

Contextual Commentary on two Modernist Texts

"I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know ... It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core ..." ¹. Thus Marlow talks of Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In this essay, I compare T. S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* with an extract from *The Passage to India*, in the context of Modernism. Using the leit-motif of "hollowness", I examine ways in which both texts are hollow. I demonstrate how their forms can be shown to be structurally hollow; and I contend that their narratives and their protagonists are hollow. I also argue that both texts tell us that we are hollow. I then go on to discuss the negative theology within the texts in order to explain why the texts are hollow in relation to God.

The Marabar Caves are hollow and so, in terms of narrative structure, is *The Passage to India*. The question of what did happen in the caves cannot be resolved, so that at the centre of the middle part of the book lies an indistinguishable non-event, an echo - as described in this extract - only amounting to "boum" ². In this way, the structure and rhythmical pattern of the novel is similar to that of T. S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men*. Both texts have at their centre an uncertainty of meaning created by the Modernist decision of their authors to withhold authority, ratification and closure.

Read without particular reference to its literary allusions, *The Hollow Men* can be seen to describe the thoughts of a man physically dying, and considering - or hallucinating - the

1 ¹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. by Robert Kimbrough, third edition, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), pp. 57 - 58.

afterlife. The man's attitude to the eerie twilight zones he envisions is best represented by the words, "Let me be no nearer / ... No nearer - / Not that final meeting"³. After a brief regression to infantilism "*Here we go round the prickly pear ...*"⁴, the man - so weak, as to seem hollow and to embody "Paralysed force, gesture without motion"⁵ - now feels a "Shadow"⁶ fall between himself and the physical world. In fits and starts, he attempts to say the Lord's Prayer⁷. He fails to complete it⁸ before he dies, realising that for him as for most of us, the world ends unspectacularly as we "whimper"⁹ out of existence. Absent from the above interpretation is consideration of the literary allusions within the text, which arguably resist a single unifying interpretation of their implications.

The Hollow Men makes allusions¹⁰ to Dante's *Divina Commedia*, to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and to the Gunpowder Plot. Other allusions include Valéry's 'Le Cimetière marin', Dowson's 'Non sum qualis eram', the Lord's Prayer and I Chronicles, Judges, Psalm 51, Ezekiel, Luke, the Resurrection, Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, Kipling's 'Danny Deever', Stavinsky's *Petrouchka*, 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush'¹¹, West African folklore and spirituality, and arguably Morris dancing. It also includes other allusions.

2 ²E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), p132, see extract.

3 ³Eliot, T. S., *The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, second edition, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 87 - 92, see extract, lines 29 - 37.

4 ⁴Ibid., lines 68 - 71.

5 ⁵id., lines 72 - 90.

6 ⁶id., line 12.

7 ⁷id., lines 76 - 94.

8 ⁸id.

9 ⁹id., line 98.

10 ¹⁰I am indebted to B. C. Southam's convocation of allusions in *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, sixth edition, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994), pp. 202 - 218. However, I have also amalgamated the findings of Dominic Manganiello, *T. S. Eliot and Dante*, first edition, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 59 - 65; and A. D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, first edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 115 - 127; and Ronald Bush, *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 81 - 101.

11 ¹¹The children's song and pagan fertility dance.

One of the effects of such intertextuality is to point the reader outside of the poem for the source of its meaning. In consequence, the centre of the poem is hollow - the signifiers have been gathered around an absence in that their signifieds lie elsewhere. What appears post-structuralist here in its stylistic parody of the way language works, stems instead from a Modernist restraint. The asceticism of holding back from imposing authorial intention upon the poem resonates with what Peter Childs sees in Modernism as "a sustained inquiry into the uncertainty of reality"¹² and simultaneously, "a suspicion of language as a medium for comprehending or explaining the world"¹³.

Childs observes that Modernism includes such characteristic traits as "scepticism towards the idea of a centred human subject"¹⁴ and "a disenchantment with European culture"¹⁵.

Christian Berg, Frank Durieux and Geert Lernout remark that Modernism exhibited reckless confidence as well as pessimistic predictions of doom, often at the same time¹⁶; and Cantor concurs in observing "a tendency towards feelings of apocalypse and despair"¹⁷. Both texts thus display Modernist hallmarks when they boldly - but pessimistically - proclaim that "We are the hollow men"¹⁸. This is a hollowness for their protagonists, of virtues, moral values, emotional orientation and identity. In the extract from *A Passage to India*, Mrs. Moore loses faith in her inherent meaning almost, it seems, by chance¹⁹. The echo which comes "at a

12 ¹²Peter Childs, *Modernism*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 18.

