APPENDIX; THE DEATH OF BECKET.
Although Thomas Becket was officially canonized only three years after his death, a state of miracles broke out at once and the common people began to venerate him from the moment of his martyrdom. This almost unexampled furore was, in large part, owing to the extremely sacrilegious circumstances in which the murder took place.

However, evaluations of Thomas' sanctity, the problem of whether he died a martyr or not, could not fail to develop side by side. This problem is closely bound up with considerations of character as revealed in Thomas' actions over his years as chancellor and Archbishop. David Knowles in his biography, approaches Thomas' character and actions with the greatest sympathy and impartiality. He comes to the conclusion that although the Archbishop was a very great and admirable man, he lacked something of that holiness and sanctity clearly seen in men like Anselm or Edmund Rich who "were venerated as intrinsically holy at every phase of their lives,..." Nor was he a martyr in the "original Christian sense" of dying as a witness to the Resurrection of Christ.1

1 Eliot makes him a martyr in this sense.
Thomas, says Knowles, "died for the freedom of the spiritual authority of the Church, and he died declaring that he knew this and was willing to meet death in this cause." This is on the whole the most balanced view possible.

Judgments on Becket's death, in spite of the official verdict of the Church, have always been very varied ranging from martyrdom to suicide. His medieval biographers, of course, approached his death as a martyrdom in the cause of God, drawing parallels with the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. But even at the moment of his death a dissenting voice is reported to have said that the Archbishop's death had been justly merited.

During the Reformation and after, this was the view that prevailed. Thomas became something of a villain, a rebellious subject who had defied his king and obstructed the just execution of royal authority. As the centuries passed, the lapse of time began to afford a more detached perspective. Also, perhaps due to a waning of religious habits of life, the death of Thomas came to be regarded more and more as a political assassination; or even as an accident precipitated by a series of circumstances in

which Thomas himself was not least to blame.

In the present day Dr. M.A. Murray has propounded a rather novel and startling interpretation of the historical incident of Thomas' death. She claims that it was the sacrifice of a substitute for the Divine King in the Pagan religion which still flourished in Europe side by side with Christianity during the Middle Ages.3

Christianity, she contends, came to the island peoples of Britain with the Augustine mission. It was a foreign religion brought by foreigners, to which, the rulers became converted. The mass of the common population meanwhile remained immersed in the old Pagan religion of the horned god, a version of the old fertility religions. The ecclesiastical hierarchy too was largely composed of foreigners. When the new religion was imposed upon the people, they accepted it in its externals while continuing in their old beliefs: "and even in the highest offices of the Church", writes Dr. Murray, "the priests often served the heathen deities as well as the Christian God and practised Pagan rites.4"

4 Ibid., p.18.
This was rendered easier by the general similarity of certain rites and beliefs between Christianity and the Pagan religion. The medieval belief in witchcraft, fairies and the devil is to be associated with this religion whose god Christian writers called the devil. They thus identified him with the Principle of Evil. Fairies were not the fragile creatures read about in fairy tales but human beings. "The number of recorded marriages between 'mortals' and fairies is another proof that fairies...were human. The Plantagenet kings had a fairy ancestry;..."5

One of the main beliefs of this pagan religion was that the king was the god incarnate, and he was worshipped as such. But at the end of a fixed term of years he was killed in sacrifice for the prosperity of his people. When the practice began to die out a substitute could be sacrificed instead of the king himself. This substitute for a limited time before his death also enjoyed royal powers. "The fundamental difference between the two religions", says Margaret Murray, "is that the Christian believes that God died once for all, whereas the more primitive belief is that the god is perpetually incarnate on earth and may therefore be put to death over and over again."6

5 Ibid., p.50.
6 Ibid., p.128.
Among other instances parallel to the case of Thomas Becket, she describes the deaths of William Rufus in England, and Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais in France.

