different and that makes the corners have the same shade the eight are in singular arrangement to make four necessary.

Lax, to have corners, to be lighter than some weight, to indicate a wedding journey, to last brown and not curious, to be wealthy, cigarettes are established by length and by doubling.

Left open, to be left pounded, to be left closed, to be circulating in summer and winter, and sick color that is grey that is not dusty and red shows, to be sure cigarettes do measure an empty length sooner than a choice in color.

Winged, to be winged means that white is yellow and pieces pieces that are brown are dust color if dust is washed off, then it is choice that is to say it is fitting cigarettes sooner than paper.

An increase why is an increase idle, why is silver cloister, why is the spark brighter, if it is brighter is there any result, hardly more than ever.

## H. D. (Hilda DOOLITTLE, 1886-1961)

### **Oread (1924)**

Whirl up, sea—  
whirl your pointed pines,  
splash your great pines  
on our rocks,  
hurl your green over us,  
cover us with your pools of fir.

### **Helen (1924)**

All Greece hates  
the still eyes in the white face,  
the lustre as of olives  
where she stands,  
and the white hands.

All Greece reviles  
the wan face when she smiles,  
hating it deeper still  
when it grows wan and white,  
remembering past enchantments  
and past ills.

Greece sees, unmoved,  
God's daughter, born of love,  
the beauty of cool feet  
and slenderest knees,  
could love indeed the maid,  
only if she were laid,  
white ash amid funereal cypresses.

## Mina LOY (1882-1966)

### Parturition (1914)

I am the centre  
 Of a circle of pain  
 Exceeding its boundaries in every direction

The business of the bland sun  
 Has no affair with me  
 In my congested cosmos of agony  
 From which there is no escape  
 On infinitely prolonged nerve-vibrations  
 Or in contraction  
 To the pinpoint nucleus of being

Locate an irritation	without
It is	within
	Within

It is without  
 The sensitized area  
 Is identical with the extensity  
 Of intension

I am the false quantity  
 In the harmony of physiological potentiality  
 To which  
 Gaining self-control  
 I should be consonant  
 In time

Pain is no stronger than the resisting force  
 Pain calls up in me  
 The struggle is equal



The open window is full of a voice  
 A fashionable portrait painter  
 Running upstairs to a woman's apartment  
 Sings

“All the girls are tid'ly did'ly  
 All the girls are nice  
 Whether they wear their hair in curls  
 Or —”

At the back of the thoughts to which I permit  
 crystallization

The conception                      Brute  
 Why?

    The irresponsibility of the male  
 Leaves woman her superior Inferiority.  
 He is running upstairs

I am climbing a distorted mountain of agony  
 Incidentally with the exhaustion of control  
 I reach the summit  
 And gradually subside into anticipation of  
 Repose  
 Which never comes.  
 For another mountain is growing up  
 Which        goaded by the unavoidable  
 I must traverse  
 Traversing myself

Something in the delirium of night hours  
 Confuses while intensifying sensibility  
 Blurring spatial contours  
 So aiding elusion of the circumscribed  
 That the gurgling of a crucified wild beast  
 Comes from so far away  
 And the foam on the stretched muscles of a mouth  
 Is no part of myself  
 There is a climax in sensibility  
 When pain surpassing itself

Becomes exotic  
 And the ego succeeds in unifying the positive and  
 negative poles of sensation  
 Uniting the opposing and resisting forces  
 In lascivious revelation

Relaxation  
 Negation of myself as a unit  
     Vacuum interlude  
 I should have been emptied of life  
 Giving life  
 For consciousness in crises      races  
 Through the subliminal deposits of evolutionary  
 processes

Have I not  
 Somewhere  
 Scrutinized  
 A dead white feathered moth  
 Laying eggs?  
 A moment  
 Being realization  
 Can  
 Vitalized by cosmic initiation  
 Furnish an adequate apology  
 For the objective  
 Agglomeration of activities  
 Of a life  
 LIFE  
 A leap with nature  
 Into the essence  
 Of unpredicted Maternity  
 Against my thigh  
 Tough of infinitesimal motion  
 Scarcely perceptible  
 Undulation  
 Warmth      moisture

Stir of incipient life  
 Precipitating into me  
 The contents of the universe  
 Mother I am  
 Identical  
 With infinite Maternity  
     Indivisible  
     Acutely  
     I am absorbed  
     Into  
 The was—is—ever—shall—be  
 Of cosmic reproductivity

Rises from the subconscious  
 Impression of a cat  
 With blind kittens  
 Among her legs  
 Same undulating life-stir  
 I am that cat

Rises from the sub-conscious  
 Impression of small animal carcass  
 Covered with blue bottles  
 —Epicurean—  
 And through the insects  
 Waves that same undulation of living  
 Death  
 Life  
 I am knowing  
 All about  
     Unfolding

The next morning  
 Each woman-of-the-people  
 Tiptoeing the red pile of the carpet  
 Doing hushed service  
 Each woman-of-the-people





As usual  
 Is smiling as bravely  
 As it is given to her to be        brave  
 While the brandy cherries  
 In winking glasses  
 Are decomposing  
 Harmoniously  
 With the flesh of spectators  
 And at a given spot  
 There is one  
 Who  
 Having the concentric lighting focussed precisely upon her  
 Prophetically blossoms in perfect putrefaction  
 Yet        there are cabs outside the door.

### III.

#### MAGASINS DU LOUVRE

All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass

Long lines of boxes  
 Of dolls  
 Propped against banisters  
 Walls and pillars  
 Huddled on shelves  
 And composite babies with arms extended  
 Hang from the ceiling  
 Beckoning  
 Smiling  
 In a profound silence  
 Which the shop walker left trailing behind him  
 When he ambled to the further end of the gallery  
 To annoy the shop-girl  
 All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass  
 They alone have the effrontery to  
 Stare through the human soul  
 Seeing nothing  
 Between parted fringes

One cocotte wears a bowler hat and a sham camellia  
And one an iridescent boa  
For there are two of them  
Passing  
And the solicitous mouth of one is straight  
The other curved to a static smile  
They see the dolls  
And for a moment their eyes relax  
To a flicker of elements unconditionally primeval  
And now averted  
Seek each other's        surreptitiously  
To know if the other has seen  
While mine are inextricably entangled with the pattern of the carpet  
As eyes are apt to be  
In their shame  
Having surprised a gesture that is ultimately intimate

All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass.

## Langston HUGHES (1902-1967)

### I, Too (1945)

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.