CHAPTER V

ELIOT'S PLAYS

Note: Textual quotations are taken from

The Collected Plays of T.S. Eliot

Faber and Faber, London 1962
MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

As Giorgio Melchiori has pointed out "a dramatic element has been at work in Eliot" from the beginning of his literary career. No wonder, poems of Prufrock and Other Observations are "a gallery of dramatic portraits," and Poems 1920 show his "capacity for producing realistic visual portraits which are dramatic in their brevity." In Sweeney Agonistes and The Rock he tries his hand at the writing of incise and intense dialogue in the one, and poetic and antiphonal chorus in the other. From the poetic/dramatic point, however, these are preteritory exercises. Murder in the Cathedral is his first great and crucial writing in this genre.

Deriving from the visionary aphorism of Dante, "And in His Will is our tranquillity," the play seeks to exalt the eternal design, that His Will configurate to put the human mind in accord with it. It is a study of martyrdom, of "the role of the spiritually elect in society, the fructification of communal life by the example of the saint and the saintly," and holds that

"... action is suffering
And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer

Nor the patient act. Both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be willed
And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be for ever still." (P.17)

Combining the stoicism of Greek thought with the piety of Christianity, its theme reveals the inter-play of immanence and transcendence. If consummated, this inter-play is likely to turn a saint into a prophet and a social-set into a community of potential saints, because it implies that the seat of God is the centre round which the heavenly bodies revolve, the earth is the centre of the material universe, and "man himself a self-contained microcosm" round which "the whole of nature" revolves just as the celestial bodies 1 revolve round "that fixed star, the earth." In this system, the whole of social reality has the aroma of super-country, autochthonous in its unspiritualised, and Christian in its spiritualised state. Thus Eliot's world-vision denoted by the relationship of super-city vis-a-vis spiritualised super-country comprehends the super-country itself. In this divided state, its autochthonous aspect is symbolised by the Women and the Knights and the Christian aspect by the Archbishop and the Priests. The women stand for subaltern humanity and the Knights for the hegemonic class. In the same way, the Archbishop represents

the spiritual clan, and the Priests the theological aspect of it.

These characters form four discontinuous orders, and not three as Francis Fergusson has held in observing that "The chorus would be in the order of nature; the Tempters, Priests and Knights in the order of the mind; and Thomas in the order of charity." Actually, there are serious flaws in Fergusson's division inasmuch as it does not mark a qualitative distinction between the Knights and the Priests on the one hand, and the Knights and the Women on the other. Moreover, it is not relevant to bring in the Tempters into this division because they are not living beings like the Women, the Priests and the Knights. Being the objective correlatives of the past and present attitudes of the Archbishop, they are just phantoms.

According to this four-fold division, the Knights stand for the order of politics which, distinguished from the order of charity, is a vortex of depravity. This order of politics is oppressively hegemonic and coalesces into the institution of State as the Archbishop's order of charity embodies itself forth as Church. Because of their antagonistic attitudes, Church and State get interlocked in an irreconciliable conflict. As Croce has observed, there is an "endless struggle between State and Church" because Church seeks guidance from spiritual and ethical norms while State from political and economic interests. Ultimately, the order of charity comes out spiritually triumphant though in the process it undergoes physical mutilation. The order of politics is ultimately defeated, though in

the immediate context it seems to have scored a victory.

The conflict between Church and State has observers in the order of mind and the order of nature as represented, respectively, by the Priests and the Women. Lacking ontological/existential awareness of life, the Priests are alive only on a facile mental plane and are involved in the actual conflict in a very superficial way. The Women, living autochthonously, are wholly involved in the conflict. So they not only experience agony but also attain agon of the whole cataclysm. For them the scene of the conflict and its end into the martyrdom of the Archbishop acquire proportions which the Biblical scenes, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Last Super, the Crucifixion, etc. have for Tintoretto. They are no longer "merely human events for him, as they are for most of the artists of the Renaissance, nor are they mere episodes in the tragedy of the Redeemer as they are for Michelangelo, but they are rather the visible manifestation of the mysteries of the Christian faith."

This is because the conflict is worked out in an allegorical rather than historical sense in spite of the fact that it hinges upon an actual historical incident of the twelfth century. Thus it denotes such spiritual attitudes as are relevant even for today. So the play is not at all historical as Tennyson's Becket is which, under the garb of palpable moral lesson, seeks to portray the life of the medieval times. It is not even historico/psychological as Anouilh's Becket which reflects modern psychological complexes in the medieval milieu. Instead, it is universally allegorical even though it narrows

its scope by presenting "the church struggling against society towards God" or "right reason for martyrdom — the right doctrine of human life in general — orthodoxy."

Church and State are not invoked here as authentic historical forces for the Church, far from representing the totality of civil society — "is only an element of diminishing importance within it" while State represents "every attempt to crystallise permanently a particular stage of development, a particular situation."
The destiny of one declines and of the other rises because religion and politics, the analogues, respectively of Church and State, seek to convince people of their verity in different ways. Taking human nature as "fixed and immutable," religion tries to bring the people round to itself by "indefatigably repeating its apologetics struggling at all times and always with the same kind of arguments, and maintaining a hierarchy of intellectuals who give to the faith, in appearance at least, the dignity of thought." On the other hand, politics regards human nature as "the totality of historically determined social relations, hence an historical faith which can, within certain limits, be ascertained with the methods of philology and criticism." Thus politics is the mode of bringing the people to a way of life through "knowledge and judgement — compassionality — through experience of immediate particulars, through a system which one would call living philology."

Since the basic conflict of the play is represented allegorically rather than historically, it observes "a fine symmetry in the design, as in a medieval triptych." Animating this triptych is the symbol of the wheel which seems to have been derived by Eliot from Aristotle and Dante. As Grover Smith has pointed out, "Aristotle in speaking of the nature of movement (analogous action) compares the good towards which desire moves, and by which it is moved, to the unmoved centre which in a wheel imparts motion to a rim." In The Divine Comedy Dante uses the symbol of the wheel to denote the motion of human desire and will around the still centre of the Almighty:

But yet the will rolled onward,
like a wheel
In even motion, by the love
impelled,
That moves the sun in heaven
and all the stars.

Eliot might owe this symbol to the Hindu and the Buddhist scriptures as well but the connotations here are largely occidental in tone and tempo. In the oriental scriptures, this symbol pertains to the transmigration of souls but the motif that is worked out in the play is the communion of the human with the Divine wherein the problem of time as destiny is resolved through "the complete marriage between Time and Eternity."

According to their metaphysical raison d'être all the characters, particularly the Archbishop and the Women are situated upon the wheel. The centre of the wheel is the eternal design which includes the homogeneity of space and excludes the heterogeneity of time. The Archbishop is poised here because he gives consent "to the Law of God above the Law of Man" (P.13) and loathes "power given by temporal devolution." (P.14) The rejection of temporal power and the affirmation of the Divine Will make him testify to the efficacy of Christ's crucifixion for the salvation of humanity. Consequently, he no longer fulfils Pascal's condition of the tragic paradox in which a human being does not concentrate "at one extreme," but remains in spiritual agony "by touching them both at the same time and filling up all the space between." Instead, he becomes the "E lect-Saint" of Pascal's concept who serves God "having found Him" and is ready to do for his fellows "everything which can contribute to their salvation."

Owing to this concentration at one extreme, "the contingent traits" of The Archbishop's personality have vanished, though to construe therefrom that he has "gnostic contempt for personality" is an exaggeration. He does not see anything with his visual eyes, if at all he sees something it is only with the eye of the mind. Evidently, he does not make any gesture and is in this respect unlike the persons portrayed by El Greco for whom "the gesture remains the decisive thing, the centre of the event." He is unlike Kafka's characters too, in

2. Denis Donoghue, The Third Voice, Princeton 1959
whom "animal gesture combines the utmost mysteriousness with the utmost simplicity." In fact, the Archbishop's distinction lies in contemplation which is apt to make him evanescent. But the playwright bars him from this through the scene of temptation. Of the four Tempters the first two derive their logic from the actualities of the past, and the last two from the probabilities of the future. The whole dialogue with the Tempters symbolises "an introspective process" in which "Becket's conscience" is placed "within himself" and the Tempters are merely "the objectified facets of his own consciousness."