In the instance of Thomas Becket, she bases her case largely on the fairy ancestry of the Normans and the Plantagenets. An ancestor of William the Conqueror was called Robert the Devil not for any traits of character but because he belonged to the old religion and was believed to be the pagan god incarnate. The Conqueror's son and successor William Rufus had been killed, supposedly in a hunting accident, by an arrow from one of his own men. Dr. Hurray contends that the killing had been deliberate on the part of both killer and victim; that Rufus was sacrificed as the incarnate god for the health and prosperity of his people. Henry, on both sides, had a pagan ancestry; and could, presumably, have belonged to the old religion, though conforming outwardly to Christianity.

Dr. Murray puts down the large proportion of personal feeling in the struggle between Henry and Becket to the fact that Henry knowing he might be called upon to die for his people, had chosen Becket to be his substitute. Becket had begun by refusing, but Henry "used all the means in his power to force Becket to surrender, and
succeeded in the end.* 7 Among the evidence adduced in favour of this theory is the instance of Henry holding Thomas' stirrup at Fréteval; of the detailed Christ-parallel found in the contemporary biographers; of words and phrases indicating Thomas' own knowledge of his death and the appearance of his behaviour on the last day as voluntarily courting death. Added to all this was the fact that the news of the murder spread to certain distant places on the very day that it was committed.

On the whole, the view is as plausible as any other and there is no definite proof either way. However, owing to the several similarities between Christianity and the old pagan religion, most of the points cited in favour of this theory can be interpreted ambiguously with both a Christian and Pagan slant. The Christ-parallel in the contemporaries particularly, might be put down to the accepted style of hagiography. A martyr dying for the Church was supposed to have imitated Christ. Only the references to Backet's wishing to be king may point in the Pagan direction, or they may have been the result of Henry's jealousy of Backet's splendour, and popularity with the people. But his last prayer to Mary and the saints — overheard by Grim — is definitely Christian.

7 Ibid., p.172.
Such a view as Dr. Murray’s also tends to underestimate the importance of the public and political nature of the conflict.

Among the literary artists, Tennyson’s treatment of Becket’s death has been criticised for its ambivalence. "It is not easy", writes Moody E. Prior, "to determine whether Becket dies a martyr to his ideals, opposed by politicians, villains, and time-servers, or whether for all his great virtue and personal integrity, he paid harshly for his pride, his stubbornness, and his inability to see the practical necessity of compromise." In this, Tennyson’s conclusion partakes of the ambiguity felt by most modern historians in evaluating the situation. It arises largely from contradictions in Becket’s own behaviour and the complete lack of certainty about his motives.

In addition, however, Tennyson supplies an ambivalence of his own which has the effect of lowering the dignity of the archbishop-martyr’s death with a thump. This is caused by the Eleanor-Rosamund embroilment in the story. In Act V, Henry’s final wrathful outburst is precipitated not by Roger of York’s statement that Henry will have no peace while Thomas lives, but by Eleanor who enters later and

8 Prior, op.cit., p.265.
caps the bishops' complaints with the tale that Becket has sent Rosamund into a nunnery. Henry's speech mingles in equal proportion the absolving of the bishops and getting Rosamund out of the nunnery. There is, in addition, a strongly established personal animosity between Becket and the Knights partly engineered by the ubiquitous evil designs of Eleanor. The exalted martyrdom might be reduced either to a murder of personal vengeance by the Knights, or to the result of a ridiculous jealousy in a conventional love-triangle. In any case, the impact of Becket's own intransigence in the cause of the Church is diffused and the reasons leading to his death are muddled.

There is a similar ambiguity in Fry's treatment. However, it is not particularly noticeable since the emphasis falls on Henry's reaction. Becket's death is presented in a third-person narration instead of being dramatised; in the face of the king's anguish the mention of the bare fact of the murder does not attract attention at all. We are not really interested, at that moment, in knowing whether Becket's death was a martyrdom or an indirect suicide.