13 ¹³id., p.19.

14 ¹⁴id. p.18.

15 ¹⁵id., p.20.

16 ¹⁶*The Turn of the Century: Modernism and Modernity in Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Christian Berg, Frank Durieux, Geert Lernout, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), pp. 8 - 9.

17 ¹⁷Quoted here from: Peter Childs, *Modernism*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 19.

18 ¹⁸*The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 87 - 92, see extract, line 1.

19 ¹⁹John Beer, 'The Undying Worm', *E. M. Forster: A Passage to India: A Casebook*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1970), p.215.

moment when she chanced to be fatigued"²⁰ convinces her that "pathos, piety, courage - they exist, but are identical, and so is filth"²¹. It radically disorientates her by drowning out all of her points of reference - scripture, her children, God, her surroundings ("even the elephant had become a nobody"²²) - in an all encompassing relativism: "Everything exists, nothing has value"²³.

When in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is talking to Mr. Kurtz, he describes the difficulty of "[dealing] with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low ... He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man!"²⁴. In Michael Levenson's work, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*, this confrontation - "I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air"²⁵ - is referred to as a "sensory derangement that casts the individual into unarticulated space"²⁶, thereby exposing the "fragility of identity, the barriers to knowledge, the groundlessness of value - these great Conradian (and modern) motifs"²⁷. The Marabar Caves are "unarticulated space"²⁸ in the sense that they break down all of the differences upon which meaning, and therefore language, depend. It is Mrs. Moore's contact with unarticulated space which destabilises her, which decenters her as a subject and which demonstrates how precariously hollow she is. In Modernist terms, this questions the resilience of our own subjectivity.

20 ²⁰ *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), p.131, see extract.

21 ²¹ id.

22 ²² id.

23 ²³ id.

24 ²⁴ *Heart of Darkness*, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), p.65.

25 ²⁵ id.

26 ²⁶ Michael Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality: Character and novelistic form from Conrad to Woolf*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 5.

27 ²⁷ id.

28 ²⁸ id.

The destruction of difference is also the destruction of the narrative. Thus the narratives which cohere and structure her universe into meaning all collapse in upon themselves: her children, her day - she reminds herself that "she was only an elderly woman who had got up too early in the morning and journeyed too far"²⁹, her faith, and her health - "she thought, "I am going to be ill," to comfort herself, then she surrendered to the vision"³⁰. Hollowness possesses her thoughts and haunts her mind with its echo until "She sat motionless with horror"³¹ and does not "want to communicate with anyone not even with God"³²; or even it seems - as her stream of consciousness runs empty - with the narrator. "We are the hollow men"³³, Eliot tells us, "Our dried voices, when / We whisper together / Are quiet and meaningless / As wind in dry grass"³⁴. Robbed of her subjectivity, Mrs. Moore's voice becomes like those of the hollow men: so that "the affectionate and sincere words that she spoke to [Aziz] seemed no longer hers but the air's"³⁵. In this extract, the dramatic ease and suddenness with which Mrs. Moore is emptied of her faith in meaning, disturbingly implies that we may all be just as hollow as her.

One interpretation of *The Hollow Men* is that it says that we are all hollow men. Howarth takes the epigraph to *The Hollow Men*, "*Mistah Kurtz - he dead*"³⁶, to mean that "the figure of evil has disappeared from life, and thus all values have disappeared"³⁷. Kurtz's death signifies a vacuum in the oppositional dialectic which Professor Godbole verbalises in a later part of *A*

29 ²⁹ *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), p.131, see extract.

30 ³⁰ *id.*, p. 132.

31 ³¹ *id.*

32 ³² *id.*

33 ³³ *The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 87 - 92, see extract, line 1.

34 ³⁴ *id.* lines 5 - 8.

35 ³⁵ *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), p.132, see extract.

36 ³⁶ *The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.87, see extract. See also *Heart of Darkness*, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), p.69.

Passage to India: "Good and evil are different as their names imply. But in my own humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in one, absent in the other ... Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence"³⁸. The death of Kurtz, of Guy Fawkes, of Cassius, must make us empty of virtue - must make us "the hollow men"³⁹. Five o'clock in the morning is the traditional hour of Jesus' resurrection⁴⁰. For this reason, the rhythmical section "*Here we go round the prickly pear ...*" can be seen as turning the pagan fertility dance into either, as Southam suggests, "a modern *infertility* dance"⁴¹, or as an attempt to summon resurrection or a second coming. The cry of the hollow men in the wilderness of the "cactus land"⁴² could therefore be a cry for divine grace, a recognition of the hollowness of life without "the Shadow"⁴³ (in Luke, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit⁴⁴) whilst awaiting "a resurrection that never occurs"⁴⁵ in Ezekiel's "valley"⁴⁶ of "dry"⁴⁷ bones⁴⁸; A valley which is also simultaneously "our dry cellar"⁴⁹ - the cave in which Jesus is entombed. In this interpretation, the "penny for the Old Guy"⁵⁰ evokes a plea for sympathy towards a dead or dying God⁵¹, the old man, the Father, whose death may necessitate a "penny" fare placed in the hollow mouth of the God-effigy. What is being envisaged then, is