Dressed in all the splendour of a twelfth century courtier, the first Tempter stands for revelry and sensuality. As Northrop Frye has observed, "Its object --- is not to persuade him to desert, but merely to remain in his mind as a source of distraction, confusing him in crucial movements." Its motive, as the Archbishop fully understands, is to invoke

"Voices under sleep, waking a dead world
So that the mind may not be whole in the present." (P.20)

In very explicit words, it tells the Archbishop to resume friendship with the King on terms of surrender to the pleasures of the mundane world. Politely but firmly, the Archbishop dismisses it and his action does not in any way involve him at any deep personal level. Feeling that it is impossible to regress to the past, he reflects to himself:

2. John Peter, 'Murder in the Cathedral' included in T.S.Eliot (edited by Hugh Kenner, New York 1962 PP.164,158
But in the life of one man, never
The same time returns, Sever
The Cord, shed the scale. Only
The fool, fixed in his folly, may think
He can turn the wheel on which he turns. (P.19)

The second Tempter asks him to resume the hegemonic power
that previously he had as the Chancellor. Opining that "Power is
present/Holiness hereafter" (P.20), it beckons him to enter the order
of politics and renounce the order of charity of which he is the
symbol. Inadvertently, it contradicts itself when it compares the
import of Power with "a templed tomb, a monument of marble". (P.20)
The suggestion for the pursuit of unscrupulous pursuit of power does
not inveigle the Archbishop at all and he rejects it through his
irrefragable reply concluding that

"But what was once exaltation
Would now be only mean descent." (P.22)

The third Tempter looks at the Archbishop's situation from
a historical perspective. His commitment to the Law of God above the
Law of Man seems to it to be "a blind assertion in isolation" (P.23).
So it asks him to align with the forces of the future. In other words,
it asks him to be a Machiavellian in the essential sense of the word.
But Machiavelli is distinctive because he "discovered the necessity
and autonomy of politics --- which is beyond or, rather, below moral
good and evil, which has its own laws against which it is useless to
rebel, politics that cannot be exercised and driven from the world
with holy water." So "in the person of a condottiere who represents


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plastically and anthropomorphically the symbol of the collective will". The Prince "discusses what the Prince must be like if he is to lead a people to found a new State."

The Archbishop has nothing but repugnance for this suggestion. Instead of the Machiavellian condottiere, he has identified himself with what may be called his antithesis, i.e., Samson in Gaza. Rejecting the thesis of political manoeuvre and alignment, he observes,

"To make, then break, this thought has come before
The desperate exercise of failing power.
Samson in Gaza did no more,
But if I break, I must break myself alone." (P.24)

The disgust of the Archbishop is endorsed by the fourth Tempter, who is ever within and ever precedes expectation. Objectifying his lesser self, it envisages martyrdom but for wrong reasons:

Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest
On earth, to be high in heaven ... (P.27)

Through the vision of eternal grandeur, the fourth Tempter offers dreams of damnation. Its vision extends into the future to the horizon beyond which miracles cease, and the Archbishop is only historical material for finding the historical fact. In a bid to identify itself further with him, it utters the very words which the Archbishop had uttered while musing over the mystery involved in the working of the Will of God through the Will of Man. However, the Archbishop does not let this identification grow and separates his essential self from his inessential self represented by the fourth

Tempter. Realising the sin involved in doing "the right deed for the wrong reason" (P.30), he commits himself to the doing of the right deed for the right reason.

That he does the right deed for the right reason is attested by the Women who, through their choruses, consummate the poetic/dramatic action of the play. These Women belong to the poorest stratum of society and their poverty and womanhood enable them to symbolise completely the autochthonous life of subaltern humanity. The preoccupations of their lives, "beginning to crystallise around the person of Becket, at first, seem to be little more than the perennial fears of medieval peasants." They think at the level of commonsense in a neophobe and conservative way. Evidently, reality seems to them to be unchangeable because in their case man's relationships with self and society are reduced to his relationship with nature. Thus they have no consciousness of its historicity, in the absence of which they form a composite personality with collective and concrete impressions of reality, which relate to "eternity and time, duration and flux, spirit and flux, action by suffering and suffering by action." Of course, their impressions are bereft of the speculative subtlety of the Archbishop's reflections but, for this very reason, they are universal. Commonsense has the quality of universality simply because it lacks subtlety and sensitiveness.

Another factor contributing to the collective and concrete core of their impressions is that they see with visual eyes and vision alone shows that beings that are different, exterior, foreign to one

another, yet absolutely together, are simultaneity. Thus their gesture is their articulation through which they express their collective view of reality. Up to the murder of the Archbishop reality perceived through common sense appears simultaneous to them. But as they undergo experiences entailing fear, shame, contrition, humiliation and self-demolition, they develop good sense through which they perceive reality as Incarnation, "the union of God with one man at a given moment and place in Time, during which the contingent became eternal and history was eternalised." Thus the progress from common sense to good sense and from simultaneous reality to Incarnation runs through the choruses like a thread. Because of this inner progress the essential action of the play "is neither carried out by the main character, nor does it grow linearly in time; it is a cumulative form of action, or --- a progressive dawning of light or illumination which enforces upon Becket the significance and necessity of his death, and upon the audience the moving wisdom that truth and the unfolding of the historical process cannot take place without the dire exaction of blood and tears."

For example, the major portion of the first Chorus relates to the autochthonous life of the Women, and through their life to that of subaltern humanity in general. From time immemorial subaltern humanity has lived on labour, in contrapuntal relationship between man and nature. Not having the urge to impart historicity to this relationship, subaltern humanity has borne the oppressions of the hegemonic strata of society in the same strain. Regarding this life essentially as their own, the Women portray it with deep awareness.

To impart higher meaning to their vegetative life, there comes into their articulation the nostalgic mention of the Archbishop who once exercised spiritualised hegemony and is once again expected to salvage them from their life of bondage. Taking the occasion to be unpropitious for the second coming of the Archbishop, they feel deeply frightened but are otherwise in fervour. As a result, the collective personae (we) of their articulation changes into individual persona(I) and waiting for him is associated by them with waiting for the Second Coming of Christ.

The second Chorus just precedes the arrival of the Archbishop. The distant fear of the Women, "but that it would not be good if he should return" (P.11) now changes into a terrible prolepsis of doom which they articulate by portraying evil as an element of the environment. Depicting their labour-based world as afflicted with seasonal vagaries and hegemonic oppression, they regard their life as an unchanging and ahistorical situation rather than a sequence of changing and historical events. Thus they perceive it structured with "private terrors, particular shadows and secret fears."(P.16). Now they experience "a final fear which none understands" (P.16) and want that they be not chosen,

"To stand to the doom on the house, the doom on
The Archbishop, the doom on the world." (P.16)

So in a halting tone of the Kierkegaardian repetition of sentences, they ask the Archbishop to return to France:

O Thomas Archbishop, leave us, leave sullen Dover, and set sail for France. Thomas our Archbishop,
Still our Archbishop, even in France. (P.16)
The third chorus gives expression to the vertical hiatus that accrues in their generic personalities on account of the fear and terror they have experienced with respect to the Archbishop. The vestige of rationality which so far had been integral to their articulation, gives way to irrationality that they pour out through animal images:

\[
\text{Sweet and cloying through the dark air} \\
\text{Falls the stifling scent of despair} \\
The forms take shape in the dark air \\
Puss-puss of leopard, footfall of padding bear, \\
Palm-patting of nodding ape, square heyana waiting \\
For laughter, laughter, laughter. (P.29)
\]

The articulation of the Women here assumes surrealistic proportions and recaptures reality betrayed as reification, and rationality as irrationality.