Anouilh, on the other hand, avoids this sort of uncertainty completely by conceiving and building his
protagonist almost entirely on twentieth-century assumptions of existential heroism. His Becket is cast in the mould of his other idealistic heroes. His revolt differs from Antigone's only in not being a gratuitous denial of life. In terms of Anouilh's world, death is the only absolute purifier, embraced with greater or less alacrity by his idealists, and he finds nothing reprehensible in their seeking it. However, Becket even on these terms, is not a suicide. This is made clear in one of his speeches to Louis in the scene after leaving Pontigny. "Vous avez le goût du martyr?" asks Louis. Becket counters:

Serais-il sain d'aller mendier, sur les routes d'Europe, une place disputée à la peur, où ma carcasse serait en sécurité? D'ailleurs où ma carcasse serait-elle en sécurité?...Je suis Archevêque-Primat d'Angleterre. C'est une étiquette un peu voyante dans mon dos. L'honneur de lieu et la raison qui, pour une fois, coïncident, veulent qu'au lieu de risquer le coup de couteau d'un homme de main obscur, sur une route, j'aile me faire tuer — si je dois me faire tuer — coiffé de ma mitre... dans mon Église Primatiale.  

9 Anouilh, Becket, p.126. Hill, p.96. "Would it be healthyminded to walk the roads of Europe, and beg a refuge where my carcass would be safe? Besides, where would I be safe? I am Primate of England. That is a rather showy label on my back. The honour of God and common-sense, which for once coincide dictate that instead of risking the knife thrust of some hired assassin, on the highway, I should go and have myself killed — if killed I must be —...with my mitre on my head...in my own cathedral." (Italics mine).
And Louis is inclined to agree with this piece of reasoning. Beckett is certain of two things: that he will not abandon his ideals, and that consequently, death some time or other is certain. He is a hero who takes a stand which he does not abandon when faced with death; but he does not go needlessly asking for it.

At the same time he is not a Christian saint, since Anouilh himself is not interested in theology or the Church, except as they provide a concrete peg on which to hang his hero's idealism. Anouilh treats Thomas Becket "a Christian Saint, as a hero of selfhood". 10

Laurence Binyon's play, The Young King was written in 1924 for the opening of Massfield's theatre at Boar's Hill, Oxford. It was also performed in an abridged form at the Canterbury Festival the year before Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral. It is a poetic drama of the standard historical-romantic variety.

10 Robert Bolt, Three Plays, p.96. Neither Anouilh nor Bolt is a professing Christian. And there are interesting parallels in their approaches to orthodox Christian sanctity. The differences, however, especially in the writers' humanising or distancing of the central figure are very striking. While Becket excites awe and admiration, Bolt's More excites affectionate fellow-feeling in addition.
Unlike the other works, however, Becket has only an extremely marginal relevance to Binyon's play. A loosely constructed, simply episodic work in eleven scenes, The Young King covers a period from three years after Becket's death — the barons' revolt of 1173-74 — to the death of Young Henry in 1182. It takes for its central figure Henry's eldest son who was known after his coronation in 1170 as the Young King.

The main interest of the play, as the author himself indicates, lies in "the theme of father-and-son and of the antagonism between two generations". Binyon's main concern, therefore, was with "a human relationship rather than with history". The potential universality of such a theme is immediately apparent, and handled effectively, it might have produced a great work of art. The central situation is the archetypal one of Oedipus. However, although this theme is, with great explicitness made to dominate the play, the work as a whole fails. This is due mainly to the banality and commonplaceness of the language and the monotony of the regular blank verse line, but also

12 Such an approach is latent in the historical events themselves. In the first chapter of Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, Maud Bodkin explores the richness of this theme of the conflict of generations as a major archetype of tragic poetry.
to an incorrigible tendency to talk in abstract generalisations.

The fourth scene deals with the capture of a city in Anjou.

Suzanne — an important but invented character, in some ways even an author persona — comes to plead for her father's life. She tries to rouse the Young King to an awareness of all the atrocities inflicted in his name on innocent people:

I marvel at your great captains and lords of war,  
that execute your will with such brute agents, 
you are brave to have that done out of your sight  
which, when you have the sight of it, sickens you,  
my lord, do you look over these poor roofs,  
make your imagination like an eye, ...  
to see the things gross hands do in your name  
with horrible delight, there, there, and there.13

Such language together with the various melodramatic and sentimental twists in the action, destroys the tragic impact of the Oedipus theme. The play concludes on a return-of-the-Prodigal-Son note. The Young King dies in his father's arms. Henry is left lamenting the passing of youth while old age lives on.