37 ³⁷ Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures behind T. S. Eliot*, 1964; A transcript of this book was read by Eliot and revised; quoted here from *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994), p. 207 and p.41.

38 ³⁸ *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), p. 158.

39 ³⁹ *The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 87 - 92, see extract, line 1.

40 ⁴⁰ *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994), p.215.

41 ⁴¹ id.

42 ⁴² *The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 87 - 92, see extract, line 40.

43 ⁴³ id., lines 76, 82 and 90.

44 ⁴⁴ *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.101.

45 ⁴⁵ *T. S. Eliot and Dante*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 59.

46 ⁴⁶ *The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 87 - 92, see extract, lines 54 and 55.

47 ⁴⁷ id., line 10.

48 ⁴⁸ The Holy Bible: New International Version, second edition, trans. and ed. by The Committee on Bible Translation, the International Bible Society, (UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), Ezekiel, 37: 1 - 14: *The Valley of Dry Bones*, pp. 868 - 869.

49 ⁴⁹ *The Hollow Men, Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 87 - 92, see extract, line 10.

50 ⁵⁰ id. p.89.

an ironic potentiality whereby pagan mythology has rushed in to fill the spiritual vacuum, and God must pay Charon for passage over the Acheron. If the death of Kurtz heralds the death of Christ and the death of any oppositional evil and good, we are all condemned to be like Dante's trimmers, "who lived without blame, and without praise"⁵², in a meaningless social, moral and literary wasteland. Manganiello describes it thus: "Eliot underlines the need for a moral perspective without which human beings experience death in a spiritual no man's land"⁵³. We would all be thus condemned as hollow men.

The play of meanings within *The Hollow Men* could be said to mirror those of a psychologist's Rorschach test⁵⁴ in its capacity to resonate - within limits - the projected interpretations of the "reader". Or it could be regarded rather, as resembling Prufrock's magic lantern - "It is impossible to say just what I mean! / But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen"⁵⁵. In this second analogy, the poems would cast their pattern onto the screen of our consciousness, in the manner Eliot admiringly remarks that Dante achieved: "his philosophy, not as a theory ... or as his own comment or reflection, but in terms of something *perceived*"⁵⁶. If we are to accept the latter attitude, then where Ronald Bush sees *Four Quartets* as asserting "not feelings, but the pattern which we make of our feelings"⁵⁷, *The Hollow Men* ought perhaps to be taken not as a poem about God, but as an intimation of the pattern by which we can think about God.

51 ⁵¹This idea from *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 127.

52 ⁵²*Inf.* III. 36, quoted here from: *T. S. Eliot and Dante*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 59.

53 ⁵³*T. S. Eliot and Dante*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 60.

54 ⁵⁴"Psychology: A personality test consisting of a number of unstructured inkblots for interpretation". *Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition, ed. by Lorna Gilmour, (England: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), p.839.

55 ⁵⁵'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), pp. 16 - 17.

56 ⁵⁶*T. S. Eliot and Dante*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 3.

57 ⁵⁷*T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 82 - 83; quoted here from Shira Wolosky, *Language Mysticism: The Negative Way of Language in Eliot, Beckett, and Celan*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.42.

Both texts then, make references to religion. In particular, they approach Christianity through negative theology. In the extract from *A Passage to India*, Mrs. Moore teeters on the brink of total disillusionment, until "suddenly, at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she ... was terrified over an area larger than usual"⁵⁸. It is the utterances of scripture, amounting only "to "boum"⁵⁹ which ultimately make her "[surrender] to the vision"⁶⁰. Yet this is, nonetheless a "vision": a revelation as apocalyptic as those of Revelations in its destructive effect upon her universe. It constitutes a spiritual or mystical experience to the extent that it shows her how far language lies from the divine: "and she knew that all its divine words from "Let there be Light" to "It is finished" only amounted to "boum"⁶¹. God's words - from their authorial genesis of reality and meaning, to the expiry of "the Word made flesh"⁶² in Jesus' dying words - are shown to be indistinguishable from and trapped within the echolalia of language.

