CHAPTER VI
TREATMENT OF TIME

Lord Snow, in his attempt to portray the social and economic flux of the years following the World War, has, in the *Strangers and Brothers* series, used the devices of overlapping situations and characters and of the changing focus both in space and time. Functioning along with the overlapping or similar situations are recurring characters who reappear either in flesh and blood or sound an echo down the corridors of memory. In spite of several instances of recurring situations and reappearing characters, the whole sequence of *Strangers and Brothers* was not conceived as a chronologically straight narrative.

However, the novels in *Strangers and Brothers* series do not follow the chronological order in their publication. The order of their publication is as follows:

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Published In</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td><em>Strangers and Brothers</em></td>
<td>1940</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td><em>The Light and the Dark</em></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Time of Hope</em></td>
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<td><em>The Masters</em></td>
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<td><em>The New Man</em></td>
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<td><em>Homecoming</em></td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td><em>Corridors of Power</em></td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td><em>Last Things</em></td>
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But in the time sequence of their narrative, they fall into the following order:
Snow wrote the novels in an order different from the way he wants them finally to be read. Snow's design is to bring out the contrast in the relationship between what Lewis Eliot sees and what he feels in the whirligig of time.

In the novels of the series we find that there are three novels—Time of Hope, Homecoming and Last Things— in which the narrator, Lewis Eliot, is a participant; while in the remaining eight he is an observer as well as a narrator. Looking to the chronological order of the novels which deal with Lewis's personal life we find that there is a gap of time in those novels as Time of Hope deals with the period from 1914 to 1933, Homecoming covers the period from 1938 to 1951 and Last Things the late Sixties. But taken as a whole, the sequence covers the complete period from 1914 to 1968. As the whole series has the double purpose of dealing with the life of Lewis Eliot, the narrator, as well as those of the characters surrounding him it records the simultaneity of incidents, and hence the overlapping of time and situations.
The Light and the Dark covers the same time sequence as The Masters and both emphasize the different aspects of Calvert’s and Eliot’s relationship to the Cambridge college. Snow has used the common devices of overlapping situations and characters. The trial of George Pessant in Strangers & Brothers foreshadows the trial of Donald Howard in The Affair; the election of Roy Calvert to a Fellowship in The Light and the Dark adumbrates the election of a master in The Masters; Charles March leaves law for medicine as Lewis Eliot himself leaves law for a college Fellowship.

Among the modern novelists Snow, Lawrence Durrell, Anthony Powell, etc. have experimented with time in order to evolve a working method. In France, the influence of Proust remains supreme, coming down to the present in the variations of Beckett, Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Nathalie Sarraute, all of whom upset clock-time and impose psychological time upon the pattern of the narrative. A novelist like Butor assumes a significant place either for reasons of suspense and narrative plotting or for psychological import.

In a writer like Powell, time, as the title of the series—The Music of Time—indicates, is to be arranged musically, with the past entering and re-entering like a musical motif, arranged and rearranged, modulated and harmonized. For him, things in the past continue to well up; events come back as though eternally recurrent, like those episodes of early experience which, on a reexamination at a later period,
seen to be crowded together with such unbelievable closeness in the course of a few years, yet equally giving the illusion of being so infinitely extended during the months when actually taking place.

Snow himself occasionally works with Proust's so-called 'privileged moments' in which a substance, flavour, meeting will recall almost an entire previous existence, and in this way he is actually closer to Powell's use of time than to Durrell's. Durrell's purpose in the Quarrat is to gain simultaneity by having the unchanging substance of the narrative screened through the eyes of different characters and thus modulated accordingly. While an earlier novelist like Conrad was concerned with making the reader see. Durrell goes further and asks him what he actually sees and whether he can even be sure that he has seen. The substance becomes ever-moving and ever-changing. In Snow's hands, there is some attempt at simultaneity, for many of the events in the sequence overlap, but Snow is very sure of what everyone sees. Also, the sequence is controlled by Eliot in a way denied to Darley in Durrell's Quarrat.

