Chapter III

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In Eliot’s earlier plays, the idea of sainthood is in the foreground. In the later plays, this theme has been pushed farther and farther into the background as he has sought to depict the contemporary world and show martyrdom in relation to the lives of the ordinary men and women of today. He portrays the spiritually mature person influencing the lives of the masses. According to D.E. Jones, Eliot is not concerned with person of exceptional spiritual awareness, or the saint, in isolation but always with his relationship to the community, to ordinary men and women. He wants therefore to reach ordinary people, to help them towards ‘some awareness of the depths of spiritual development’ (124)

In The Confidential Clerk the realization of the self on the part of the hero, is depicted as the spiritual quest for the identity of the hero. All the characters in this play are in their own way groping towards the ultimate reality of their selves. The hero Colby Simpkins who had been brought up as a natural Son of Sir. Claude Mulhammer desires to know who his real parents are. The theme of this play is a continuation of the theme taken up in the earlier ones which is self realization of the individuals leading to the act of choice. Eliot becomes more and more accessible to the common people for whom he leaves the message that one should always face the reality and should treat others with sympathetic understanding.
The action of *The Confidential Clerk* is a farcical complication involving children who are lost and wrongly identified as in the old drama of intrigue. The plot of the play is similar to the story of Ion in Euripides. Ion was the offspring born of Apollo and Creusa, the princess of Athens he had ravished. The son was abandoned by the mother. Brought up by the priestess of the Delphic shrine, Ion becomes an officer in the Temple Creusa is married to Xuthus, a neighbouring Chieftain and for many years they remain childless. They both come to ask for a remedy from the oracle. Apollo lets Xuthus believe that Ion is his son. Creusa is jealous thinking that Xuthus has had an illegitimate son. So she plans to kill Ion. But the plan is foiled and she seeks refuge at the alter of Apollo. The Priestess brings in the evidence of the cradle and wrappings of the baby and Creusa recognizes that Ion is her son. But Ion thinks that it is just a device on the part of the gods to alleviate the shame of Creusa. He appeals to Apollo. Pallas Athene appears on behalf of the God and confirms Creusa’ claim. Ion accepts his good fortune.

Eliot has diversified the Euripidean foundling and invested the bastard daughter. Ion is diffracted into Colby Simpkins and B. Kaghan. The fathers of the two young men were a musician and a poet respectively. The theme of Divine fatherhood germinates here. Ion discovered that he was the son of a God. Colby discovers that he is also the son of God. Mrs. Guzzard fulfils the function of the priestess and Pallas Athene, while Lady Elizabeth
yearns for motherhood like Creusa.

Eliot has used Ion, the drama of parents seeking a child and of a child in God’s service to bring out the beauty of family relationships juxtaposed along with the beauty of the lonely service of God. The great issue treated in Euripides is skillfully transferred to the theme of alienation and relationship among human beings in The Confidential Clerk.

In the Confidential Clerk Eliot has explored and synchronized all the resources at his command, some of the most perplexing paradoxes confronting twentieth century man, his loneliness amid the crowd, his incommunicability in an age of communications, his insecurity in an age of prosperity. Colby Simpkins, the hero and exceptional person among the rest of the characters has to come to terms with his own identity as to who he is and what his mission in life is. He is not following the way of the cross culminating in death. Yet he is a new testament saint who chooses the way of holiness preferring God’s service to worldly prosperity.

Claude Mulhammer a rich businessman and his wife Lady Elizabeth Mulhammer an eccentric, who is learning mind control and eastern philosophy, do not have children. Sir Claude has had an illegitimate son before his marriage to Lady Elizabeth and the boy has been brought up by Mrs. Guzzard. Sir. Claude has financed the upkeep and education of the boy. However after twenty five years, Colby Simpkins, the son has to be recognized as Sir. Claude’s son in the eyes of the world. So while Elizabeth
is on a tour to Europe Sir. Claude makes Colby take up the position of his confidential clerk hitherto occupied by the honest and devoted Eggerson who has been wanting to retire from service. Eggerson and Colby are to meet her at the airport but before they could leave the house Lady Elizabeth arrives on her own. She is greatly attracted by Colby’s person. Being a victim of lapses of memory she asserts that she is the one who had interviewed Colby and approves of his appointment.

As Colby settles down in his new position he is confronted by two interesting characters. Lucasta Angel, the ward of Sir. Claude, who is actually his illegitimate daughter. The other person is B. Kaghan also a prosperous businessman who goes along with Sir. Claude. But Lady Elizabeth, who is supposed to be aristocratic, looks down upon Lucasta and Kaghan because to her they are cheap and common. Lucasta is interested in Colby. She likes him to teach her music. Colby quickly recognizes that she has no identity of her own. Their friendship could have developed into stronger ties. But getting to know that she is his half sister Colby does not encourage any intimacy between them. Lucasta misunderstands him that he is rejecting her because she is illegitimate.

Sir. Claude tries to break the news to Lady Elizabeth that Colby is his son, and she believes that he is actually her own son whom she has through her first husband Tony. Since the father died she has lost track of the child. The name of Mrs. Guzzard, the aunt of Colby, is familiar to her.
and she insists that Colby is her son. Colby is not interested to have any presents but he wants to find out the truth about his parentage.

Prior to the rising of the complications regarding Colby’s parentage, there is a brief scene where Sir. Claude talks freely with Colby. He tells Colby about his interest in pottery which he had wanted to make it his profession. But his father had persuaded him to become a financier, because he would have remained only a second class artist. Now he does pottery only as his hobby and also escapes into the world of art when reality is too much to bear. Colby also confesses to Sir. Claude, his passion for music. But he tells Sir. Claude that he would not accept any make-believe situation.

Mulhammer, has been really hankered after being a potter. But realizing that he would never be more than a second-rate craftsman, he takes the opportunity of going into finance, to which he cannot wholly give himself. He remedies his frustration by collecting pottery, and withdrawing from time to time into the refuge of his collection, where, though not ‘transfigured by the vision of some marvelous creation,’ he can escape from the unreality of his business life. His father has left him the business, and the son has wished to fulfill himself in what his father had wished him to fulfill. Colby likes to be a musician. Both know, however, that Colby would be only a second-rate musician, So Sir Claude comforts his son by expatiating on the value of his own solution. To give Colby the same
comfort he will set him up in a nice flat with a first-rate piano, so that he also can escape from the hollowness of business into the realm he would wish to inhabit.

In Colby, Claude’s experience is replicated. Though he has aspired to be a potter he has become a financier only at the insistence of his father. In an effort to help Colby, Claude tells about himself. For him the finer products of the potter’s art are not for use or decoration. To quote.

   For me, they are life itself.

   To be among such things.

   If it is an escape, is escape into living.

   Escape from a sordid world to a pure one.

   I want a world where the form is the reality,

   Of which the substantial is only a shadow. (236)

According to him he has been turned aside from his pursuit of reality by the pressure of the family.

   I loathed this occupation

   Until I began to feel my power in it

   The life changed me, as it is changing you:

   It begins as a kind of make-believe

   And make-believing makes it real (236)
He has assembled a collection of porcelain in a private room as a substitute for the creativity. He firmly believes that he is incapable of such creative work. Separated from the ordinary business of living he has had to evolve a secret life of himself which has never been fully satisfying. One of the significant features of the play is realization of self-knowledge. "At the centre of the design is Colby’s search for a way of integrating the outer world of action with the inner world of spiritual being". (Jones 159).

Unlike Colby, Sir Claude is the prototype of worldliness and he fears to face reality. Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth begin their life with false pretences. Their world of make-believe gets shattered through the comic force. Both of them desire that they should have their own child, and their desire is fulfilled in some unexpected way. Their claim over Colby does not stand. Sir Claude has his daughter Lucasta, and Lady Elizabeth. To her great surprise learns that B. Kaghan, whom she does not much like earlier, happens to be her son.