In the fourth chorus, the hidden dimension of irrationality is again put in control of the manifest vestige of rationality. Naturally, a latent type of pleasure-principle begins to accrue to their reality-principle, leading them to read positive meanings into the incident which so far has been a source of fear and terror to them. Thus in a relaxed tone, they feel that:

"The peace of the world is always uncertain, unless men keep the peace of God
And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it.
And the world must be cleaned in the winter, or we shall have only
A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest." (P.35)
This newly-acquired peace altogether vanishes in the fifth chorus. After their defiant talk with the Archbishop, "the death-bringers" (P.41) have gone to return with deadly intentions. Making full use of their visual, auditory, tactile senses, the Women articulate the doom that is going to befall them through the Archbishop's murder. On account of the cumulative use of imagery drawn from the animal, the bird and the vegetation world, the articulation is comprehensive and the technique is modernist, a complex of the surrealist technique. The acme of their terror is reached when they speak lines distinctive for surrealist inversion and distortion:

Corruption in the dish, incense in the latrine, the sewer in the incense, the smell of sweet soap in the woodpath, a hellish sweet scent in the wood-path, while the ground heaved (p.42)

The use of surrealist technique shows nature as a discontinuum of solitary and terrible objects, with only virtual links and relations. The discourse of the Women is, what Roland Barthes would like to call "a discourse full of terror which means that it relates man not to the man, but to the most inhuman images of nature, heaven, hell, the sacred -- etc."

To make the extremity of their terror all the more overwhelming, the collective persona (We) changes into the individual persona (I). The articulation swells with hopelessness but it does not become an end in itself. In the vortex of hopelessness, hope is


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born for the Women, and in the sixth chorus it is this hope that acquires paratactic expression:

Emptiness, absence, separation from God;
The horror of effortless journey, to the empty land
which is no land, only emptiness, absence, the Void
where those who were men can no longer turn the mind

to distraction, delusion, escape into dream, pretence
where the soul is no longer deceived, for there are no objects,
no tones;

No colours, no forms, to distract, to divert the soul
From seeing itself, foully united forever, nothing with nothing.
Not what we call death, but what beyond death is not death
We fear, fear. (PP.44-45)

Stressing the importance of the negative way in order to reach plenitude and affirmation, this chorus gives place to the seventh and the eighth choruses, the chief motif of which is absolution through a storm of cosmic proportions. Reminiscent of El Greco's portraiture of the storm in 'View of Toledo', in the seventh chorus blows one subsuming "ram of blood", "private catastrophe", "the personal loss" and "the general misery" into "an instant eternity of evil and wrong" (PP.47-48).

In the eighth chorus, the main emphasis is upon God's glory that shows itself as much through macrocosmic agencies as microcosmic beings. Since it has the aroma of God's Glory, this storm does not end in universal destruction as El Greco's storm is envisioned to do by Bertolt Brecht. Instead, it ends in universal cleanliness, leading

1. According to Ernst Fischer (The Necessity of Art P.139), Bertolt Brecht has the following poetic version of El Greco's storm:

Of these cities will remain
Only the wind that swept through them.
the Women to thanksgiving, confession and, lastly, prayer:

Lord, have mercy upon us
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Blessed Thomas, pray for us. (P.54)

The progress of the Women from commonsense to good sense is the cumulative action of the play and the role of the destiny of the Archbishop is almost seminal in it. To make his destiny an adequate objective correlative for the Women, the playwright has brought in the episode of the Knights, as to make his destiny clear to Becket, had come the episode of the Tempters. No doubt, it is a very dramatic use of contrast because the Knights symbolise a form of the hegemonic power as the Tempters symbolise its content. Naturally, the Knights are four in number, too like the Tempters. They go deeper and deeper into the Archbishop's mental framework to explore the reasons which have made him accept martyrdom as the Tempters had done to divert him away from the Law of God to the Law of Man. For example, the third Knight claims that they "have been perfectly disinterested." The second Knight denotes him as a victim of spiritual obduracy; and the fourth Knight stresses that his death be given "the verdict of suicide while of Unsound Mind". (P.51)

In keeping with the dramatic exigencies, the Knights come twice, once to imprecate the Archbishop and then to murder him. In their imprecations, they speak the language of the political communique, prominent for the use of such words as "vassal", "command" and "privilege", etc. The Archbishop disapproves of their "scolding and blaspheming" (P.39) and tells them that by insulting him, they are
insulting Church. Agreeing to none of the King's commands, either to revoke the suspension of the bishop or to depart from the land, he feels himself to be one with the subaltern humanity, with the assertion,

"Never again, you must make no doubt,
Shall the sea run between the shepherd and his fold." (P. 41)

Quite offended, the Knights depart with the threat that they will now come as death-bringers. In the interregnum, the Bishops feel frightened because they live in the order of the mind which is particularly susceptible to this feeling. So they close the doors of the Church and drag the Archbishop away from the altar. Regarding it as a spiritual offence, he scolds the bishops because he cannot have

"The Church of Christ
The sanctuary, turned into a fortress." (P. 45)

So the doors are unbarred and the Knights, slightly tipsy, make their sacrilegious entry. After having derided him with satirical and abusive words, they murder him. And he takes his murder as the continuation of the crucifixion of Christ:

Blood for blood,
My blood given to buy my life,
My blood given to pay for His death,
My death for His death. (PP. 46-47).

The murder of the Archbishop upon the altar has its full quota of poetic exigencies because it denotes him as a Christian as well as sacrificial hero. He is Christian not only because he identifies himself with Christ and the Women take him to be so but, also because the scene of his murder gives an impression of crucifixion, as in the
triptych: "Thomas preaching in the centre, on the left the people acclaiming him in the Cathedral porch, and on the right his murder." When the swords of the Knights flash upon him, there is created a circle reminiscent of the wheel that, as a morphological symbol, is basic to the structure of the play.

On this occasion, the Archbishop seems no less sacrificial. Whereas from one aspect his murder reminds of the dismemberment of Dionysus, etc., from the other aspect it shows him as the quester who has found his Grail in his death, "that is to say the highest knowledge, wisdom, consecration, the philosopher's stone, the aurum potabile, the elixir of life." Through the Women, a part of this benediction goes to the subaltern humanity because for them is now ordained the regeneration of the universe, "a new creation" as Mircea Eliade would like to call it. Thus incorporated into the religious pattern, the mythical motifs intensify its content but in the process are themselves transformed. After all "myth and miracle, becoming intensified in Christianity become at the same time different from ancient myths and miracles." This is because to man's relationship with nature, religion adds his relationship with self and this addition appropriates the structural proportion of the myth to its own ontological/existential content.

This appropriation does not, however, take place in the

Interlude and the Speech of the Knights. They are not only interrelated but are relevant from the larger perspective as well. As Northrop Frye has observed, "One is the voice of reason accommodating revelation to human ears; the other is the voice of rationalisation accommodating a criminal act to public ear." The 'Interlude' and 'the speech of the Knights' are meant for the Women and through them for subaltern humanity. They are not a "superfluous -- completely unnecessary to the play" as Sean Lucy has alleged. Their dramatic exigency cannot be denied. Nevertheless, poetic exigency could have accrued to them if they had been introduced more integrally.

As they are, they have introduced imbalance in the form of the play. As Denis Donoghue has observed, "Imitation of its action is complete at the end of Part One -- in fact everything after Part One is superfluous." Denis Donoghue only exaggerates what is vitally true. Part Two fails to have as much dramatic potential as Part One has. In fact it was not supposed to have this potential in a corporeal way. Its tone was to be visionary which could be so if the Interlude and the Speech of the Knights had been introduced in a comparatively integral and mediated way.

Since subaltern humanity forms the core of the play, its language, though comprehensive, is not of a world of subtle and sensitive personalities. It is rather the language of a community.