As Lord Snow reverted to the traditional plot and character his treatment of time differed from that of the 'stream of consciousness.' Based upon psychological time, the stream of consciousness novel put stress on the temporal dimension of memory. This temporal device is found in Proust's use of involuntary memory which is concerned with that part of the mind which stores sensations of the past and which can be evoked by a momentary feeling. For Proust,
this momentary feeling was 'privileged moments.' The involuntary memory contains a half-remembered, half-forgotten past which can be called upon at any moment of sudden revelation. It dwells in the mind and enables us to take possession of our lives. It is seen quite often that what is present suddenly becomes the past. In Proust, Marcel has his time all over again: he sees everything double. First, there is Marcel saying, 'I am doing this': then there is the older Marcel saying, 'I recall how it was.' Like Snow, Proust was also writing about man in society, not simply about man locked into himself.

Unlike Proust, however, Joyce wanted to catch the present, the immediate moment of perception which he called 'epiphany.' For Proust, time past could become time-present, to fade immediately into the past again while for Joyce time present was all important—a continuum of present, in which the past inevitably lingered. In his A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man he confronted his reader with the direct mental experiences of the characters. There were only occasional shifts from past to present, from present to past, what was happening seemed to occur largely at whatever moment the reader happened to be reading the story. This was a distinct departure from the way in which the conventional novels unrolled themselves with the author constantly telling the story and knowing everything about his characters. The author's voluntary rejection of omniscience created the need to use the memory of the characters to place the reader in a relationship with the past. For Virginia Woolf one incident
contains the whole of the story, time shall be utterly
obliterated; future shall somehow blossom out of the past.

T. S. Eliot's belief that --

Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present

is at the core of William Faulkner's work. Proust's aware-
ness resided in his acting need to recover the past, Faulk-
ner's arose from his having grown up in a society in which
the past had virtually engulfed the present. There is no
dividing line between what is and what was in Basy's, who
has been three years old for thirty years. We cannot make
any distinction between an immediate reality and memory.
In Faulkner's masterpiece, The Sound and the Fury, we observe
and are made to feel, the swallowing up of the present by
the past.

As the primary concern of the stream of consciousness
novels is time they have been called 'time-novels.' James
Joyce's Ulysses is a story of eighteen hours of experience,
retrieved from all eternity and Marcel Proust's quest for
'lost time' "is an attempt on an heroic scale to recapture
the memories of moments that have long disappeared but which
still live somewhere in the consciousness..." Proust spoke
of his wish to "seize, isolate, immobilize for the duration
of a lightning flash...a fragment of pure time in its pure
Virginia Woolf recur to the 'movement' which can hold a world within its fractional pulse and William Faulkner write into the core of his work the meaning of the "arbitrary dial" whose shadow marks the present and absorbs all that is past.

The difference between what the stream of consciousness novelists attempted and the treatment of thought in Lord Snow's series *Strangers and Brothers* lies in the fact that in Snow we do not have a flowing stream of thought but a narrator's (Lewis Eliot's) reflective intelligence; distanced in time and space. Snow has a sense of the present in relation to a sense of the past, of the way things are and the way they used to be, and he finds a significance in the difference between now and then.

As one of the major interests of C.P. Snow is "the power relations of man in organized society" and as he believed that "the novelist must face to day's world and link us informatively to it," he chose instead of psychological time a conventional sequence for his series *Strangers and Brothers* covering the span of time of nearly fifty five years from 1914 to 1968. Here Snow has sought realistic explanation of the social and political tensions of the period. The object of his study is the consciousness of the twentieth century man who is represented by his narrator, Lewis Eliot. F.K. Karl has, therefore, come to the conclusion that --


"If, by some not impossible chance, the world were suddenly to be destroyed and only Snow's novels recovered by a future generation, the historian of that day would have a fairly good idea of what a responsible twentieth century-man was like merely by following the author through the vast labyrinths of a bureaucratic society where the individual, without visible guidance, must himself find his way or be lost." 3