Act the beginning of the play Sir Claude Mulhammer, financier, is sitting in the spacious private office of his London house. The elderly Eggerson, his former confidential clerk, has now retired except for purposes of consultation. He is summoned to his office to meet. Sir Claude’s wife Lady Elizabeth, is shortly due to arrive at Northolt. Sir Claude wishes that he could tell his wife about Colby, and hopes she would accept Colby in her missing son’s place.
Lady Elizabeth who arrives speaks of mind-control, auras, and the marvellous continental doctors she has been consulting. But she approves of Colby, reminds that she herself once has had a son who would now be about his age. The insecurity of the father and son relationship is further drawn with clarity. To the great shock of Colby, Lucasta announces that she is Claude’s natural daughter. B. Kaghan divulges that he is a foundling and he has been adopted. Lady Elizabeth claims him as her own ‘lost child.’

Through further cross-questioning the truth about B-Kaghan is unearthed. He is found to be actually Barnabas, the son of Lady Elizabeth. At first she is shocked. But she gets reconciled to it quickly and gets ready to make preparations for the wedding of B. Kaghan and Lucasta. But Colby much to the sorrow of Sir. Claude who wants him to continue as his son, rejects the offer. It is Eggerson who suggests that Colby can take up the post of the Church organist in his own parish. Colby prefers to take up such a vocation in service to God rejecting the post of the confidential clerk. Sir. Claude turns to Lucasta for filial love.

In the last scene Mrs. Guzzard is called upon to give evidence to find out the truth of Colby’s parentage. Eggerson is the judge or moderator at the meeting. Mrs. Guzzard reveals the shocking truth that Colby is neither Sir. Claude’s son nor Lady Elizabeth’s but her own son. Her husband has been an unsuccessful musician who died when Colby was a baby. The child of Sir. Claude had died. Sir. Claude has mistook Colby for his son. She has
allowed Sir Claude to support her son.

In the words of Haidar:

Colby’s suffering acquires a fresh intensity when Lady Elizabeth claims him to be her lost child. He tells her that the living fact of her being Colby’s mother is a dead fact, and that out of dead facts nothing living can spring. He becomes more and more restless to know the truth about his heritage. Owing to his insistence Mrs. Guzzard, who has brought him up, is called in to give her evidence. Ultimately he is relieved to learn that he is a son neither of Sir Claude nor of Lady Elizabeth, but of Mrs. Guzzard who does not disclose the fact to Sir Claude in order to ensure Colby’s security. So long as he knows himself to be Sir Claude’s son, he feels an obligation to his job, and takes it up as duty for duty’s sake. But the revelation that he is the son of Mr. Guzzard, an unsuccessful musician, makes him free to choose his profession. His choice of career as a church organist proves that Lucasta is right in calling him religious-minded. Religion and morality are almost synonymous for him. He is a man who knows his mind. He realizes that by choosing his father’s profession, he may be able to know him. (139, 140)

Sir Claude allows himself to be guided by his wife’s illusions, and
has accepted art as an escape from the outer world where he is a successful financier. Thus far he has not been honest to himself and so his world of art has not been real. Lyndall Gordon comments, “Eliot acknowledges that Lady Elizabeth’s woolly obsession with the light from the East and Sir Claude’s collection of pottery is their only possible substitutes for religion.”(225) She further comments, “In Colby’s rare case, art—organ music—will take him further, into religious commitment, but for Sir Claude, the prototype of worldliness, art will provide only an intermittent ‘escape’ from his life of ‘make-believe’—though, since he is not creative, the escape is itself, he owns, only another mode of make believe”. (Gordon 225).

Lady Elizabeth who has been a real lady and being particular about culture and not having to do anything with the common people has a rude shock of her life when she comes to know that B. Kaghan is her son. She has been trying to find religious inspirations in the wrong way. But she is brought to the understanding of her own nature and the true nature of her own family. Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth realize how they both had been participants in a marriage of convenience without properly understanding each other. It is Colby’s presence which brings about a kind of awakening in both their lives. They face the future with a different outlook, “Colby’s presence has served as a leaven helping others to understand themselves, particularly their own inadequacies and limitations. In other words he has
made possible a more fruitful communal life.” (Jones 167)

Colby and Lucasta share a secret joy of music and begin to understand each other. Due to the revelation of Lucasta’s identity as the illegitimate child of Sir Claude there is a breakdown. Colby then knows himself to be Claude’s illegitimate son and thereby Lucasta comes to be his half sister. Hence, he cannot marry her. Colby is mentally prepared to live a solitary life. His ideal love hardly exists on this earth and his loneliness may be removed only through divine presence. Lucasta, on the other hand, is contented with earthly love. The theme of this play is a self realization of the individuals leading to an act of choice.

Lucasta decides to marry Kaghan, and hence she fades out of Colby’s picture, apparently unregretted. The young man, with immense satisfaction declares that he knows who his father is and he can follow him. But Sir Claude is broken though Lucasta tries to comfort him; the cherished hope of having a son to follow him is shattered. Further, Lady Elizabeth tells him she would far rather have had him for a husband as a second-rate potter than as an important financier who, she fancied, had married her only because he wanted a hostess.

Colby’s apprehension of the ineffable truth of the divine makes him a man with a mission. His quest for identity enables him to discover his Christian identity through Eggerson who can be called as a sort of spiritual agent like Agatha in The Family Reunion. During his very short stay amidst
the Mulhammer household, Colby meets with several characters and opportunities. Though he can become the heir to Mulhammer if he continues there, his passion for music and his desire to opt for a real vocation forces him to seek for something higher and not the mundane. He believes that everyone should have his own secret garden to retire too. He feels that the real garden is that one Eggerson possesses where he is not alone because he is close to God. Colby tells Lucasta.

If I were religious.

God would walk in my garden

And that would make the world outside it real

And acceptable I think. (246)

Colby is trying to discover his identity as a son. At the end of the play he succeeds in discovering the truth that though man is born of earthly parents, his primary devotion belongs to God, his Heavenly father. He exclaims at the end of the play.

I have the idea of a father

It’s only just come to me I should like a father

Whom I have never known and couldn’t know now

.....................

Whose image I could create in my own mind,
Colby has recognized the real 'father' having heard that his father is an ordinary man, a musician whose life he wishes to perpetuate by becoming a church organist in a suburb of London. He has answered like the boy Christ who told his parents that he was about his master's business whereas they were thinking in a worldly way. Christ's mission may not be a great success according to worldly standards, but the true Christian tries to imitate and perpetuate the spiritual life of Christ. It is in terms of men's primary duty to God that man derives the meaning of the bond of love and obedience to his earthly parents.

The plot involves a discussion of make-believe and reality in the lives of Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth. Art as a substitute for religion, the acceptance of the human condition and human responsibility, the questions of paternity, heredity and fatherhood in God are the other issues dealt with. There can be no relation of father and the son unless it works both ways. There is a suggestion of reconcilement and atonement. No single character has a monopoly of wisdom or virtue. Each in his or her own way has glimpses of the truth and each is capable of suffering, because each character is capable of love.

"At the centre of the design is Colby's search for a way of integrating the outer world of action with the inner world of spiritual being (Jones 159). This leads to fulfillment of relationship with others and God
and his discovery of her religious vocation. In the words of Jones, “the person he used to be ‘the disappointed organist’, returns ‘to take possession’ and the attraction of the art he has forsaken becomes so powerful that he has to fight that person”. (159)

“In The Confidential Clerk, Colby’s search for spiritual heritage forms the basic pattern of the play. “The outer world of action and the inner world of spirituality which have been sought to be integrated in the play, are the two kinds of reality that Eliot sought to reveal in poetic play”. (Haldar 138). The following words of Colby throw light on his spiritual crisis. As Lucasta says to Colby:

I admired your courage

In facing facts—...