Negative theology is a phase which refers both⁶³ to John of the Cross' theology and to the Neoplatonist writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. In John of the Cross' *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, he writes, "Through the emptiness and darkness and detachment from all things," the soul must pursue its desire in "obscurity and annihilation of all outward and inward things, to build on that which it neither sees nor feels, to journey by denial of ourselves and of all things"⁶⁴. The vision to which Mrs. Moore submits in the extract is a spiritual purgation in this sense. Eliot's poetry can also be described in a similarly ascetic and

58 ⁵⁸ *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), pp. 131 - 132, see extract.

59 ⁵⁹ id. p.132.

60 ⁶⁰ id.

61 ⁶¹ id.

62 ⁶² "The Word became flesh", The Holy Bible: New International Version, (UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), John 1:14, p. 1063.

63 ⁶³ *Language Mysticism: The Negative Way of Language in Eliot, Beckett, and Celan*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 12 - 14.

nihilistic idiom. With reference to "Four Quartets", Wolosky writes, "Negating every assertion, removing with steady determination every condition, pointing through all dispersed repetition to a centre that will pass beyond all of them, the poem pursues its own linguistic undoing toward a signified unity it can never directly contain"⁶⁵.

In Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*, "the negative way more closely addressed the problem, or rather the impossibility, of defining God"⁶⁶. This aspect of negative theology posits God as the hors-texte outside of language: the absence indicated in Hebrew by "Name of God" - "Yahweh" - literally "he that is"⁶⁷. Dionysius' "litanies of negation"⁶⁸ can be used to explain the hollowness structurally inherent in *The Hollow Men*: where, in the words of Dionysius, "the simple, absolute, and unchangeable mysteries of heavenly Truth lie hidden in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence"⁶⁹. If Eliot's poem feels hollow, it may be because he cannot express God.

In *The Hollow Men* the speaker appears to be holding off from approach to the divine, much as Dante⁷⁰ feared approach to Beatrice at the summit of the mountain of paradise⁷¹, saying "Let me be no nearer / ... No nearer - "⁷² and deferring the moment as Prufrock and language defer jouissance through the irresolution of the words "there will be time ... indeed there will be time"⁷³. It is again language that acts as a barrier to God in this poem. "Between the

64 ⁶⁴ John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Complete Works of John of the Cross*, trans., and ed. by E. Allison Peers, (Westminster MD.: Newman Press, 1953), p.180; quoted here from: *Language Mysticism: The Negative Way of Language in Eliot, Beckett, and Celan*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.13.

65 ⁶⁵ *Language Mysticism*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 41.

66 ⁶⁶ id., p.13.

67 ⁶⁷ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary: Of Current English*, seventh edition, ed. by J. B. Sykes, (UK.: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 538.

68 ⁶⁸ *Language Mysticism*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 13.

69 ⁶⁹ id.

70 ⁷⁰ *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994), p. 212.

71 ⁷¹ p. 54 and 61.

72 ⁷² *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.90, see extract, lines 29 and 36.

73 ⁷³ 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.14.

conception / And the creation / ... Falls the Shadow"⁷⁴ - in this instance the "Shadow" of language, in the form of those words which actualise "[C]reation" out of "conception": "Let there be light"⁷⁵. The halting, stumbling approach to the divine, "For thine is / Life is / For thine is the"⁷⁶, ends this poem in sublinguistic utterance. This oblique and fragmented attempt to reach the inexpressible must end in "a whimper"⁷⁷.

Although we can not categorise the inexpressibility of God as an exclusively Modernist topos, it would be prudent to relate it to the attendant anxiety about language within Modernism. Eliot's writing in the Choral Symphony augurs the post-structuralist concerns of Barthes and Derrida in the 1960's:

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place.⁷⁸

This anxiety is also apparent in the extract from *A Passage to India*. "If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same - "ouboum""⁷⁹. The echo in the Marabar Caves is a process of incessant recontextualisation and is perhaps redolent for us of Derrida's analysis of language: whereby "iterability ... [limits] ... the idealization it makes possible: broaching and breaching it at once"⁸⁰.

74 ⁷⁴ *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.92, see extract, lines 78, 79 and 82.

75 ⁷⁵ The Holy Bible: New International Version, (UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), Genesis 1: 3, p. 3. See also: *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), pp. 132, see extract.

76 ⁷⁶ *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.92, see extract, lines 92 - 94.

77 ⁷⁷ id., line 98.

78 ⁷⁸ Quoted here from Anne Ridler, 'A Question of Speech', *T. S. Eliot: A Study of his Writings by Several Hands*, ed. by B. Rajan, (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1947), p. 117.