The entire series conforms to Snow's belief that society depends on the kind of person represented by Eliot: dedicated to some extent, but responsible and flexible enough to change when he sees that in flexibility lies the road to social and political survival. One of the real issues in our century, as Snow appears to understand it, is how to utilize the talents of a man for the benefit of his country as well as for his own benefit. The only way to deal with people is to assume their fallibility and then try to work with them. In The Masters he supports Jago because Jago is human enough to recognize his limitations, but his opponent is not. Lewis Eliot, thus, works with what is available, and what he succeeds in obtaining is always, less than what is desirable, but always more than he would have gained by "bull-like methods."

From the chronological beginning of the series, i.e., Time of Home (1914-1933), Snow has presented Lewis Eliot 'straight,' that is, as he is. Even when the other characters

3P.R.Karl : The Contemporary English Novel : p.63
see him, they agree about basic Eliot: moderate, judicious, honourable. *Time of Hope* chronicles the childhood of the 'hero,' his aspirations and ambitions, his growing circle of friends, his first success—or course, academic—, his first love, his mental development and emotional maturation, his ordeals, and his subsequent awareness of his role in life. Then Snow continues the traditional script and brings it in to line with contemporary developments. Instead of having the hero go forth to conquer, Snow encumbers him with two destructive tendencies, one physical and the other psychological. The physical ailment is Eliot's illness diagnosed as pernicious anaemia and this brings sadness, perhaps even a tragic sense of life. Certainly it develops his perceptions and makes him more aware of human frailty. In one stroke, Eliot is brought down to earth, caught as he is by the inexplicable absurdity of the universe. Even though his career continues, this period is a turning point in his development as a human being.

The second destructive tendency in Eliot is a psychological one that almost destroys his career while it also makes shambles of his private life. Here Eliot's attachment to Sheila is carried up to and through their marriage and then examined in a greater detail in *Homecoming*. Sheila's relationship with Eliot further establishes Snow's point that we are governed by forces outside our control, that free will is partially an illusion in a world where certain inexplicables mock reason. To recognize his foolishness is part of Eliot's education.
Eliot blames Sheila for the set-backs of his career, forgetting that he had relinquished success in his decision to marry her. The forward thrust of Eliot's career that began ten years before with George Passant’s help is slowed down, and Eliot’s predicament is as severe now as then. For in addition to finding his own way, he has the cares and anxieties of married life. In a movement of Proustian recall, Eliot sums up what the first twenty-eight years have meant:

"Anyway, for a second, I remembered how I had challenged the future then (ten years before). I had longed for a better world, for fame, for love. I had longed for a better world; and this was the summer of 1933. I had longed for fame; and I was a second-rate lawyer. I had longed for love; and I was bound for a life to a woman who never had love for me and who had exhausted mine." ⁴

Still Eliot is hopeful. As he indicates, he has perceived certain truths and finds that he must live with them. One of them is the nature of his career and the other is the nature of his private life, he will remain anxiety-ridden until either he or Sheila dies. With the facts before him, Eliot becomes aware of the worst he has seen of himself and his fate.

In Homecoming, Snow returns to a point of time (1938-1949) before The New Men and deals with a period shortly before The Affair. Homecoming, as F.R. Karl points out, "is to be for Eliot a journey through an inferno in which he is scorched, but eventually a place from which he ascends into heavenly bliss." ⁵ In the novel some battles are still to be fought,

⁴ C.P. Snow: Time of Hope: p.358
nevertheless resolutions and reconciliations are in sight; There stretches ahead a future of what may pass for happiness and joy and behind a past that clearly indicates misery and frustration. Even though overlapping with two preceding novels in the series this volume purports to be a logical extension of the other three and here we have a different Eliot from the one in the other novels. The forward movement of the series seems to have ended, for all that remains is a dip into the past or a foray into future to some allied problem. Eliot as a person has little more to say; he can only be a sounding board for the ideas of others. The dread of his homecomings in the past, first as a child and then after his marriage to Sheila Knight, has vanished. Now he can return home to a normal wife and stable family. He has attained personal happiness.