It’s awful for a man to have to give up.

A career that he’s set his heart on, I’m sure:

But it is only the outer world that you’ve lost:

You’ve still got your inner world a world that’s more real.

(244)

The Confidential Clerk recalls The Cocktail Party while emphasizing the tendency to protect oneself by wearing a social mask and focuses on the need to accept the consequences of choice. Colby cannot rest content in the
unreality of his divided life; since there is no continuity
between the inner and outer life, between the private and the
public worlds. Commenting on his giving up career as a
musician Lucasta asserts:

It’s the outer world that you’ve lost:

You’ve still got your inner world—a world that’s more real.

That’s why you’re different from the rest of us:

You have your secret garden to which you can retire

And lock the gate behind you (244)

The ‘secret garden’ he tells her is:

Not quite real to me—

Although it’s as real to me as . . . this world.

But that’s just the trouble. They seem so unrelated

I turn the key, and walk through the gate

When I am alone, and look at one thing long enough,

I sometimes have that sense of identification

With the maker, of which I spoke—an agonizing ecstasy

Which makes life bearable.

It’s all I have. I suppose it takes the place of religion...
I dare say truly religious people- (245)

Colby’s innate honesty and his instinctive sense of reality do not permit him to accept the views of Sir Claude’s life. He feels uneasy about Sir. Claude’s life of pretence. He does not want to build his life upon a deception. Commenting on the life of Lady Elizabeth. Sir. Claude states.

She has always lived in a world make-believe

And the best one can do is to guide her delusions

In the right direction

Colby. It doesn’t seem quiet honest

If we all have to live in a world of make-believe

Is that good for us?

Or a kindness to her? (246)

Sir Claude further states. “If you haven’t strength to impose your own terms Upon life, you must accept the terms it offers you”. (234)

Eggerson’s garden. Colby suggests, is real because he spiritually and physically retires to it. Since God walks in his garden he is not alone there. His withdrawal is productive since he grows vegetables. The dialogue between Colby and Lucasta throw light on the redemptive power on love.

What I mean is, my garden’s no less unreal to me

Than the world outside it.
If you have two lives
Which have nothing whatever to do with each other –
Well, they’re both unreal
But for Eggerson his garden is a part of one single world.
Lucasta. But what do you want?
Colby. Not to be alone there.
If I were religious, God would walk in my garden
And that would make the world outside it real
And acceptable. I think  (245, 246)
He affirms that by the communion of love, the garden and the outside world can be made real. The gap between the two worlds the public and the private, is bridged by love. The love that originates in the ordinary love will extend or originate into the other world and extend into the ordinary world. Without this bond of love life can never be fruitful or real.
Lucasta understands that for Colby the garden and the outside world are made real by the presence of God. Before realizing this he has to go through many experiences which are desolation from losing Lucasta, his father and mother and all other worldly attachments. The words of Lady Elizabeth are enlightening.
Of course, there’s something in us,
In all of us, which isn’t just heredity,

But something unique

Something we have been from eternity.

Something …… straight from God

That means we are nearer to God than to anyone. (257)

The loss of his earthly father leads him to the Heavenly Father. Colby is lead to distinguish between the dead and the living facts. He is detached from family relationship due to circumstances of his upbringing. He remains indifferent when Sir. Claude and Lady Elizabeth debate their claims. Colby exclaims:

As for a father —

I have the idea of a father.

It’s only just come to me. I should like a father

Whom I have never known and couldn’t know now,

Because he would have died before I was born

Or before I could remember; whom I could get to know

Only by report, by documents ——

The story of his life, of his success or failure…

Perhaps his failure more than his success—
Whose image I could create in my own mind,

To live with that image. An ordinary man

Whose life I could in some way perpetuate (285)

Through Mrs. Guzzard when he discovers that his father has been a disappointed musician, he feels that success doesn’t matter since his father has not been a success. As Grover Smith points out Mrs. Guzzard is a kind of fairy godmother who would like to gratify everyone’s wishes. But she knows that. “We all of us have to adapt ourselves / To the wish that is granted. That can be a painful process”. (284)

According to her one has to come to terms with the wish that is granted. She points out that there was a condition when Sir Claude had signed up the contract to look after the unwanted son.

On the other hand, Colby assists Lucasta to establish herself so that she may eventually be able to dispense with her social mask which has merely hidden her essential nonentity. According to her the effort to understand must be made continuously. Colby tells Lucasta:

There is no end to understanding a person.

All one can do is to understand them better.

To keep up with them; so that as the other changes

You can understand the change as soon as it happens
Though you couldn’t have predicted it. (247)

To cite the words of Colby and Lucasta

Colby.  perhaps what we call change…

Lucasta.  is understanding better what one really is

And reason why that comes about. perhaps…

Colby.  is beginning to understand another person (247)

To recall the words of Sir. Claude to Eggerson.

There’s always something one’s ignorant of

About anyone. however well one knows them

And that may be something of the greatest importance.

It’s when you’re sure you understand a person

That you’re liable to make the worst mistake about him. (221.
222)

Lucasta mentions a very serious matter in a simple way:

Oh. it’s strange isn’t it

That as one gets to know a person better

One finds them in some ways very like oneself.

In unexpected ways. And then you begin

To discover differences inside the likeness.(244)
Colby, the central figure, is the object of other people's choices. He is intelligent, and well-behaved. At the beginning he is trying to adapt himself to what he believes to be the facts. At the close, when asked what he wishes, he declares he wants what he has had: to have no father and no mother in this life. The only true father he can have is a father who died before he was born, who did not refuse him the knowledge of a father's love, because he was not there to give it. His music is not to be like Sir Claude's love of his pots. He is not content for it to be a hobby.

The knowledge of who his father was confirms him in his knowledge that his music is something in his very being, a key to his nature. His mother must 'rest in peace'; he has never known a mother and cannot in any true sense know one now. Colby's 'difference' is something that has been imposed upon him, which he has made and will make a source of strength.

All the characters in this play are in their own way groping towards the ultimate reality of their selves. The hero, Colby Simpkins who had been brought up as a natural son of Sir Claude Mulhammer desires to know who are real parent Sir. Claude seeks to his real self in the utilitarian art of pottery, while Lady Elizabeth Mulhammer seeks it in a faddish sort of religion.

The play centers on Colby's search for identity. Initially he has no doubt that he is a bastard child of Sir Claude who is
supporting him in secret to bring him up he has also accepted him as his confidential clerk without disclosing the fact even to his wife. Lady Elizabeth. This deceptive behaviour, Claude makes him disturbing and also with his own job. This results in his inability to choose a career, inner conflict. (Haldar 139)

Eliot has explored and symbolized with all the resources at his command some of the most perplexing paradoxes confronting twentieth century man, his loneliness amid the crowd, his incommunicability in an age of communications, his insecurity in an age of prosperity.

Colby is correct in his actions. but he is wrong in his reactions. The actions are usually determined by the will, but his reactions come out of the subconscious, and the subconscious is where the unsurrendered self lurks. The modes of his life come out his the conscious, but the moods of life come out of the subconscious. So the conversion of the actions is important, but the conversion of the reaction is just as important or in some ways more important than the actions.

With complete self-surrender the conversion of the reactions takes place. For reactions spring from the subconscious, where self - urge is dominant. To Colby his inner world of music is real since it is unrelated to his outer existence. In him the sense of orphanhood is gone. He belongs to the very centre, he belongs to God. Now nothing else matters.

The plot emphasizes still more clearly Eliot's concern with the
pattern in human lives, the mysterious operations of destiny which bring the soul to a moment of choice.