79 ⁷⁹ *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), pp. 131, see extract.

80 ⁸⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. by Samuel Weber, ed. by Gerald Graff, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.61; quoted here from Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, first edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 211.

George Steiner describes the "profound crisis of confidence in language brought on by the ruin of classic humanist values after 1914"⁸¹. However, it is also important to recognise that any movement with the rallying cry "make it new"⁸² would almost inevitably have confronted a crisis of "re-presentation"⁸³ at the front line of language. Eliot goes so far as to define the freedom for the modern poet to "dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning"⁸⁴. These anxieties concerning language have become axiomatic in the two texts because both attempt representations of a transcendental signified - which, in the words of Levinas, "overflows both cognition and the enigma through which the Infinite leaves a trace in cognition ... It makes the word God be pronounced, without letting "divinity" be said"⁸⁵. Here is the irony of the allusion in *The Hollow Men* to Psalm 51 - "O Lord, open my lips, / and my mouth will declare your praise"⁸⁶. In the poem, Eliot writes, "Lips that would kiss / Form prayers to broken stone"⁸⁷. If language can only misrepresent God, then prayers become idolatry⁸⁸ - because they are directed at a misrepresentation, a "broken stone"⁸⁹ idol. This reading of *The Hollow Men* concurs with Eliot's privileging of "the triumph of feeling and thought over the natural sin of language"⁹⁰, in 'The Post-Georgians'.

81 ⁸¹ *Extra-Territorial*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p.136; quoted here from *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.

82 ⁸² Ezra Pound. Quoted here from *Modernism*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 4.

83 ⁸³ *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.3.

84 ⁸⁴ T.S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets'; quoted here from *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994), pp. 2 - 3.

85 ⁸⁵ E. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by A. Lingis (Le Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), p.162/p.252; quoted here from *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.146.

86 ⁸⁶ The Holy Bible: New International Version, (UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), Psalms, 51: 15, p.573.

87 ⁸⁷ *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.91, see extract, lines 50 - 51.

88 ⁸⁸ *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994), p.213.

89 ⁸⁹ *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.91, see extract, line 51.

90 ⁹⁰ *Language Mysticism*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.10.

Karl Barth's notion of the *analogia fidei* is that "We possess no analogy on the basis of which the nature and being of God as the Lord can be accessible to us"⁹¹, and consequently, Ward interprets, a "hermeneutic circle is being described which moves within and understands the divine intra-dialogue, and faith is the condition for entry"⁹². It is only within the silence of this hermetic hermeneutic circle that God "is", outside of language and utterance. The experience of Mrs. Moore in the Marabar caves is a spiritual revelation precisely because the scenario is a an extreme realisation of the contact which negative theology describes as occurring between humanity and God, with language as the mediator. The cave in the extract has a polished circular chamber, but "The sides of the tunnel are left rough, they impinge as an afterthought upon the internal perfection"⁹³. It is important to recognise that the cave in the extract exists within a wider context in the novel of many other chambers which are rumoured to exist "deeper in the granite"⁹⁴, which "have no entrances"⁹⁵. Thus the Kawa Dol is described:

One of them is rumoured within the boulder that swings on the summit of the highest of the hills; a bubble-shaped cave that has neither ceiling nor floor, and mirrors its own darkness in every direction infinitely. If the boulder falls and smashes, that cave will smash too - empty as an Easter egg.⁹⁶

This cave surely represents God. The cave which Mrs. Moore entered was an approach to this spherical hermetic chamber, but as with the silence created after the echo of "*This is the way the world ends*"⁹⁷ and after the final "whimper"⁹⁸ in Eliot's *The Hollow Men*, the infinite reflection within the Kawa Dol cannot be experienced and brought into language without displacing and deferring it: without faith, it cannot exist.

91 ⁹¹ Barth, *Derrida and the Language of Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.14.

92 ⁹² id., p.15.

93 ⁹³ *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1936), p.111.

94 ⁹⁴ id.

95 ⁹⁵ id.

96 ⁹⁶ id.

97 ⁹⁷ *Collected Poems 1906 - 1962*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p.92, see extract, lines 95 - 97.

To conclude, both texts create a void which interrogates our own subjectivity. The hollowness is one of structure, of narrative and of the protagonists within the texts. As the texts approach God, they find that language is a transfiguring barrier and that the silence is impenetrable. In its "vigorous and persistent attempts to multiply and disturb modes of representation"⁹⁹, Modernism - in these two texts - has attempted also to disturb our own modes of representation; and to question our ways of perceiving a world in which it appears that God is above language.

98 ⁹⁸.id.

99 ⁹⁹Peter Childs, *Modernism*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 19.

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