Even when the Chorus changes from the personae (we) to persona (I) and vice-versa, the language keeps up its tone and tempo. All the same, with the personae (we) it is the rational aspect of the collective awareness that is explored and with the persona (I) it is the irrational aspect as it accrues to the collective awareness under the burden of shame and humiliation. Keeping too much of poetic momentum and remaining too much in the ritualistic mode, the language of the Chorus reflects poetic density in Part One and poetic transparency in Part Two. In both Parts, it uses transitive verbs intransitively, thus rendering the subject less important than the predicate. This has to be so because whatever the Chorus articulates is a result of revelation rather than of learning through the exercise of a vital impulse.

Though more transparent, the language of the Archbishop is not essentially different from that of the Chorus. It is because he feels himself to be one with the subaltern humanity. But since this oneness is not identification in the sense of embodying concretely the demands of the subaltern humanity and understanding that their collective view can have the flexibility of movement only in his individual brain, his language does not come into creative tension with that of the Chorus. It remains intact in its pristine transparency, and is a complex of spiritual aphorisms the connotative aspect of which is much more important than the denotative aspect.

The language of the Bishops and the Knights is comparatively amorphous. The words comprising them are "empty words" as Croce would like to term them, holding together and maintaining themselves "not by an act of thought that thinks them -- but by an act of will
which thinks it useful for certain ends of its own to preserve those
terms, however, empty or half-empty they may be." In the case of the
Bishops, empty words or more precisely half-empty words make a theological
language because they are concerned with theological affairs, unaware
that the core of theology is required to be the spiritual problem of
humanity. The language of the Knights is entirely composed of empty
words used in a very utilitarian and functional way. No wonder, this
language is pose in which the dictum is pronounced without adequate
analysis and perception.

On the whole, as against the integral language of Dante
and Shakespeare, the language of the play is neutral, drawing its
energy from the buoyancy of the spoken language and its subtlety from
the syncopated movements of the living voice. Shedding an aroma of
religious awareness, it comes under obligation to the medieval
morality-plays in general and Everyman in particular, to the morality-
plays for its metre as well which aims at "an avoidance of too much
iambic, some use of alliteration, and occasional unexpected rhyme."

This metre is of a loose three-stress line which has obviously
benefited from Hopkins' Sprung Rhythm but remains distinct because
Sprung Rhythm asserts the awareness of an individual in contradistinction
to community rather than of community or an individual in accord with
community. Nevertheless, this metre has enough of flexibility: "it
can be tightened up and given the taut masculinity required to carry
emotions by restricting the secondary stress and the number of syllables,

or it can be loosened up and made to side along with prose when
there is no intensity to convey."

In accord with the language and metre of the play, is its
imagery which is used with dignity and assertion in the whole body
of the play. In keeping with the transparency of his language, the
imagery employed by the Archbishop largely evokes the symbolical
importance of words:

But for every evil, every sacrilege,
Crime, wrong, oppression and the axe's edge,
Indifference, exploitation, you and you,
and you, must all be punished. So must you.
I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's end.
Now my good Angel, whom God appoints
To be my guardian, hover over the sword's points. (P.31)

Except "axe's edge" and "the sword's points" almost all the images
here derive from the symbolical import of words. This is the core
of the imagery employed by the Archbishop because even when he uses
clear-cut visual images as of "hungry hawk" and "eagle over doves",
etc. (P.24), he does so for the sake of clarity rather than intensity.

Like its language, the imagery of the Chorus is all-
encompassing. Taking the images from what Northrop Frye would like
to call "the demonic" and "the apocalptic" spheres it gives evidence
of a world whole in itself. The demonic sphere pertains to the natural,
zoological and sexual aspects of life which tend eternally to remain
the same and are averse to change caused by time and history. The

natural imagery pertains to the cyclical but binary motion of "day and night, summer and winter, spring and autumn", identifying the personae of the chorus with "the great wheel of creation and corruption, growth and ruin."  The zoological imagery regards human beings only at the autochthonous level of life and identifies the animals with them as what Baudelaire would like to term "the vivification, the carporealisation, the flowering in material form of man's evil thoughts."

An equal importance is given to animals existing on the surface of the earth and in the depth of the ocean:

"I have heard
Laughter in the noises of beasts that make strange noises; jackal,
Jackdan, jackdan, the scurrying noise of mouse and jerboa; the Laught of the loon, the lunatic bird." (P.41)

and

I have tasted
The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk, and the prawn;
And they live and spawn in my bowels, and my bowels dissolve
In the light of dawn. (P.42)

No doubt, natural and zoological images form the main burden of the imagery of the Chorus, but there is beneath it an under-pattern of sexual images which on occasions become overwhelmingly manifest. So long as they are latent, they bring the unredeemed life of subaltern

humanity into proximity with unredeemed nature:

We have seen births, deaths and marriages,
We have had various scandals

Several girls have disappeared

Unaccountably, and some not able to. (P.16)

As the Archbishop's murder grows imminent, the sexual images become more and more violent. Dilating upon the carnivorous nature of the leopard, the bear, the ape and the heyana, they show the Women suffering violations through all their senses:

For action, too soon for contrition
Nothing is possible but the shamed swoon
Of those consenting to the last humiliation
I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have consented.
Am torn away, subdued, violated,
United to the spiritual flesh of nature,
Mastered by the animal powers of spirit,
Dominated by the lust of self-demolition,
By the final utter, uttermost death of spirit,
By the final ecstasy of waste and shame. (PP.42-43)

After the murder of the Archbishop, the violation acquires religious and mystical proportions and sexual violation of the beginning changes in the end to submission of the Law of Man to the Law of God.

Looked at from the double perspective of theme and form, the play makes it clear that in it the basic achievement of the playwright lies in the writing of the Chorus because "a poet writing for the
first time for the stage, is more at home in choral verse than in
dramatic dialogue." According to the playwright, this is "a negative
merit" in so far as he succeeded in avoiding what had to be avoided
but arrived at no positive novelty. Evidently, the excellence of the
Choruses is not going to play a positive role in the writing of the
next plays because

"There is, it seems to us
At best only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience.
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been."

THE FAMILY REUNION

Like Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion works out
the theme of redemption. Whereas in the previous play, this theme worked
out its implications through the progress of subaltern humanity from
the autochthonous and unspiritual level of existence to the Christian
and spiritual level of living, in this play it resolves its problematic
nature through the awareness of tradition of an aristocrat who so far
has led a deracinated and estranged life. In this case the awareness
of tradition is identified with the consciousness of family which

2. Ibid, Four Quartets, New York 1943  P.13
binds a person concretely to past, present and future. According to T.S. Eliot himself, the family is a bond which embraces a longer period of time, "a piety towards the dead, however, obscure, and a solicitude towards the unborn, however remote." This accords perfectly with his idea of tradition which involves "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together."

In his awareness of tradition and consciousness of family, it is hindsight rather than foresight that works as the modality of perception. Religion, in a kind of hindsight, appropriates man's relationship with self to the idealised awareness of his relationship with nature. Naturally in upholding family and through it tradition, Eliot exalts religion and the verities of life eternally occasioned by it. He inter-relates the motif of curse and knowledge with sin and expiation. Curse is the punishment inexorably meted out to those who violate the tradition of the family and knowledge is the curative measure against the curse. Similarly sin is violation of the verities sanctioned by religion and expiation is the measure for terminating the consequences of sin. Curse, being mythical is preordained, and sin, being religious, sanctions a limited amount of will and initiative. Encounter with curse leads to the equilibrium of nature where reality viewed as nature is "governed by the symbol of a circle that returns in itself." On the other hand, encounter with sin means that for the

first time is really broken the perpetual return of human affairs to their starting point and there is raised "the knowledge of the eternal present." When sin and curse are inter-related, it complicates the problematic nature of redemption by taking it out of the precincts of the Church. But in another way it becomes more amenable to resolution by entering the domain of mythology.