Greek tragedy is the tragedy of necessity', W.H. Auden has written. 'Christian tragedy is the tragedy of possibility.' 'The Confidential Clerk' which, like all Eliot's plays, is a religious drama, is a tragicomedy of choice: all of his characters choose their destiny in the moment of crisis. The most significant choice, perhaps, is that of Colby (in whom we may find echoes of Celia in 'The Cocktail Party'): Mrs. Guzzard, who appears in the last act as an alarming fairy godmother, asks Colby whose son he would wish to be - Sir Claude's, or the son of a 'dead, obscure man'. Colby rejects Sir Claude, and thus chooses his own inheritance: he must, like Lord Monchensey and Celia Coplestone, work out his own salvation. This will lead him not, like Harry, to worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation. (Grant 312)

The achievement of one single world is a major theme in all religious drama; and when Colby walks out of Sir Claude's life in the third act of The Confidential Clerk, we may perhaps suppose that he is on his way to it. The Confidential Clerk is also concerned, like The Cocktail Party, with vocation and salvation. While Colby believes he is Sir Claude's son, he believes that he too must accept his disappointment as a musician, and he
'fights' the moments when he says, "the thing I cannot do, / The art that I could never excel in. Seems the one thing worth doing, / the one thing That I want to do". (288) But with the discovery that he is the son of a disappointed musician, Colby accepts his 'second-rate' vocation. To Sir Claude he says

You had your father before you, as a model:

You know your inheritance.

Now I know mine.

It's no longer a question of ambition! (289)

The problem of in two worlds, a leit motif referred to in the earlier plays is taken up and developed in a new way in the last play, The Elder Statesman. The Elder statesman recalls the theme of the relationship between human and divine love is dealt within the play. It is a fitting play to make a close study of Eliot's drama for it stresses the quality of divine resolution and reconciliation to God's will through human love. The play opens with Lord Calverton who is found to be a lonely man, ill and prematurely ageing. Monica, his daughter, is deferring her marriage to Charles Hemington, a young M.P., because she realizes that her father needs her presence. His son Michael is indifferent to the father. In Act 1, Lord Calverton's sole friend and classmate Culverwell, who is at present living under an assumed name Fred Culverwell Dick Ferry comes. Having been sentenced to imprisonment for forgery in England he had gone to the
Central American Republic of San Marco and become a prosperous business man. Now he comes back and almost blackmails Lord Calverton. What he wants is just the friendship of Lord Calverton so that he will be accepted in society.

Lord Calverton meanwhile has to enter the convalescent home. Actually he is very ill. At the convalescent home along with Culverwell another ghost of the past comes in the form of Mrs. Carghill, a widow who is actually Maisy Mont joy, an actress. When he was a young man, she interested in him and his father broke their friendship by paying her heavily. Now Mrs. Cargill also desires to renew their friendship. She blackmails Lord Calverton that if he doesn’t do so she can circulate a few of his love letters that can jeopardize his respect in society. But Lord Calverton does not get alarmed or desperate. At the convalescent Home his analysis of his self has already begun and he faces his ghosts, and faces death bravely, sustained by the love of his daughter Monica.

Commenting on the same J.G. Weightman remarks:

Lord Calverton, the elder statesman, has lived a lie all his life. During his wild youth at Oxford, he runs over an old man but does not stop, not wishing it to be known that there are two women in the car with him. After leaving Oxford, he involves himself involved in a breach of promise action with the musical comedy actress whom, in a sense, he genuinely loves.
The memory of these two early misdeeds fester within him and prevent him from being anything more than a near-success.” His conventionally suitable wife has long been dead. He is at loggerheads with his son, who has hated growing up in his shadow. He is now ill and living in retirement with his daughter, an intelligent girl who cherishes him.” It is at this point that two ghosts from his past come to plague him: a friend of his student days, a scholarship-boy whom he corrupts and who witnesses the motor-car incident, and the ex-actress, now a wealthy widow. Under their taunts he comes to realize his mistakes, and finds peace before death. (Grant 707)

In the words of Haldar, “Claverton is being pursued by some ghosts as he has a strong sense of sin owing to some accidents in his youth. Once as a young man he ran over a person and did not stop. A companion-in-guilt is there, a successful scoundrel, whose name is Gomez. Another secret incident of his life is that years ago he had an affair with an actress who had sued him for breach of promise.” (141) Though settled out of court, late in life, she appears with his letters to blackmail him. “Claverton has to face each on close terms and his suffering continues as long as he fears to face the reality. He admits the truth of his past only in the last act”. (Haldar 141)

Lord Calverton is deeply troubled as, accompanied by his daughter.
he enters a convalescent home called Badgley Court. He asks,

What is this self inside us,

this silent observer, severe and speechless critic,

who can terrorize us and urge us on to futile activity,

and in the end judge us still more severely for the errors

into which his own reproaches drive us?’ (317)

Henry Hewes remarks.

His errors, embodied as people, return to haunt him. The first
is an unsavory companion of his college days who remembers
the night he ran over a man on the road and did not stop. The
companion has changed his name to Gomez and gone off to
prosper through shady dealings in Central America. But he
too faces a lonely old age and needs to renew his
acquaintance with Lord Claverton, because Lord Claverton is
the only one who knows all the unpleasant facts about him,
and yet cannot judge him because Gomez also knows about
him. Next there is a rich widow, who turns out to be the
former showgirl, Maisie Mountjoy, once has had a brief affair
with Lord Claverton, but has been bought off by his father.
She too wants to rehash the details of this incomplete first
love. Finally, Lord Claverton’s ne’er-do-well son Michael
appears. He has lost his job and wants his father to stake him to a partnership abroad, something in ‘import and export with an opportunity for profit both ways.’ He wants to be something on his own account, not a prolongation of his father’s existence. After furiously upbraiding Michael, the ludicrousness of Lord Claverton’s position is made apparent as he says: ‘What I want to escape from is myself in the past. But what a coward I am to talk of escaping! And what a hypocrite! A few minutes ago I was pleading with Michael not to try to escape from his own past faithlessness. I said I knew from experience! Do I understand the lesson I would teach. Well I’ll begin to study. Michael and I shall go to school together, and suffer the same humiliations at the hands of the same master.” (Grant 703)

In the beginning of the play Lord Calverton, retired from active official life is referred to as a lonely person who desires to live a life of isolation. Monica, his daughter tells Charles, her fiancé who does not like to leave her father alone for long” because of his terror of being alone. In the life he has led, “he never had to be alone”. (299) Even when he is reading the newspaper in the evening at home “He needs to have-someone else in the room”. (299). There is also another reason for his dependence on Monica: “It is his fear of being exposed to strangers”. (300)
Monica asks her father not to think of anything but to rest and Lord Calverton answers that he has been doing nothing else but "contemplating nothingness". (300) He has nothing to say; there is only nothingness before him he says in a way telling way.

It’s just like sitting in an empty waiting room

In a railway station in a branch line

After the last train, after all the passengers

Have left, and the booking office is closed

And the porters have gone

what I am waiting for

In a cold and empty room before an empty grate? (302)

The waiting has been for no one and for nothing. As seen in all the heroes of Eliot here is also found the theme of isolation due to lack of knowledge of one’s self and mistakes of the past. Having been insulated from others Lord Claverton exclaims that he recognizes himself as a ghost not realizing that nemesis is round the corner with ghosts resuscitated from the past. He says:

It makes me smile

To think that men should be frightened of ghosts.

If they only knew how frightened a ghost can be
The familiar compound ghost is reflected in the fire watching episode of Little Gidding discloses ‘the gifts reserved for age / To set a crown upon your lifetime’s effort’, the last of them being

the rending pain of re-enactment

Of all that you have done, and been; the shame

Of motives late revealed, and the awareness

Of things ill done and done to others’ harm

Which once you took for exercise of virtue.