Taken as a whole, the novels *Strangers and Brothers* and *The Conscience of the Rich* treat Eliot's early years and *Time of Need* focuses more directly on Eliot's family background as well as on the years of his tragic romance and marriage with Sheila; *The Light and the Dark* and *The Marksman* concentrate on what Eliot sees and learns about others while he is at Cambridge. *Homecoming* deals with his agony caused by his wife's suicide as also with the uncertainties Eliot feels in trying to fall in love again with Margaret Davidson. The next novel in the sequence, *The New Man*, considers the problems that arise between the administrators and the scientists working on the atom bomb. The novel discusses this problem
in personal and human terms because Lewis Eliot is one of the administrators and Martin Eliot, his brother, is an atomic physicist.

The main part of Eliot's experience in *Homecoming*, *The Light and the Dark*, *The Conscience of the Rich*, *The Masters* and *The New Man* is concerned, roughly, with the years from 1937 to 1945. The various compartmentalising of what is, in effect, one total experience, that of Lewis Eliot, into five separate novels is perhaps one of the most puzzling aspects of the sequence. At the same time that Eliot is engrossed in his relationship with Sheila in *Homecoming* he is involved with Calvert in *The Light and the Dark* and with Charles March in *The Conscience of the Rich*. His courtship of Margaret in *Homecoming* coincides with the equally important relationship with his brother, Martin, in *The New Man*. At the same time he is occupied with university politics in *The New Man*; with law in *The Conscience of the Rich*; and with his career in the Civil service in *The New Man* and *Homecoming*. And yet each of these relationships and each of the involvements in outside experience is kept separate in each novel. It is as if these individual relationships were lived out in separate, unrelated worlds, that they had no bearing upon each other, though each seems to affect Eliot's total reaction to life and experience.
The Affair presents Eliot, a changed man. He has passed through a number of significant stages of development. He has now an awareness of the nature of his double self and has experienced the need for an ideal balance a man should preserve between the knowledge of his inner self and the awareness of the possibilities of different responses to the experience in terms of changing social conditions. Made tolerant by the memory of this awareness, Eliot witnesses in a number of friends the same struggle to attain this ideal balance. He has, under the shock of experience, envisaged the possibility of despair. And finally he is able to re-establish the true balance in at least one relationship—that with Margaret.

Snow has appended to the narrative a convenient genealogy of the deaths, births and marriages of his characters that occurred between 1944 and 1969, which covers the span of time between Last Things and The Slaves of Solace. Eliot's father, and his friend, Francis Getliffe, the physicist, have died. An Eliot marries a Calvert. All this makes an oddly cut-and-dried code to a book that not only evokes and concludes the scenes of the choked and knotted past, but looks the turbulent present bravely, if wistfully, in the eye.

As the present is more important for Snow, it weighs heavily on Lewis Eliot and, as ever in days gone by, gives him food for thought, and sometimes action. His reflection of the Cabinet honour signals the end not only of Eliot's
public life but also his life in literature. The operation during which he technically dies from cardiac arrest and then rallies back, yields up a splendid passage of Eliot reminiscences on earlier, more vigorous days, evoking scenes that are dramatic in themselves and aim at the same time to tie up the loose ends of the past neatly.

It has been remarked that Eliot's personality never changes but we sense throughout the series that as time passes he does not only learn a lot about himself and about others but also makes an all round progress in his life, economically, socially as well as mentally. Rising from the world of poverty he reaches the edge of prosperity; from a clerk he becomes a lawyer and gains an important status as an administrator. In the beginning he is unable to understand his own nature and becomes unhappy because of possessiveness but at the end gains maturity to understand the nature of relationships in life and profits by experience and becomes happy in life. Thus, in one way or the other; throughout the life of Lewis Eliot we feel the passing of time as he progresses by and bye in different walks of life.