In modern times this inter-relationship comes into being when in relation to super-country, super-city is not identifiable with the autochthonous life of subaltern humanity. Now it is super-city with all its penumbra that is regarded so by the aristocratic elan, the hegemonic sense of which like religion itself is a matter of diminishing importance. No longer realising its identity in the outward order of politics, the aristocratic elan becomes an inward political order in itself. This political order can become objective and attain "classical serenity of thought and action" when it performs a cultural function of national proportions. It can perform this function only when it transcends the limitations of its class-character and becomes conscious of the whole of humanity on the concrete terrain of history. When aristocratic elan remains embedded in its own class-consciousness, it envisions the whole crisis upon trans-historical terrain of religion. In that case, develops a hiatus between the idealised concept of the super-country which no longer determines man's relationship with nature and the historical world which determines man's relationship with self but with which the aristocratic elan never comes to terms. Thus divided within, the aristocratic elan divides the world without. It regards

its limited amount of will and initiative as sinful and finds resolution of all its contradictions in a metaphysical vision that brings the Biblical Eden down on the earth in the form of an anthropological 'Home' valid beyond time and space. Then it arrives at the visionary conclusion:

"Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered."

Such a hiatus-riden house with its aristocratic elan is of the Monchensey family at Wishwood, where its members have gathered to celebrate the birthday of Amy, the head of the family after the departure and subsequent death of her husband, Lord Monchensey. As Roy Battenhouse has remarked, the name Wishwood is probably symbolic — "intended by Eliot to stand for universal man's Dream-House, located in a wood of wish and memory." Symbolically it is "the rose-garden" or "the hyacinth garden," the awareness of which is apt to leave a person overwhelmed with nostalgic memories of love and affection.

Actually Wishwood evokes none of these associations because

1. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, New York 1943  P.17
"the word suggests the confusion and sinister character of the wood, and the desire of its inhabitants for the past." So it is a cold place of which Amy, after the death of her husband, is the sole master. Unlike Lorca's Bernarda Alba, she is incapable of exercising hegemony over the minds of others. At the most she can impose herself upon others which she freely does and as a result there is "an assemblage of relatives on her birthday." No doubt, she tries her best to keep the house going according to chronological time which, as shown by her obsession with the clock, is her sole preoccupation. Naturally the house is a cursed one, first, because it is divested of its pater familias, and, secondly, because it is managed from the angle of unredeemed time.

The members of the Monchensey Family, now achieving "togetherness" at Wishwood can be divided into two different worlds. The first of Charles, Gerald, Violet, Ivy, etc., is "the larger, the normal world". Persons belonging to it are those whose "vision is circumscribed by purely natural law" and who are shallow, almost flat, lacking complexity. They see only events; "they cannot interpret motives except by the selfish standards of profit and loss, expediency, private satisfaction." No doubt, their aristocratic elan has been eroded by the trade-sense of capitalism that is a penumbra casting its sinister shadows upon their lives. Due to this shadowiness, the universality of their folkloric past has largely vanished into the

transitoriness of the urban present. They are neither preoccupied with the past nor deeply involved in the present. They behave in a uni-dimensional way, and flit across chronological time without experiencing any interplay between immanence and transcendence. They have come to the birthday party by reflex action, none of them has been invited to it.

The other is "the spiritual world" which in the full sense of the word has "only one representative", Agatha. She has ontological/existential awareness of life, earned by living in solitude for thirty years. Relating to sin and expiation and curse and knowledge, her awareness is symptomatic of the reality of spiritualised super-country. She is not absolute in conviction nor hieratic in expression as the Archbishop is in Murder in the Cathedral and thus belongs to Pascal's order of charity. Almost imperatively, the essence of spiritualised super-country here is not incomparably distinctive as it is in the previous play. Unable to perform a cultural function of national proportions, she can put her guidance and experience only at the disposal of an isolated individual who may perceive its value.

Such an individual is Harry. He avails of her guidance and experience in the authentic sense of the word. Since he belongs neither to "the larger, the normal world" nor to "the spiritual world," Harry is in a deep spiritual dilemma. Though he exists between "sleep and waking", he is too sensitive and acute not to revolt against the former world. And "spiritually too childish ---- and indeed too ignorant", he is unable "to understand the praetematural world." In this divided state, he comes to Wishwood where he instinctively and

intuitively feels that he cannot adjust himself. The reasons are two: first, life "in a pattern of timed moments by the clock" disgusts him; and, second, he is suffering from an agonising guilt-complex, relating to the death of his wife. She had been "swept off the deck in the middle of a storm" (P.61) but Harry feels he had pushed her into the ocean.

Because of this guilt-complex, Harry feels like being tied to the "burning wheel" (P.66) of suffering. He feels his situation to be entirely hopeless, and he likens himself to

"... the old house
with the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning,
In which all past is present, all degradation
Is unredeemable." (P.66)

In this respect, he is apparently like the Women of Canterbury, but essentially unlike them. Responding to crisis of identity, the women preoccupy themselves with the human condition while he engrosses himself in his isolated situation. In an obsessive but egocentric tone as he says,

"I was only reversing the senseless direction
For a momentary rest on the burning wheel
That cloudless night in the mid-Atlantic
When I pushed her over." (P.66)

Harry's limitation to respond only to his isolated situation does not let him become a tragic hero though D.S. Bland tries to establish him as one in contrast with the anti-hero in modern literature. Being the artistic analogue of "modern mass man", the anti-hero responds

neither to the objective nor the subjective situation because his relationship with self has been manipulated into the modern version of man's relationship with nature, i.e., the vast productive system of the super-city. As against it, the tragic hero envisions irreconcilable dichotomy between these two relationships and suffers because of his adhesion to one but response to both. Harry adheres and responds only to his subjective situation. Therefore he is no more than a "quasi-tragic hero in relation to his private crisis, the guilt action."

So when this quasi-tragic hero arrives at Wishwood, the action of the play, hitherto inert and subdued, acquires momentum. However, the dramatic momentum is exhausted by Harry's encounter with Amy and other characters of the larger world and poetic momentum by his encounter with Mary and Agatha. Amy and other characters adopt bivalent attitudes towards Harry's disturbed state and do not attempt to grasp his condition from beyond a psycho-physical theuraptic angle. Amy, inwardly happy that death has relieved him of a misfit, regards his disturbance as physical exhaustion. So she insists that he should have a hot bath and feel relaxed in surroundings familiar to him since his childhood.

His two uncles and two aunts, take his disturbance as caused solely by shock. They are of the opinion that he should get settled in life if he wants to become mentally a balanced person. So all of them agree with Gerald when he suggests,

"Make him feel at home, I say!
Make him feel that what has happened doesn't matter.
He's taken his medicine, I've no doubt.
Let him marry again and carry on at Wishwood." (P. 61)

Obviously, their analysis has not a remote connection with Harry's problem. To succeed collectively where they have failed individually, Ivy, Violet, Gerald and Charles, join to form a chorus. Amy is not included in the chorus because she is essentially a solitaire. The inclusion of the uncles and aunts in the chorus is apt because they all have rational but eroded selves. Violet is thick-skinned and obtuse, Ivy silly and ridiculous, Gerald stupid and apathetic and Charles dull and eccentric.

Notwithstanding the aptness of the choice of characters for inclusion in the chorus, it fails to become a viable structural unit of the play. It is because none of these characters is what Northrop Frye would call a "chorus-character." Rooted in tradition, the chorus-characters, through their organisation and articulation, create an image of organic community. Individually, they may be having generic selves, but after their inclusion in the chorus, they merge so organically in the composite personality that their generic selves cease altogether to matter.

But Violet, Ivy, Gerald and Charles do not undergo this transformation coherently and spontaneously. They feel awkward and perturbed because they have alienated selves which may form a group rather than the composite personality of the chorus. So they "draw

1. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton 1957
together, as if to find safety in numbers, and voice their fear of the unknown." However, "they are unlike the usual Greek chorus in that their role is not to illuminate the action, but to express their baffled inability to understand what is happening."