Then fools’ approval stings, and honour stains.

From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit

Proceeds unless restored by that refining fire

Where you must move in measure, like a dancer. (39-40)

Something very much like this is the experience of the Elder statesman. He has to undergo ‘the rending pain of re-enactment’ and he proceeds ‘From wrong to wrong’. “The mistaken attempts to correct mistakes / By methods which proved to be equally mistaken”, (309) until he is ‘restored by that refining fire’, which is the fire of Purgatory’ the fire of the Divine Love.

The ‘awareness of things ill done dawns upon Lord Claverton by the
visit of Gomez and the accidental meeting with Mrs. Carghill the ghost from his past. He realizes that he has corrupted the one and betrayed the other. He is responsible for the thwarting of a prime natural instinct in Gomez.

Friendship with Gomez has indirectly robbed him of all other friendship which made all his other friends and acquaintance turn their backs on him.

He has made a new life in another country and has taken another name, this change of name being the outward symbol of an attempt to create a new self. But this new self is not real because it has no connection with his earlier self; it is built on no foundation. To become a real person again, he needs to establish contact with someone who can serve as a link between the two selves, and no one can do this more effectively than the man who was responsible for this division of selves in the first place:” (Jones 185)

Fred Culverwell tells Claverton “I need you, Dick, to give me reality!” (30) that seems to have “died and has become a ghost”. (Jones185) So also Maisie Montjoy once his mistress has come to claim friendship for her own gains. Denying that claim he says that they have settled their scores long back. But he is not at ease.

In the very first act Culverwell comes back into his life and
Claverton recognizes the fact that both of them have in common a state of isolation. But actually Culverwell does not have the depth of character to feel the isolation as deep as Lord Calverton. Lord Calverton confronts Culverwell with the accusation of being an impostor “why do you come back with another name”? (305) and Culverwell hits back with the same coin. “You’ve changed your name too, since I knew you:” (305) He reminds Lord Calverton how at oxford when they were together he had been plain Dick Ferry. Later when he married he became Mr. Richard-Calverton-Ferry having taken his wife’s name and finally become Lord Calverton. His son Michael has followed his father in his reckless way of undergraduate life. Later at Dadgley Court Lord Calverton is worried about Michael’s reckless behavior.

The arrival of Culverwell and MaisyMont joy makes Lord Claverton face the past and recognize his sins. They are the ‘ghosts’ from his past and their secret lies in the meaning attached by Eliot to tradition: “that to understand one’s buried life, with which are buried the lives of others, can help one understand the self that is rooted there”. (Smith, 244)

Culverwell insists that it is Lord Claverton who has encouraged him to become a forger which has led him into serious crime and he has been forced to go abroad and live under an assumed name. He also reminds the elder statesman of how he has been a witness to a hit and run incident in which a dead man was run over by Lord Claverton. He remarks that Lord
Claverton will be. “afraid of whispers / The reflection in the mirror / of the face behind you / The ambiguous smiles”. (314)

Maisy Montjoy adds to these threatening that she can circulate the love letters he has written in his days of indiscreet behaviour. It will affect his social standing. She reflects that in youth he was posing as a man of the world: now in old age he is posing as an elder statesman.

The intrusion of the past in the form of these two former acquaintances urges and appeals to Claverton to introspectively look back.

The worst kind of failure, in my opinion

Is the man who has to keep on pretending to himself

That he’s a success. (312)

This sets Lord Claverton to consider how he has been living a life of pretence. The falsities surrounding his personality begin to drop off. He has recognized that Culverwell and Maisy Montjoy are mere ghosts from the past. In his opinion

Specters from my past. They’ve always been with me

Thought it was not till lately that I found the living persons

Whose ghosts tormented me, to be only human beings

Malicious, petty, and I see myself emerging

From my spectral existence into something like reality (341)
By the beginning of the second act Lord Claverton's self-examination has begun. He opines,

What is this self inside us, this silent observer, Severe and Speechless critic, who can terrorize us And urge us on to futile activity And in the end judge us still more severely For the errors into which his own reproaches drove us? (317)

Lord Claverton states:

If a man has just one person, just one in his life to whom+ he is willing to confess everything, then he loves that person, and his love will save him.’

Confessing to his daughter, he remarks:

It’s impossible to be quite honest with your child. To one’s child one can’t reveal oneself while she is a child. And by the time she’s grown you have woven such a web of fiction about you’. (318)

This is proof that the healing of his personality has already
begun. Lord Claverton is forced step by step to lose his feelings of
superiority. He is made to recognize the wrong he had done to a Culverwell
and Maisie Mountjoy. Before his salvation is complete he must endure the
humiliation and sufferings he has inherited by his own sins of the past.
What he learns is that each individual ought to accept the responsibility of
his own moral choices. Michael his son throws his fortune into the hands of
the dishonest Culverwell of all the people that Lord Claverton would
have wanted to associate with. Michael declares that he is not a fugitive
from justice but a ‘fugitive from reality’. As for himself Lord Claverton has
learnt that there is no escape from reality and one cannot be free from the
past.

Monica informs Claverton Michael has been in trouble again, he
immediately recognizes makes replication of his own misdeeds in his son’s
behaviour. The healing of his conscience, however, is a complicated
process. He cannot make reparation to these people, because he cannot turn
back the clock and make them what they were. He can find absolution only
in a roundabout way. Ultimately it takes place in his confession to his
daughter. There are barriers that have to be overcome first. His suppression
of the sense of guilt has corrupted him and made his relations with his
family a sham. Lord Claverton “has abnegated his real self, the sinning
self”. (Jones 186) Pointing out the contrast between both of them, Gomez
observes:
You've changed your name twice—by easy stages.

And each step was merely a step up the ladder.

so you weren't aware of becoming a different person:

But where changed my name, there was no social ladder.

It was jumping a gap—and you can't jump back again.

I parted from myself by a sudden effort.

You, so slowly and sweetly, that you've never woken up

To the fact that Dick Ferry died long ago (308)

Claverton does not sense his counterfeit image until he confronts his son, Michael who protests that as the son of a famous father he has been denied the right of realizing himself. In the midst of advising Michael not to run away from his past failures, Claverton has a sudden illumination about himself, and growing humble, asks, "Do I understand the meaning / Of the lesson I would teach? Turning to his daughter, Monica, he adds: 'Is it too late for me?' (337).

Claverton receives his son's unwelcome decision with surprising and new-found compassion. He tells Michael:

I shall never repudiate you though you repudiate me.

I see more and more clearly the many mistakes

I have made my whole life through.
I see that your mother and I,
in our failure to understand each other,
both misunderstood you. (350).

As Michael prepares to take his unknown journey with the hardhearted Culverwell, Lord Claverton accepts his failure in the upbringing of his son. Though he has learnt a bitter lesson, he tells Michael that he will never repudiate him though he may do so.

I see now clearly

The many, many mistakes I have made

My whole life through, mistake upon mistake

The mistaken attempts to correct mistakes

By methods which proved to be equally mistaken. (350)

Lord Claverton is able to reflect the divine love in that he is able to love Michael who has rejected him. His love for Monica is reared and reciprocated by her devotion and always. But he is beginning to love Michael for the first time. He realizes that he has selfishly tried to manipulate the life of his children to make Monica adore him and to perpetuate himself in Michael. Now he has the illumination of what love is. He is satisfied that the love of Charles and Monica is genuine and not make believe. Throughout the play, apart from Lord Claverton attaining his true identity, the love of Monica and Charles gains strength and culminates in
depth and understanding. In the beginning Charles is slow to respond because he is not sure of the true degree of her love for him. But when she recognizes and appreciates his affection they become closer mentally. Charles tells Monica, “You are changing me and I am changing you”. (298)

Mrs. Carghill finds Michael ‘the image’ of what his father was when she knew him. Michael proves to be weaker than his father. He lacks the restraining influence of the ‘prudent devil’ which has prevented his father from sinning unreservedly and becoming aware of his sin as sin. The greater sinner is more liable to have a sudden revulsion from sin than the mild sinner and in this revulsion to find contrition. Michael’s weakness might be his salvation, if he did not have in Gomez ‘a custodian of [his] morals’ who will have the same influence on him that his father had on Fred Culverwell. It is not surprising that: ‘Michael has found his inheritance a burden’: “I was just your son that is to say, / A kind of prolongation of your existence / A representative carrying on business in your absence”. (333).