Becket, as a figure, never appears in the play, since it begins three years after his death. Becket's death, however, and its long-term effect on the events in Henry's life are meant to be important in the play. This we gather

13 Binyon, op.cit., p.53 (Italics mine).
from repeated explicit and implicit references.
Sr. H. A. Lolly, in her thesis, even goes so far as to say that the core of Binyon's play is the didactic one of poetic justice, evil being punished "in this life", consequent on the murder of Becket.

The theme of Becket's death is meant to function on three levels, the physical or practical, the moral, and the psychological. On the plane of external events, the basic incident on which the whole action hinges is Young Henry's coronation, which was one of the immediate causes of Becket's death. One of Henry's captains in the opening scene exclaims, "...I think King Henry lost his wife/The day he crowned his son at Westminster."14 This is caught up by Young Henry's wife, Margaret in the next scene, "I wish my Harry never had been crowned"; for he has since then become embroiled in a spider's web of plots and intrigues. All the evils in the land she traces to the death of the Archbishop "Murdered foully by King Henry's men ---"

...Becket, who loved us, WAS Harry's friend and my friend; ... He should have set the crown on Harry's head.15

14 Ibid., p.6.
15 Ibid., p.12.
More pertinently, "...Harry leaned upon his wisdom. Harry/Gives his ear now to men who are not wise." 16

Unfortunately for the author's intentions, Harry himself never even mentions Becket, nor does he show himself aware of any influence of his mentor's death. Although the historical Young King was said to have made Becket's murder one of the excuses for his revolt, there is no inkling of such an intention in the play. Young Henry is obsessed by the futility of his crown, a "gilded mockery", a "heavy plaything", a "barren title", a "landless name"; by the possessive, imprisoning love of his father and by his own anomalous love-hate attitude to that father. He even thinks to avenge his mother's "wrongs" on Henry, but anything to do with Becket is simply not there.

On the plane of practical political expediency, Eleanor counts Becket's murder as a point in her favour, since it has completely alienated the Church from Henry's cause. Similarly, Henry himself comments:

...before I chase these rebels
I have sworn to make my peace with Rome and do
My naked penance for the Archbishop's death.
I will have Holy Church upon my side,
Then I will fall on them with a clean soul. 17

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p.30.
At the same time, however, Henry is conscious of a moral guilt weighing on him. To his son's excuse that he wishes to go on a pilgrimage, Henry replies, "It is I, God wot, have blood upon my hands, You have no slaughtered Becket on your soul." This aspect of Henry, appears to be important in terms of statement. But dramatically it fails due to the overweening emphasis on his attitude to his son, and on the family curse and demonic ancestry. Becket or no Becket, we come to feel, the family of Plantagenet is doomed by heredity. "Ay, like is too like", says Young Henry to his father.

Now in this secret midnight we are come
To the core and kernel. It's not crowns and thrones,
Not friends and foes, not policies and arms,
But the old, black, bitter roots that twist in us.

In the face of such a feeling, Becket and all his works seem quite superfluous.

However, the melodramatic Scene IX which deals with the Young King's sacrilegious despoiling of the shrine at Rocamadour, carries overtones of the earlier, more heinous sacrilege committed in his father's name. History, in some sense, seems to be repeating itself. As the monastery

18 Ibid., p.32.
19 Ibid., p.94.
bell tolls a curse on the young prince, Binyon seems to say that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. In fact the entire scene appears to have been designed expressly for this purpose.

On the psychological plane, Henry's indirect and almost unconscious involvement in Becket's murder is accepted as a fact. The central figure of the Young King is an embodiment of the author's conviction that there are complex and often self-contradictory motives governing human action; and that as often as not, the individual himself is unaware of the nature and strength of these hidden forces. "...Harry loves his father," says Margaret, "hates him too. But deep in, deeper than his hate, he loves him." The problem conceived in these terms is one of locating one's true self. Young Henry is seen as a man struggling for individuality, through the smothering possessiveness of both his parents, and perhaps even of his wife.