Eliot tries to resolve this dilemma by showing these characters existing as individuals along with being the constituents of the chorus. Taking them thus from a dual view, he perceives their failure as chorus only at the technical level. As he observes,

"I had indeed made some progress in dispensing with the chorus; but the device of using four of the minor personages, representing the family, sometimes as individual character parts and sometimes collectively as chorus, does not seem to me to be very satisfactory. For one thing, the immediate transition from individual, characterised part to membership of a chorus is asking too much of the actors: it is a very difficult transition to accomplish. For another thing, it seemed to me to be another trick, one which, even if successful, could not have been successful in another play."

This is not enough, because basically the failure of the chorus is thematic and its technical failure is only a consequence of that. No doubt, the experiment of introducing the chorus is "one of the most interesting aspects" of the play, but it only adds to the

incongruity of the situation in showing that "the unconscious characters are the ones who have to provide the choric atmosphere."

In contrast with the arrangement of the worldly characters into an apparently undramatic mode is the involvement of the other-worldly characters of the play into lyrical duets and magical runes. It is on account of this involvement that Harry becomes wholly aware of his dilemma in the background of its past and proceeds to resolve it in the foreground of its future.

He encounters his past and present selves through Mary and Agatha. Mary, partly a being of the mundane world, gets ready for this spiritual role after she is told by Agatha what they both are ordained to do at this juncture:

At this moment, there is no decision to be made,
The decision will be made by powers beyond us
Which now and then emerge. You and I, Mary
Are only watchers and waiters ... not the easiest role.
(P.77)

So in Scene II of Part One, Mary plays her ordained role of evoking Harry's childhood to him. She is the fittest person to do so because she was Harry's play-mate in childhood and often sided with him against his brothers, Arthur and John. Moreover, she has loved him in spite of the fact that she is disinclined to become an obedient daughter-in-law to Amy by marrying Harry. They evoke childhood memories first by dilating upon such symbols of mutual fixation as the hollow tree, the cave, the song, the light and the door that opens at the end of a corridor. Through elaborate patterns of childhood memories, these

symbols, as all personal symbols in Eliot, are burdened "with meaning far beyond the meaning" they have for everyone else.

Because of the evocative power of these symbols, other memories of childhood "earlier, forgotten" (P.78) begin to return. With the return of these memories, is aroused

The instinct to return to the point of departure
And start again as if nothing had happened."(P.80)

The acme is reached in the quasi-soliloquy called "the lyrical duet" by Eliot. With its subterranean tone and depth-delving tempo, the lyrical duet divests their mind of the alignments of painful consciousness formed through variegated experiences. Evidently, it has great poetic adequacy which, by not showing itself through dramatic context, is apt to become inadequate from the dramatic point of view. Even more than the chorus, it holds up the action and serves "merely as hors d'oeuvre". No wonder, Eliot is very doubtful of the dramatic significance of this lyrical duet, to drive like an operatic area the audience to "a suspension of the action in order to enjoy a poetic fantasia."

The shared experience articulated so resonantly by the lyrical duet, is not, however, destined to perpetuate itself. Apparently, on account of her lack of imagination but essentially because of her deep sympathy with Harry, Mary asks him to marry her and stay at Wishwood. This is a wrong suggestion, because if accepted it is apt to result in
a continued domination of his mother over him. Also he cannot "allow himself to feel attracted physically and affectively by a woman, for he has loathed one woman to the point of wishing or perhaps even causing her death, and this woman obviously recalls the other and his sin."

Acute though the temptation, he must reject this suggestion. The occasion is provided by the Furies who induce in him an apprehension like "a sweet and bitter smell/From another world" (P.83). They stand revealed against the window and warn him against "the accident of a dreaming moment". (P.83) To divert his attention away from them, Mary behaves as if she were unable to see them. But he dismisses her as aperceptive, and the Furies also vanish as mysteriously as they had appeared.

Contrasting with this encounter ending on an obvious note of failure, is Harry's encounter with Agatha which ends on an ineffable moment of success in Scene II of Part Two. Agatha is not aperceptive as Harry thinks Mary to be. Having experienced a moment of apocalyptic illumination in her love for Harry's father, she is aware of the interplay of immanence and transcendence. She perceives the possibility of illumination through a mode other than love. That mode is specifically suitable for Harry whom Dr Warburton shows to be half-dead and in need of revival. Were Dr warburton's analysis to conform to truth, Harry's recovery would be in becoming fonder of his mother and in getting rid of the phantoms of convention and appearance through his future stay at Wishwood.

According to Agatha, his callousness is not the core of his

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problem. Referring to the curse-riden tradition of the family, she, now, wants him to assume its burden, first, because he is its pater familias and, second, because he is her own son, though born from the womb of Amy. Since he regards her as "liberated from the human wheel" (P.103), he believes everything that she says about his birth in un-love. Naturally, he realises that his sin is the consequence of the curse lurking over the family and his salvation lies through expiation as much as knowledge.

This realisation is attested to by two factors. In the lyrical duets which Agatha has with Harry, she re-creates herself as what Herbert Marcuse would like to call "the image of the desired woman ....the mother in whom the son once had the integral peace which is the absence of all need and desire." Secondly, the Furies, which so far had seemed vindictive, now appear as "bright angels" (P.111) to Harry. Previously they were inscrutable:

Were they simply outside
I might escape somewhere, perhaps, were they simply inside
I could cheat them perhaps with the aid of Dr Warburton —
Or any other doctor ——(P.99)

Now he is able to locate them as agencies of the eternal design:
This time, you are real, this time you are outside me,
And just endurable. I know that you are ready,
Ready to leave Wishwood, and I am going with you.(P.108)

Having thus marked them, not as objectifications of his psychological delusion, but as agencies of the eternal design, Harry

comes to accept them "as manifestations of Divine Love rather than Divine Wrath."

Like the chorus, the introduction of the Furies raises the problem of their poetic/dramatic relevance. At these two junctures of the play, the Furies are justified in their appearance. If they do not appear to prevent Harry from marrying Mary, they let him do what his father had done, i.e., to suffer in the vortex of original sin. Similarly, if they do not urge him to reposit complete belief in Agatha, they do not help him in recognising that the curse coming to him from his family is that he was "conceived in un-love, born from the wrong mother, doomed to be un-loved, and he himself naturally married a woman whom he did not love, who did not love him, whom he ended in hating." Realising the importance of their junctural appearance, Philip R. Heading has observed, "They seem to fit well with the stylisation of the trance-like speeches of Harry, Agatha and the chorus; with the explicit shifts in levels of meaning; and with the anti-literal tone that recurrently emerges — elements not necessarily derived from Greek tragedy." "The play in its own terms justifies their use," is the conclusion that he draws from their junctural importance.

In spite of their junctural importance, the Furies do not look relevant from the poetic/dramatic angle in the form in which they appear in the play. Appearing thus, they hold that the immutable laws of gods controlling human life are valid in the universality of space

and eternity of time. They had to be inscrutable in appearance in Greek tragedy because the life that they showed to be immutably controlled, was autochthonous, determined only by man's relationship with nature. The curse lurking over the Monchensey Family is far from having the spatial universality and temporal eternity of autochthonous life. Rather than have proportions of past through man's relationship with nature, this curse has those of present, through man's relationship with self. Evidently the Furies cannot play in this drama of modern times "a part which is purely a matter of individual conscience" because "the pangs of individual conscience can only be exteriorized through actions and reactions." So some other method developed in dramatic terms from the cinematographic technique is required to perform this function because "in brief time here loses, on the one hand, its interrupted continuity, on the other, its irreversible direction." As is explained further in cinema time can be "brought to a standstill in close-ups; reversed in flash-backs; repeated in recollections; and skipped across in visions of the future."  

The introduction of the Furies shows that "a Greek myth ... from now on will be the infra-structure of his themes which are both modern and perennial." The mythical prop of this play comes from The Oresteia and more particularly from The Choephoroi and The Eumenides of Aeschylus. When this play is studied in juxtaposition with them several parallelisms and contrasts emerge. Harry, for example, is in

a situation partly like and partly unlike that of Orestes. Parallel to Orestes is Harry's fate because his father, whom he more and more regards as pater familias, was driven into isolation by his mother. Of course Harry's father did not have the royal grandeur of Agamemnon and his mother does not have the vindictive and murderous nature of Clytemnestra. This is because the playwright's vision of history records the annihilation of personality and attenuation of passion as categorical with the passage of time.