“His solution to the frustration of life in his father’s shadow is to go abroad where he can ‘be somebody on [his] own account’. He might even, opt to take a different name. For him, this symbolizes an attempt to cut adrift from the earlier self, to escape, in effect, from one’s essential identity”. (Jones 188) He will become ‘a fugitive from reality’, his father warns him:
Those who flee from their past will always lose the race.

I know this from experience. When you reach your goal,

Your imagined paradise of success and grandeur,

You will find your past failures waiting there to greet you

(333)

There has been no existing bondage between the father and the son. On the contrary in his passion for domination Lord Claverton has rejected his son’s love.

“Love cannot develop unless there is an acceptance of the other person in his own right and not as an image of one’s own creation or a projection of one’s self. Just as he has thwarted the ‘gift of friendship’ in Gomez and abused the capacity for loving-slight though it may have been- in Mrs. Carghill- so he has denied his own son’s capacity for family affection. (Jones189)

Reminded of his earlier failures, with the bitter realization of what he has done to his son, Lord Claverton re-evaluates himself:

Do I understand the meaning

Of the lesson I would teach? Come, I’ll start to learn again.

Michael and I shall go to school together.
We’ll sit side by side at little desks
And suffer the same humiliations
At the hands of the same master. (337)

He begins to acquire what Eliot calls in East Coker, The only wisdom we can hope to acquire’, ‘the wisdom of humility’. (199)

Conscience is still alive in him, but it has been distorted into a passion for self-justification:

Some dissatisfaction

With myself, I suspect, very deep within myself

Has impelled me all my life to find justification

Not so much to the world—first of all to myself. (317)

Lord Claverton’s role is new in at least one important respect. It is not a case of a hero, a man of conscience and consciousness, confronting a hostile scene – and then destroying it or transcending it - but such a man confronting himself. The ‘argument’ of The Elder Statesman is strikingly personal and internal. The place of the scapegoat scene is now taken by those factors of cowardice, ‘prudence’, and emptiness which Lord Claverton sees in himself: he does not put the blame on Society, or on Matter, or Body, or Nature, or on any other capitalized malignity. Claverton does not say, as Harry said in The Family Reunion. It is not my conscience. / Not my mind, that is diseased, but the world I have to live in.” (318)
In the case of Gomez and Mr Carghill, he might still find reason for placating his conscience, for justifying himself to himself. “They have both achieved more worldly success as a result of their relations with him than they would otherwise have done”. (Jones 189)

Lord Claverton has eventually to admit his responsibility for both eventualities. In accepting responsibility he finally faces his ghosts of the three people who ‘died’ as a result of his misdeeds—Freddy Culverwell, Maisie Batterson, and Dick Ferry, his earlier self. ‘people with good in them’ (343) which he helped to stifle. He recognizes that he has been ignoring the implications of his behaviour.

How easily we ignore the fact that those who admire us
Will imitate our vices as well as our virtues—
Or whatever the qualities for which they did admire us!
And that again may nourish the faults that they were born with.
And Maisie loved me, with whatever capacity
For loving she had self-centred and foolish
But we should respect love always when we meet it;
Even when it’s vain and selfish, we must not abuse it. (343)

By acknowledging his failure and facing up to the reality of his guilt.
he makes contact with reality again, and the real self, the self who sinned, can revive, “I see myself emerging-From my spectral existence into something like reality”. (341)

And not only can the real self revive; it can find absolution. “The decisive step ‘towards [his] freedom’ consists in his confession to the one person he really loves, Monica. Preparing the way for this confession and pointing its significance, “If a man has one person, just one in his life, / To whom he is willing to confess everything... / Then he loves that person, and his love will save him”. (340)

“Absolution will come through love as the manifestation and operation of the Divine in ordinary life”. (Jones 190) Lord Claverton finds it hard to drop the pretence which he has held so long especially before Monica because he fears that unraveling will disillusion her and kill her love. But he overcomes this at great risk and divulges the truth. This leads to his freedom,

I’ve been freed from the self that pretends to be someone;

And in becoming no one, I begin to live.

It is worth while dying, to find out what life is (354).

He becomes an explorer of the Four Quartets, which points out that

Old men ought to be explorers

Here and there does not matter
We must be still and still moving

Into another intensity

For a further union, a deeper communion. (203, 204)

Having acquired peace, Lord Claverton can impart it to others his serenity and sense of spiritual reality strengthens the spiritual life of Monica and Charles. The later tells Monica, “I love you to the limits of speech and beyond” (355) and Monica response in a beautiful liturgical line “I love you from the beginning of the world” (355)

At the end of the play, Monica who apprehends her father’s imminent death remarks:

“In becoming no one, he has become himself

He is only my father now and Michael’s:

And I am happy. Isn’t it strange, Charles

To be happy at this moment?

Charles: It is not at all strange.

The dead has poured out a blessing on the living (355).

To quote Lord Claverton in this context,

You think that I suffer from a morbid conscience.

From brooding over faults I might well have forgotten.

You think that I’m sickening when I’m just recovering!
It's hard to make other people realize
The magnitude of things that appear to them petty;
It's harder to confess the sin that no one believes in
Than the crime that everyone can appreciate.
For the crime is in relation to the law
And the sin is in relation to the sinner. (345)

The same view is repeated in *Four Quartets*:

Our only health is the disease
If we obey the dying nurse
Whose constant care is not to please?
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse. (192)

Eliot seems to be indicating that the stirring of the spirit can come from quite ordinary incidents. What is more, the hero finds his salvation not by rejection of ordinary family life, but by purification of his life within the family. There is, in fact, a new emphasis upon the efficacy of love, especially of love within a family, The chief value of life inheres in the moment of illumination, the moment in the rose-garden.

"This is the experience dramatized in *The Family Reunion* (1939)-the insight Harry gains in the moment of communion with Agatha leads
him away from the family, away from normal love." (Jones 193) The following lines from the Four Quartets highlight the movement from attachment to detachment:

There are three conditions which often look alike yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:

Attachment to self and to things and to persons; detachment

From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference

Which resembles the others as death resembles life.

Being between two lives— unflowering, between

The live and the dead nettle.

See, now they vanish,

The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them, To become renewed transfigured in another pattern.

(219)

The saint’s sacrifice is seen to affect the Chamberlaynes, but they have to make the best they can of life without direct illumination. In The Confidential Clerk a less exceptional person has more obvious and precise influence on the lives of those with whom he comes into contact. In The Elder Statesman, Everyman has taken the centre.
In the opinion of Jones, "In The Family Reunion—the failure in communication is due to the obtuseness of the spiritually blind and seems irreparable. In The Cocktail Party the failure is seen to be inherent in the nature of things—people change so rapidly that we cannot keep pace with the change—and the emphasis is upon the need to accept the limits of understanding. In The Confidential Clerk the emphasis seems to have shifted slightly to the need to try to keep up with the change and thus to surmount the limits of understanding. In The Elder Statesman, however, although there is the demonstration of the failure to communicate the wisdom of experience and a momentary emphasis upon the limitations of language itself and a much more optimistic view is taken of the whole problem.