The seventh scene, the most important from the point of view of the main conflict, presents a confrontation between father and son. The son, on the point of being won over, recoils when his father demands that he give up

20 Ibid., p.16.
his friendship with Bertrand de Born. "But you are here/
My father, within walls and in my hands...."\textsuperscript{21} threatens
the Young King. One of his soldiers who has crept up
unseen interprets the half-spoken menace as a command and
leaps at the Old King with a dagger. The Young King,
however, kills him and denies, quite sincerely, his father's
imputation of treachery. "You never shaped the thought
within your mind"; replies Henry.

And yet it was your thought that leapt on me
And held the dagger. You shudder at it now
But it flew into a word — ...
And took a body, and Hell rose to snatch it
Out of your mouth and execute the thing
You never named to your own soul....
Ah, now I know you for my flesh indeed.
'Twas so that I slew Becket with the word
I had forgotten.\textsuperscript{22}

The opposition is between the conscious thought and the
momentary aberration of a subconscious wish; for even "the
word...forgotten" is not a man's truest self. This is what

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.95.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.96. Henry sees himself as having been culpable
of Becket's murder, in the same way and to the same extent
as his son might have been guilty of his, if the sentry's
dagger had thrust home. Thus, using Becket's death as a
peg, and supported by the theme of heredity and natural
family ties, Binyon implicitly reveals a cyclical view of
history. History repeats itself as a consequence of the
relative "unchangingness" of human nature. The seeds of
discord sown in one generation sprout a bloody harvest in
the next.
Eleanor indicates in the next scene.

The great revenges of the world are not
What we contrive, Henry;...
I know not what powers shape them, but not we.
...They have invisible hands, that knead flesh
And the spirit within the flesh;...
Yet well they know where the heart hides in its fear,
And when the hour's rips, they stab us to the heart
And leave us — living. Who has done this thing?

Not I! But it is done, we know they have used us,
These powers, against ourselves,...23

Eleanor speaks in general, but she might with equal
appositeness be describing the reaction of Fry's Henry to the
hour when "life goes separate from the men..."

In the penultimate scene the girl Suzanne, pleading
with Henry to forgive his son, again draws the parallel
between the two men:

We do not always that
Which our own selves do, but some other self
That comes between and mocks us with the deeds
(Do you not know it?) that we seem to have done,
Yet stare at after as on another's work.24

She is, in effect, repeating the substance of Eleanor's
speech. Becket's death, therefore, is not seen as a deliberate

23 Ibid., p.102.
24 Ibid., p.127.
crime on Henry's part. Nonetheless he is guilty, in so far as he allowed the momentary aberration to gain mastery, following upon years of active hatred. The Young King receives pardon; and his death seems to be conceived of as a sort of sacrificial atonement for Backet's murder.

The theme of Backet's death, however, is not really essential to the conception of the central father-son conflict which is basically rooted in considerations of family and heredity, except in so far as Henry's crime is seen to be the result of a family tendency. It seems to have been dragged into the play by the scruff of its neck to underline the author's concern with poetic justice. Fortunately for the play's unity, however, the Young King's complete unconcern with Backet's death and its influence, makes the theme almost entirely ineffectual in terms of dramatization. What we get are statements — largely from Henry himself, an odd reference or two from Eleanor or Margaret, while the minor characters are wholly unconcerned with it.

Binyon's play, therefore, is not, strictly speaking, very relevant to a comparative consideration of literary versions of the Becket story. The dead martyr is not even an invisible presence in the sense that Henry is in
Murder in the Cathedral. It is for this reason that the play has been dealt with only in this section.