Similarly, there is Agatha who provides a new lease of life to Harry. In this respect, she is like the Greek goddess Athena, but whereas the Greek goddess bestows forgiveness on Orestes and civic peace on the whole of Athens, Agatha imparts purpose only to the chaotic life of Harry. This parallelistic contrast or contrasting parallelism is to be explained by Eliot's view of monad-like living of man in the modern times. The most obvious parallel between Orestes and Harry is that they, both, are pursued by the Furies. Whereas in Eumenides they have been superbly used, in this play their use is only academic. Naturally, they introduce incongruence in the body of the play which has been noticed even by Eliot himself when he remarks, "But the deepest flaw of all, was in a failure of adjustment between the Greek story and the modern situation --- I should either have struck closer to Aeschylus or also taken a great deal more liberty with the myth."

The same incongruence remains when the motif of the quester is read in the personality of Harry. In search of the Grail, the quester "ranges heaven and hell, makes terms with them, and strikes a pact with

the unknown, with sickness and evil, with death and the other world." For this purpose he goes to Chapel Perilous in which he must die to be born. For Harry, the quester, Wishwood is Chapel Perilous in which the going out of the candles upon Amy's birth-day cake is like the extinguishing of lights "during the knight's vigil." So far so good, but if the parallelism is extended to ascertain the nature of Harry's Grail, his own initiative to get it and the waste land that his Grail is ordained to render fertile, there is nothing but incongruence awaiting one who proceeds for answers.

Whether approached from the motif of the curse or from that of the quest, the mythical element seems not to have vanished into the dramatic pattern. Existing as counterpoint, it gives to whole form of the play an image of "composite construction" corresponding with its hiatus-ridden theme, structurally and texturally.

Texturally, the verse of the play is of three types, choral verse of the chorus-characters, lyrical verse of the spiritual characters, and conversational verse of the worldly characters.

The choral verse seems to suffer from a peculiar type of reification in as much as a choric passage obviously spoken by the chorus, shows through meaning and persona that it is the articulation of a single individual, not one from the chorus-characters but one who is identical with the dramatic poet. The following utterance can be quoted as an evidence of this reification:

I am afraid of all that has happened, and of all
that is to come;

Of the things to come that sit at the door, as if
they had been there always.

And the past is about to happen, and the future was
long since settled.

And the wings of the future darken the past, the
beak and claws have desecrated

History. (P.87)

It is undoubtedly the troubled reflection of the dramatic poet himself
uttered through the collective persona of the chorus. The chorus-
characters could not have articulated it because neither singly nor
collectively do they experience this awareness. Of course, the composite
personality of the chorus is usually richer than the generic selves
of the chorus-characters but in the play such awareness seems to be
beyond the scope of both these types of personalities.

Lyrical articulation by spiritual characters is carried on
frequently by Harry and Agatha and infrequently by Amy and Mary. This
articulation is "verbal activity at the expense of dramatic relevance
and propriety." As Elder Oslon has pointed out, it reflects "Speech
as Meaning" rather than "Speech as Action." Usually it develops from
the perception of the inside of some remembered event but is articulated
in the context of the inside of a new event.

For the first time in the dramatic career of Eliot, this
lyrical articulation raises the problem of the communicative power of
language. Both Harry and Agatha have doubts if the language that they

2. Elder Oslon, 'William Empson:Contemporary Criticism and Poetic Drama'
   Modern Philology Vol.XLII May 1950 P.229
speak can communicate their selves to others in a pristine way. They seem implicitly to agree with Whitehead and Wittgenstein that "deficiencies of language stand inexorably in the way of a fundamental state of the nature of things" and "language disguises the thought, so that from the external form of the clothes one cannot infer the form of the thought, because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognised."

Like that of Whitehead and Wittgenstein, the scepticism of Harry and Agatha arises from the wide-spread notion deriving from religion that language fails in its effort to articulate the Logos. For example, Harry holds that spiritual experiences are "unspeakable/untranslatable" and he speaks in general terms "because the particular has no language" (P.66). Similarly, Agatha observes that deep-seated awareness is inexplicable in this world..."the resolution is in another" (P.114).

This scepticism is justified. The language of Harry and Agatha is specifically transmissible, i.e., through it they can transmit the wisdom that they acquire from experience, they cannot re-create the experience itself. For this purpose they let their language forward ontological/existential elaboration of some spiritual wisdom. To achieve authenticity they repeat and reiterate what they express through their gesture of articulation, imparting to it an aura of contemplation. Their tone is Kierkegaardian in effect and motive religious because repetition, especially in Kierkegaard's sense, is imperative.

2. Wittgenstein, Tractus Logicus Philosophicus, London 1922 P.114

for developing religious consciousness. When through the repetition 
of abstraction or anacoluthon, language has become transmissible, Harry 
and Agatha take it towards incantation where the meanings of the words 
avanish into their subterranean rhythm. At this stage they communicate 
their meanings with spontaneity that is free from every type of 
intellectual teratology. The runes spoken by Agatha bear testimony to 
this incantatory level of language:

    Accident is design
    And design is accident
    In a cloud of unknowing
    O my child, my curse,
    You shall be fulfilled:
    The knot shall be unknotted
    And the crooked made straight. (P.109)

Owing to their tendency towards incantation, Harry and Agatha 
fail to realise "unbroken transition between the most intense speech and 
the most relaxed dialogue." In a low mimetic mode, the most relaxed 
dialogue is spoken by the worldly characters. The highly flexible 

rhythm of this language observes "a line of varying length and varying 
number of syllables, with a caesura and three stresses. The caesura 
and the stresses may come at different places, almost anywhere in the 
line; the stresses may be close together or well separated by light 
syllables; the only rule being that there must be one stress on one side 
of the caesura and two on the other." Also, this language has "meticulous

flatness", "careful juxtaposition" and "veiled vellities." But it is flat and conversational rather than dialogic. So its words coincide and do not clash with one another. As a result of this coincidence this language creates a "nebulous swirling of communication --- in its cumulative impact, unsuited to the theatre."

The same method of composite construction is employed in the symbolism and imagery of the play. The symbols used are of two types, archetypal and formed. The prominently used archetypal symbols are the winter, the sun, the spring, the cave, the burning wheel, the father and the mother. While using them, Eliot has changed their exfoliative tendency into morphological. Thus, instead of remaining archetypes in Jung's sense of the word, these symbols have assumed immanent absoluteness of Cassirer's point of view. Because of this change, they tend to impart concretely allegorical rather than archetypally symbolical meanings to the dramatic pattern.

Far more important than the archetypal symbols are the formed symbols, analogous to the dominant images. Recurrently used symbols of this type are the clock, the window, the rose-garden, the water-fall, the door, the concrete corridor. Harry and Agatha use them consummately in their lyrical duets and it is largely for this use that a new perspective opens up for Harry. Thus the moment when Agatha was loved by Harry's father, is recollected by her through the use of such images:

"I only looked through the little door
When the sun was shining on the rose-garden!

2. Ibid
And heard in the distance tiny voices
And then a black raven flew over.
And then I was only my own feet walking
Away down a concrete corridor
In a dead air." (PP.106-107)

As Harry and Agatha grow incantatory in their articulation, they start making surrealistic use of these symbols and images. While explaining to Harry her ineffable joy at looking through the little door, she ends on an image of the above-mentioned type:

I was only the feet, and the eye
feeling the feet: the unwinking eye
Fixing the movement. Over and under. (P.107)

Far from dissipating the impression, this type of cogitative distortion consummates it because this distortion has a positive aspect in Kierkegaardian repetition which counteracts the Kafkean repetition of worldly characters.