And again the limits of expression and understanding are seen to be transcended by love. Where love does not exist, as between Michael and his father in the earlier part of the play, expression is hampered and understanding is impossible; where it does exist, as it does increasingly between Monica and her father, expression is made easier and the shortcomings of expression are remedied by understanding at a deeper level.

You always were. You wanted to pose

As a man of the world. And now you’re posing

As what? I presume, as an elder statesman;
And the difference between being an elder statesman

And posing successfully as an elder statesman

Is practically negligible. And you look the part.

Whatever part you’ve played. I must say you’ve always
looked it. (324)

The tension of The Elder Statesman is located between privacies of
two sorts which hides itself behind a role and one day withers into a ghost:

If I’ve been looking at this engagement book, to-day.

Not over breakfast, but before tea.

It’s the empty pages that I’ve been fingering

The first empty pages since I entered Parliament. (301)

This kind of privacy gives itself into communion with another
person precisely because ‘it is a privacy, a self, a serene personal entity’.

(Grant 729) Lord Claverton sums up a few minutes before the end of the
play:

... from the self that pretends to be someone;

And in becoming no one, I begin to live.

It is worth while dying, to find out what life is.

Charles and Monica, close the play as they opened it:

Monica : We will go to him together. He is close at hand,
Though he has gone too far to return to us.

He is under the beech tree.

It is quiet and cold there.

In becoming no one, he has become himself.

He is only my father now, and Michael’s.

And I am happy. Isn’t it strange, Charles,

To be happy at this moment? (340)

Grant refers to the words of Donohue, “When Monica refers to the father ‘thinking of nothing’ he revises the remark to contemplating nothingness”, (Grant 714) which he finds striking the play moves from oaths to prayers. As Lord Claverton confesses his guilt, he achieves self-knowledge. ‘Love’ becomes an important factor to this end. The transforming power of love is apprehended by Lord Claverton. He has spent all his life in the selfish exploitation of others. He has been unable to acknowledge the responsibility of loving and being loved. The visitation of the ghosts of his guilty past, cure him of the malady of his personality. He has come to recognize the necessity of personal love before either selfhood or salvation can be achieved. His son Michael’s nature and the way he allies himself with Culverwell has endowed him with a new kind of humility and his process of realizing his self is completed.

Love becomes the fountainhead of their Christian identities, because
they find divine love reflected in human love. In the suffering and death of Lord Claverton, Charles and Monica discover rebirth. Monica says.

But there’s no vocabulary
For love within the family, love that’s lived in
But not looked at, love within the light of which
All else is seen, the love within which
All other love finds speech.

The love is silent. (355)

Charles and Monica recognize the new identity Lord Claverton has acquired. He has told them that he has received a deep interior peace of soul. “It is peace that ensues upon contrition / When contrition ensure upon knowledge of truth”. (353)

The highway of holiness is open before him to follow.

Through this identity that the father has gained Monica and Charles feel that they have been renewed in their personalities. Charles tells Monica “So that now we are conscious of a new person who is you and me together.” (355)

“Fearing to be possessed by others, Lord Claverton has distorted the impulse of love in him into possessiveness. When, near the end of the play, he has had the illumination / Of knowing what love is’, he comes to understand the motive of his possessiveness.” (Jones 187)
Why did I always want to dominate my children?

I mark out a narrow path for Michael?

Because I wanted to perpetuate myself in him.

I want to keep you to myself, Monica?

Because he wanted you to give your life to adoring

The man that I pretended to myself that I was.

So that could believe in my own pretences. (353)

Since he has recognized his past mistakes and owns them up. Lord Claverton learns to face the ‘ghosts’ from the past. Just like Harry in The Family Reunion achieved liberation by facing the Eumenides Lord Claverton also attains freedom.

Further Lord Claverton is able to impart to Monica and Charles analytically the knowledge he has gained. He says that in the lives of most people there may not be ‘crimes’ which haunt them but there will be.

“Temporary failures, irregularities, aberrations, / Reckless surrenders, unexplainable impulses / Moments which they will regret the next moment”. (340)

To this Charles admits that there have been things in his life which would be best forgotten. But he will not hide them from Monica. Lord Claverton observes that Charles is lucky because the love between them both is genuine and pure. A man may be said to be safe if he has one person
in the world to whom he could confess what he wishes to hide from all the world. He himself had not been fortunate enough of having a wife who could understand him. He could not confide in Monica because she was his daughter and she had idolized him. He could not confess his shortcomings to her because it would shatter her 'ideal' of a father. He hopes that Monica will not reject him now that she knows that the idol was not perfect. But Monica tells him, 'I think I should only love you the better, father. (341).

As Lord Claverton confesses his guilt, he achieves self-knowledge. 'Love' becomes an important factor to this end. The transforming power of love is apprehended by Lord Claverton. He has spent all his life in the selfish exploitation of others. He has been unable to acknowledge the responsibility of loving and being loved. The visitation by the ghosts of his guilty past cure him of the malady of his personality. He has come to recognize the necessity of personal love before either selfhood or salvation can be achieved. His son Michael's nature and the way he all es himself with Culverwell has endowed him with a new kind of humility and his process of realizing his self is completed.

Consciously or unconsciously, Lord Claverton has become a "hollow man", a mere facade, a mask without a face (pp.16-17). Unless the innermost self has communion with another spirit, it will atrophy. "Lord Claverton's mask has cut off all genuine communication with his wife and children. He has
found himself ‘at home’ only in the public world, the world of politics, where everyone else wears a mask and will be less liable to notice his and where genuine communication is so rare as not to be missed. In the last resort, however, his attempt to compensate for failure in his private world by success in the public world has proved”. (Jones 186)

Claverton says, “You made friends with me Because it flattered you / tickled your love of power To see that I was flattered, and that I advised you”. (309)

The latter retorts. ‘I certainly admit no responsibility / None whatever, for what happened to you later. (309)

Having confessed all his transgressions to Monica, Claverton has the courage and insight to acknowledge him ‘a broken-down actor’ who has never loved anyone. In fact he has loved Monica,

but there’s the impediment:

It is impossible to be quite honest with your child….

How could I be sure that she would love the actor

If she saw him, off-stage, without

His costume and his makeup? (340, 341)

And again
How open one’s heart

When one is sure of the wrong response? (342)

Only in the realization of Monica’s steadfast love he is able to finally accept himself there is potential pathos in his lines:

If a man has one person, just one in his life
To whom he is willing to confess everything...

Then he loves that person and his love will save him (340)

Lord Claverton as a retired statesman is in search of a resting place, accompanied by his daughter and visited by his son. He recognizes not the physical place, but the spiritual stance and the death implies the death of pretentious self. Only after recognizing all about his real past he is able to find and resist. Claverton’s crisis may be interpreted as man’s universal dilemma. Monica says about her father that he is afraid of loneliness, of being exposed to stranger, and that he is unaware of the seriousness of his illness. “Her diagnosis arising out of her sympathy highlights man’s spiritual disease and its recovery”. (Haldar 143)

The play reveals a man’s dead past. His own dead self and the dead selves of a man and woman with whom he was involved confronts him. Like Harry and Celia Lord Claverton realizes the need to face the past and not run away from it. As they go to meet Lord Claverton Monica utters these epigrammatic words, a fitting finale to the play and the theme of the
self where a positive affirmation is made through the concept of love parallel to the divine love Agape”.

Age and decrepitude can have no terrors for me.

Loss and vicissitude cannot appeal me.

Not even death can dismay or amaze me

Fixed in the certainty of love

unchanging. I feel utterly secure

In you; I am a part of you

Now take me to my father. (355)

Claverton experiences the terrible isolation of his private world where all his sham except the love of and his daughter and vice versa but even this relationship is blighted by his fundamental evasion. Having failed to get into touch with his children in the frank interchange of love, he has attempted to dominate them, to impose his own pattern upon them. The Eliot of East Coker (1940) enjoins:

Do not let me hear

Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,

Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession.

Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.(199)

Lord Claverton goes off to die in tranquility under a beech tree. He
has, ironically, found peace at Badgley Court.

The word God is never mentioned in *The Elder Statesman*. Lord Calverton finds confession as the road to salvation and peaceful death. For the Christian, Eliot explains, says that there is that perpetual living in paradox. One must lose one’s life in order to save it. One must be otherworldly and yet deeply responsible for the affairs of this world. One must pre-serve a capacity for enjoying the things of this world such as love and affection. The protagonist says “At seventy I laugh at myself more than I did when I was young, / and conversely I am less and less worried about making a fool of myself.” (356)

Weightman remarks that this play conveys an immense fatigue with life, which is tempered in some degree by as embodied in the daughter and her finance, the experience of shared love. The realization that other people actually exist, in the way one exists for oneself is the final test. Thus the true meaning of ‘love thy neighbor as thyself’ is exemplified.

“Calverton, having confessed his mistakes, is now able to dismiss these ‘ghosts’ from his mind and he condemns egotistical self-deception. (Grant 708) In the opinion of Dennis Donoghue “Lord Claverton in his role as self-critic, the silent observer who when forced speaks out, gathers up this role unto himself as Oedipus” (Grant 715)

This involves an act of moral choice, *The Elder Statesman*, commits firmly to the possibility of an individual moral act. There comes a certain
stage in The Elder Statesman’ at which Lord Claverton, like Harry
Monchensey, decides not to run away from his specters, but Claverton’s
decision, unlike Harry’s, issues from his own resources as an individual
moral being. The new play asserts, as clearly as anyone could wish and
much more clearly than he might have expected that Man has the power of
moral choice, that he holds this power by virtue of his existence and dignity
as a human being.

When Monica urges her father to escape from those obnoxious
familiars Federico Gomez and Mrs. Carghill, he corrects her as we have
seen - warning her that there is no escaping one’s self Lord Claverton,
reciting a gentle lesson about reality and make-believe, says:

And Michael -

I love him, even for rejecting me,

For the me he rejected I reject also.

I’ve been freed from the self that pretends to be someone;

And in becoming no one, I begin to live. (Grant 353, 354)

The Elder statesman the key-word is Love; not indeed a new word
even in the spare landscape of Eliot’s plays, but until now a word used only
with a certain embarrassment. ‘The Elder Statesman’ offers the word with
full, grave commitment as the Meaning of Meanings. Listing the key-terms
of the early plays we have Conscience, Consciousness, and Understanding: and now Love. "The nature of Love is defined not by a context of limp ‘good deeds’ but by a genuinely illumination, a flowering of insight into the relation between reality and responsibility." (Grant 718, 719)

And again:

Directed by Love he finds the words Claverton which he performs in the presence of Monica and Charles. "The endorsing forces are Love. Speech. Communication. Understanding. Illumination. and Consciousness." ... Lord Claverton’s terms are an autumnal translation of Monica’s insight: he speaks of ‘the peace that ensues upon contribution’, and ‘the illumination of seeing what love is’: again, ‘I have been brushed by the wing of Heaven’. This is luminous speech and there are luminous acts, too, as when Lord Claverton says to his severed son, ‘I shall never repudiate you, though you have repudiated me. (Grant 720, 721)

Calverton’s unsurrendered ego is always boastful, always longing for attention, always recounting its greatness.

In Eliot, Lord Claverton recognizes not the physical place, but the spiritual stance and the death implies the death of pretentious self. He has to recognize all about his real past
so that his resting place may be secure. Claverton’s crisis may be interpreted as man’s universal dilemma. Monica says about her father that he is afraid of loneliness, of being exposed to stranger, and that he is unaware of the seriousness of his illness. Her diagnosis arising out of her sympathy highlights Eliot’s changed attitude to man’s spiritual disease and its recovery.”(Grant 720)

In Lord Claverton, as the central character, the play has a considerably modified Eliot hero: an aging public figure, condemned by ill health to retire, Claverton has only a brief stop to make in his ‘purgatory’ before he is released from the burden of his ‘guilt.’ In a lifetime of riding on the high tide of success, he has never been troubled by his conscience, and it is only awakened on the eve of his retirement when by accident he meets two figures from his remote past who remind him of moral failures in his youth. Once, a former Oxford classmate now turned into a cynical Central American businessman, draws a likely parallel between his own fraudulent life and the statesman’s; the other, an aging musical comedy star, recalling how he had callously jilted her, pricks his ego by observing

The difference between an elder statesman

And posing successfully as an elder statesman

Is practically negligible.
And you look the part. (324)

Formerly he had surrendered self; to pride, to lust, to money, to resentments, and hatred. Self-surrender delivers him and leads to a blessed deliverance. Lord Claverton surrenders self, when he allows his mind to be remade and his whole nature becomes transformed. After surrendering self he throws to the winds all self-boasting and all self-serving. He is free to rise above everything and be conqueror in everything. Possessing all through self-surrender he is free to conquer all. The characters are required to face their unmasked selves. In Murder in the Cathedral ‘reality’ comprises revelations of the saint’s hidden motives which enable him to be a real saint.

Harry, Celia and Colby, the central characters having acute consciousness, are saintly persons, if not saints. In The Elder Statesman, for the first time, reality is not transcendental. It is enough for the protagonist to confess the truth to one person, and the soul is safe. Calverton is not aware of the fact that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. He ceases to be lord over himself. He has not been a captain of his soul.

Eliot is also showing that blood relationship alone does not become a guarantee to love. Love must be earned and deserved. Eggerson is the one to whom Colby turns at the end. The play The Confidential Clerk is not just
a domestic drama. It is about the entire human family. Eliot had told E. Martin Browne that Eggerson is a fully developed Christian. He is the one who suggests that Colby can take up the post of the organist in the Church. Colby who has realized his real self has come past from worldly ties that are carnal but gets closer to Eggerson as a son to take up the journey on the highway of holiness.

Colby’s mind is “remade” that is not engrossed thinking about itself, its wants and desires, its hurts and its slights, its self-pity and resentments. Now it is a mind that is circling around a new centre. Christ. therefore, thinking his thoughts, and therefore, healthy, constructive, creative thoughts. Such thinking helps to transform his whole nature and outlook and his whole nature is transformed. Surrender then is not a grudging compulsion but a happy yielding of himself to the love and goodness of God. to God himself. Surrender delivers him from self-pre-occupation. By surrender, by surrendering self he surrenders to the perfect purposes of God who illustrated in Himself the wonder of self-surrender.

The ultimate goal of Claverton’s life is pursuit of pleasure which results in self-centeredness and neurosis. Emptiness, desolation and hopelessness are the outcome of his wrong relationship and loss of faith in God. He is lost without knowing where to turn for companionship and consolation. He wanders aimlessly being threatened by defeat and despair. His sense of disillusionment, insecurity and unutterable despair finally lead
him to repentance by the Godly counsel and assistance of his daughter Monica.

In *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman*, there is a conflict between love and religious faith in the portrayal of Colby and Claverton. In both the characters, Colby Eliot explores a highly conscious self, particularly at moments of crisis and conflict which lead to decisive acts of life. This is an agonizing experience for the individuals who encounter this experience. It becomes a from the moment of intense suffering and inability to see the past and the future as postulates of the present moment; the moment assures and results in the deepest knowledge of the self. In the plays suffering precedes self realization which is closely related to the reality of suffering which continues during the entire time of spiritual crisis. According to C.H. Smith sense of a disorder both in the internal and the external world, and a search for system, characterize Eliot's thoughts all through his work.