Meyer's interest in Becket's death — to a certain extent like Fry's, or even Binyon's — extends only as far as its effects on Henry. The incident is actually presented, but visibly in the hindsight of his subsequent miracles and sanctity. Its main importance for the novella is to embody the blood-guilt that consigned Henry's soul to eternal damnation. The dead martyr on the other hand, is rather simple-mindedly and superstitiously presented by the narrator as a vengeful saint visiting retribution on his opponents even after his death. This is seen in the calamities that befall Henry as well as in the death of the sick girl loved by the narrator, whom the kerchief soaked in the martyr's blood did not miraculously cure. This is not, however, to be confused with Meyer's own view of Thomas' death which does not emerge with any certainty.

As against the deliberately secular treatment of these other writers, Eliot's is explicitly theological and religious. There is no ambivalence of the sort found in Tennyson and Fry, regarding Thomas' death in Murder in the Cathedral. This is so, largely because the concentration falls on Thomas the Archbishop, and even more
particularly, the Archbishop returned from exile.

Eliot's approach to the martyrdom harmonises with that of the medieval biographers; but the self-division presented within the protagonist's soul is essentially modern. The death of Eliot's Thomas is unequivocally a Christian martyrdom. Yet it may be claimed that a large part of this certainty arises from the explicit clarity of what is said, after the emotional crisis, in the sermon, rather than from a clear dramatisation of the actual moment of Thomas' conversion to the right reason.

On the other hand, we may say that the fourth temptation dramatises with great conviction, the protagonist's struggle and the emerging recognition of sin. This recognition for Eliot is the first step on the road to salvation. The sermon, therefore, as a statement of what has occurred within Thomas, does not have to be taken entirely on trust. We have seen at least some of it happening.

25 Speaking of the naive simplicity of medieval religious beliefs, Victor Hugo says, "On voyait tout... alors, sans métaphysique, sans exagération, sans verre grossissant, à l'œil nu. Le microscope n'avait pas encore été inventé, ni pour les choses de la matière, ni pour les choses de l'esprit." (At that time, everything was viewed without metaphysics, without exaggeration, without a magnifying glass, with the naked eye. The microscope had not yet been invented for either material or spiritual things.) Notre Dame de Paris.
At the same time, the ease for the other side is so clearly presented, that even a critic like Mark van Doren can feel uncertainty about the death of Eliot's Becket. "For who can say that Thomas Becket was without spiritual pride when he determined to obey the instinct of martyrdom? ... The point is plainly made that if Thomas suffered death for the sake of power and glory he was not holy; and there is abundant evidence, both before and after the catastrophe at the altar, that most of England felt a fanaticism in his final act." But such a statement confuses the historical situation with Eliot's interpretation. What all England felt about the historical Thomas is quite immaterial to the play except that it offered the playwright a hint for his satiric prose apologies. The fact remains that Eliot saw his Thomas as a Christian martyr in the full sense of the word; that is, Thomas dies not only upholding the primacy of spiritual authority, but as a "witness to the Resurrection of Jesus", to use David Knowles's phrase.

Parallel with this presentation of a Christian martyrdom, also runs the anthropological waste-land under-pattern, noted in an earlier chapter. In terms

of this under-pattern, Thomas can also be seen as the archetype of the incarnate god whose sacrifice was said to renew the earth physically and bring prosperity to the people. It is a literal and primitive equivalent of the more refined Christian theology. These archetypal implications, however, are only an undertone and counterpointing rhythm to the principal concern with specifically Christian doctrine; and the distinction is always important — it is the distinction between time and timelessness.

It is interesting to note Shelley Mydans' obvious use of Dr. Margaret Murray's theory to round out her picture of Thomas' relationship with Henry. There are, however, certain differences between Dr. Murray's theory and Mrs. Mydans' application. The most important is a clear distinction in the latter between what Henry wants and what Thomas is actually prepared to give.

Henry's paganism is heavily underlined by recurring emphasis on his ancestry, and by making adroit use of some of the evidence cited by Dr. Murray. Henry makes it clear from the very beginning — in the hunting scene with Thomas in the woods where Rufus was killed — that he regards his ancestor as a good king, a great man and
a model worthy of emulation. He also makes it plain that he will stand no jesting with or light-hearted dismissal of the old religion. At the same time, Thomas is consistently, irrevocably and deeply Christian. Henry speaks of the belief that a king must die for his people.