It has to be accepted that there are many gaps in our knowledge of Roy Calvert's motivation; all the same, he is a real and credible human being, a rare personality. In him Snow has his sole contemporary protagonist. In a way, Roy's mental illness is an adequate symbol of the 1930's. As F.R.-Kazi points out, "In Roy, Snow has caught a figure who is -
sacrificed to his age; he is, in his way, its conscience.6

The Roy Calvert of STRANGERS & BROTHERS gives little indication of the Roy we meet in The Light and the Dark. In the earlier novel, he is simply impetuous, and indiscreet, not manic or depressed in any significant way. Similarly, the Roy we see in Time of Hope, published after The Light and the Dark but covering the preceding period of twenty years, again gives little indication of the tormented young man of twenty-four we meet later. Thus, we see different stages in Roy's life.

In Charles March, once again, we see a representative portrait of the twentieth century man. By overthrowing his career as a lawyer in which he could have been very successful if he wished, Charles particularly overcomes the restraining influence of the past, in particular his father's very strong control over him. The gap in the thinking of father and son is indicative not only of the gap between the two generations, but also of the hiatus between the rich and the poor, the have and the have-not, the conservative and the liberal. The gap between the generations is further apparent in the kinds of people who receive invitations to Braynston Square, the March home. Formerly, only titled and moneyed young men were invited and the servants recognized their worth. Now come men like Eliot and FrancisGaliffee, poor, pesty young men without connections or war-drobes. In changing times, the old alignments, as Charles finds out, no longer

6J.R.Karl: CPR.Mow:
make the same sense. Charles's decision to come to terms with himself, then, is the decision the entire age must make. *The Conscience of the Rich* is perhaps the best of the novels because it catches broadly and succinctly the social and political dilemmas of the time.

*The Masters* and *The Affair*, taken together, provide us with a fair idea of the passage of time. *The Masters* takes place in 1937, during the time of the Spanish Civil War and just preceding World War II. Snow is ultimately suggesting here that the struggle for power within the college is of the same quality as the struggle for high political power. By the time *The Affair* is taking place, that is, seventeen years after *The Masters*, ten new Fellows have come on the scene and many of the old Fellows whom Lewis knew were dead. They were Beards-Smith, Bustane Pilbrow, Chrystal and Ray Calvert. Only Arthur Brown seems to be untouched by time as he goes on quietly managing college business and happy in his little world. He has come to terms with Crawford, the Master, whom he has never liked and whom he opposed seventeen years earlier in the contest for the mastership.

Many of the important characters from *The Masters* are still alive, and they display their talents in much the same way they did in the earlier novel. In fact, the passage of time is a curious phenomenon in the novel. Francis Gatliffe is back doing research after a successful career in the
Government. Nightingale, whom we remember as an unpleasant and unsuccessful scientist before the war, has returned happily touched by time. He is now happily employed as a Bursar.

All through The Affair we are made aware of the changes, especially the social changes that have occurred since the mid-thirties; and Snow appears to enjoy the role of social historian. There are, for instance, no servants going round now carrying trays covered with green baize; and the young fellows actually discuss college business with their wives.

Thus, Snow rejects the stream of consciousness method, attacks experimenters and is suspicious of involved symbolism. He has little interest for the so-called psychological time which is the keynote of the stream of consciousness novel. His narrative proceeds in linear time showing the resultant changes in his characters. No doubt, he has not maintained chronological order in writing the novels of the sequence but they are chronologically linked according to his plan. We also feel the eternity of time as in so many novels the same kind of thing happens at different times and the identification of the time past, present and future is rather lost. However, we feel the passing of time throughout the series as thoughts and attitudes and behaviour change with the changing society from one generation to another. William Cooper has rightly remarked that —
"Strangers and Landmarks is based on the concept that the present moment of time, indissolubly a part of the past and of the future; it can be taken as its own, complete as it is in itself; but only when it is shown to have embedded in it signs of what has gone before, and what is to come, does it signify fully." 7

7 William Cooper : *CaP.Gayo* : p.16