King Rufus so believed. The time came in his reign. It was foretold long, long before. The time came for the king to die. And he was king. And there was none to die for him. He had not made provisions; he was the only king. Thus when the time came, he died by the arrow in the sacred wood. It was a noble death. It was a sacrifice...

Thomas calls it the Devil's teaching. "Henry looked very queerly at him and his voice was soft as fog. 'Do you not know that I am of the Devil's family — as was King Rufus?'"27 In a later incident Henry picks up Dr. Murray's illustration of the Norman ancestor called Robert the Devil.

This dimension of opposing religious beliefs further complicates the relationship between Henry and Becket, adding one more to the conflicts already raging within Thomas. For Thomas understands Henry well enough, though he is shown to be making every possible effort to push the

27 Mydans, op. cit., p. 243.
thought from his mind. Henry's provision-making for the future is presented as, at least partly, responsible for all the favours with which Thomas is loaded. However, it is made clear that Backet himself never gives even the semblance of a consent.

Throughout the exile it is the thought of Christian martyrdom that is shown gaining on Thomas, and spiritual pride of the Eliot type. At Fréteval, however, comes a jolt: Henry, in token of reconciliation and humility moved to Thomas's horse and held the stirrup as he said, 'You shall be king in England now...'

Thomas stopped, frozen, in the field. He means me to stand ready in his place, he thought. He is afraid of his old gods and of the people, should they demand his death. He has learned nothing from me, and he would trick me into this, and hold me to it.

...How many of his traps have I stepped into?...

"Not king, my son", Thomas is made to assert. "Not king. But archbishop."28

During the final scene of the murder, it is definitely clear that from Thomas's point of view, the death was in no way a giving in to Henry's wishes, a substitution of himself as sacrificial victim for the Divine King of the old religion.

28 Ibid., p.473.
Thomas stood wounded, blood upon his face.
...He heard the voice of Robert: 'Father... Son... And then no more.
This was his moment; he had chosen it. Not Henry. And he died for God, for God alone. ...'Now I am ready to die for Christ, and for the Blessed Virgin, and for the Church...'

At the same time the possibility of Thomas' physical death having succeeded in serving Henry's purposes is not ruled out. On the Christian theological plane, Thomas' thoughts further complicate the matter by introducing the note of conscious will and, perhaps, pride in his death.

These three alternatives are presented but left unresolved. However, the author's own view appears to incline towards Christian martyrdom. She has weighted the positive side by expatiating on the miracles, and also by giving Thomas a sincerely religious temperament. On the other hand, the attitude of Mary of Barking to the recording of the miracles, serves to indicate the negative aspect, and to remind us that Becket may have died — in Eliot's words — for "the wrong reason".

The most important horns of the final dilemma, however, as Thomas sees it, are the alternatives of Christian martyrdom on the one hand, and Henry's heretical

29 Ibid., pp.500-501.
demands of a substitute sacrifice on the other. In terms of this second alternative the knights become "King's men" in an additional sense, as officiating priests in a religious ritual — the sacrifice of the substitute victim.

The same alternative strands are also found in Eliot's play, but there is a major difference. Like Eliot's Thomas, Shelley Mydans' also has spent his whole life struggling with his pride. But whereas Eliot uses the anthropological-exchotypal aspect only as a sort of musical accompaniment to his main theme, Shelley Mydans consciously uses Dr. Murray's entire hypothesis and illustrations as a historical possibility. This provides Thomas with one more alternative from which to make his choice — one more "wrong reason" from the author's point of view.

From the point of view of history the problem continues to remain an insoluble one.

This appendix has been thought necessary since the death of Becket with its attendant spectacle has attracted the imaginations of several generations of artists, particularly in murals and manuscript illuminations,
sculptures, pictures in stained-glass, paintings and etchings; and has been used as a climactic point of one sort or another by all the literary works considered here.