Imagery used in the play is of cumulative nature. Evoking the nearness of the words to the objects, the playwright uses them in a non-metaphorical way. The communication, thus attained, is not usually mediated; many times it is illustrative only. For example, in the following utterance, Agatha articulates her meaning through the first three and the last three lines. The middle portion only illustrates:

Yes, I mean that at wishwood he will find another Harry
The man who returns will have to meet
The boy who left. Round by the stables,
In the coach-house, in the orchard,
In the plantation, down the corridor
That led to the nursery, round the corner
Of the new wing, he will have to face him——
And it will not be a jolly corner.
When the loop in time comes — and it does not come for everybody——

The hidden is revealed, and the spectres show themselves. (PP.60-61)

Such use of imagery is symbolistic. It makes the play unnecessarily ambiguous. Consequently *The Family Reunion* only partly succeeds as poetic drama. It has a transitional place in the poetic/dramatic career of T.S. Eliot because

"...what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate—but there is no competition——
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss
For us there is only the trying; the rest is not our business."

THE COCKTAIL PARTY

In *The Family Reunion* the ontological/existential tone, is reinforced by a mythical undertone. It has religious overtone besides.
In *The Cocktail Party* however, the theme changes into a search for redemption and vocation. Psychology is employed to help this search because, as T.S. Eliot has himself observed,

   P.17
"Psychology has very great utility in two ways. It can revive, and has already to some extent revived, truth long since known to Christianity, but mostly forgotten and ignored, and it can put them in a form and a language understandable by modern people to whom the language of Christianity is not only dead but undecipherable. But I must add that I think psychology can do more than this, in discovering more about the human soul still; for I do not pretend that there is nothing more to know; the possibilities of knowledge are practically endless...

Psychology is an indispensable handmaid to theology, but I think a very poor housekeeper."

This psychology is not just psychoanalysis in the technical sense of the word, providing therapeutic analysis of the psychic phenomenon. Instead, it becomes what Herbert Marcuse has called "meta-psychology", the nexus of metaphysics and psychology. Under its discipline the human condition is subjected to a minute observation in order to develop self-awareness by virtue of which a human being may transcend the human condition and salvage itself from the existentialist vacuum which it feels sucked in.

Accordingly the subject-matter of the play is provided by the crisis faced by people living in the overwhelmingly urban surroundings of the super-city. At its most obvious level, the urban surroundings of the super-city are symptomatic for "the amorphous crowd of passers-by,  

1. T.S. Eliot, The Listener, March 30, 1932
the people in the street", who through "shock and contact" are drawn into human relations and human consciousness. In its most penetrating form this drawing-in is likely to occur in the life of middle-class people because they are part and parcel of the productive system of the super-city. They cannot keep it at bay as the aristocratic class are inclined to do though they may only get more and more caught in by the reality of the super-city.

The characters of The Cocktail Party give a very glaring evidence of this wholesale drawing-in. All the characters have significance in this scheme together rather than in isolation. This is so in spite of the fact that they are divisible into two groups. Edward, Lavinia, Celia and Peter form the first group which may be called the group of cocktail party characters.

This group of characters are facing problems representative of life in the super-city. Edward and Lavinia face a marital crisis, in which the attitude of their circle are so ambiguous that their family life is reduced to a state of insanity. After Lavinia's departure everything lies in disorder and confusion in Edward's apartment where there are not even enough provisions for a single man's supper. At one moment characters, both sympathetic and ironical, crowd about Edward and at another moment he is left all alone in the apartment.

In fact Edward and Lavinia have become so habituated to being surrounded by people that they have lost the capacity to react emotionally towards each other. To employ words from Freud they have become "dry

egoists, the loci of their superegos" are automatised and they regard each other simply as objects. Their values have become entirely self-centred and marital fidelity has no meaning for them. Obviously Edward has adulterous relations with Celia and Lavinia would gladly commit adultery with Peter. Her failure to indulge herself that way lands her in a neurosis that overloads her with a feeling of vacuum. This neurosis makes her complain of masculine infidelity and regard her feminine condition as a form of deprivation, so much so that she slinks away from the house.

Like Edward and Lavinia, Celia and Peter are also alienated beings though they are not depersonalised like them. So Celia and Peter are fond of going to the cinema which, as Walter Benjamin has pointed out, "came in an age of maximum alienation of men from one another, of unpredictably intervening relationships which have become their own." No doubt film has social significance particularly in its most positive form, but "it is inconceivable without its destructive cathartic effect, that is the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage."

On both of them, the effect of the cinema is destructive and cathartic in as much as they both reject traditional values at the conscious level but accept their idealised surrogates at the subconscious level. Peter is deeply in love with Celia who has safeguard against alienation in her urge to write poetry. The tension between the etymological roots and metaphorical meanings of words has enabled her to retain respect for life. Poetry has given her a consistency which

1. Sigmund Freud, Civilisation and its Discontents, London 1949, p.44
imparts potential of an aristocratic quality to her conduct and temperament. Due to this type of temperament she contemplates Edward with feeling of love. In fact her gesture accords more with hearing and less with seeing. So she does not see Edward's "implacable and indomitable spirit of mediocrity" (P.153). Listening to her voice from within she feels that he is in extreme distress and therefore in extreme need of her love. Only when Edward fails to rise to the level of her love, does she perceive his mediocre extroversion. Even then listening to the voice of her inner self, she extricates herself from the whole affair. The following lines eloquently reflect the potentially aristocratic aroma of her personality at this juncture:

"That is not what you are. It is only what was left of what I had thought you were. I see another person
I see you as a person whom I never saw before,
The man I saw before, he was only a projection —
I see that now —— of something that I wanted ——
No, not wanted —— something I aspired to ——
Something that I desperately wanted to exist. (P.154)

Edward regards her love for him only as a "passing diversion" and indulges in "a crude subterfuge" (P.151) to give dignified appearance to his dissimulation. Actually, he is incapable of loving though his suspicion of his own incapability is as disturbing to his self-esteem "as in cruder man, the fear of impotence" (P.181). Lavinia also, in her love for Peter, fails to attain the dignified posture of Celia. She was attracted to Peter on one of the Thursdays organised by her apparently for Edward's recreation but essentially for her own indulgence.
The defection of Peter, who values moments passed in the company of Celia more highly than Lavinia's association, leaves her prostrate with the impression that she is incapable of eliciting love. Bringing home to her in retrospect the significance of this impression, Reilly tells her, "Certainly, you were completely prostrated, And Certainly, you have somewhat recovered, But you failed to mention that the cause of your distress Was the defection of your lover -- who suddenly For the first time in his life, fell in love with someone, And with someone of whom you had reason to be jealous."(P.180)

Throughout the play the playwright is concerned with the bringing out of these four characters out of their predicament. He "gives more weight and attention to humanisation of non-saints than to the transcendhumanisation of a saint." The non-saints are Edward, Lavinia and Peter and the saint is Celia. They attain humanisation and transhumanisation, respectively, not through their own initiative and will but through the efforts of their guardians, who form the second group of characters in the play. The most prominent of the guardians is Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, the distinguished psychiatrist. Alex and Julia are simply his acolytes who, "under the disguise of the absurd mannerisms, conceal their role of protective genii, indeed of guardian angels." Throughout the play Reilly, Alex and Julia are referred to as guardians while there are Guardians to whom they offer libations at the end of Act II, invoking the protection of the stars over Edward and Lavinia. In a mood of deep prayer they call upon the Guardians,

"May the holy ones watch over the roof
May the Moon herself influence the bed" (P.194)

At another place, they invoke for Celia the watchfulness and protection of the "Protector of travellers." (P.194) Strangely enough, before the end of Act III, it is suggested that "Edward and Lavinia are approaching the degree of understanding necessary to help Peter reach the condition in which perhaps the words of the Libation scene can be valid for him, and they are thus in a sense also becoming guardians."

In other words, they speak and behave like worldly characters but in fact are charismatic personalities. For example, Julia and Alex look like the obtuse characters of The Family Reunion but are different from them in the sense that their selves have volatile outlines while those of the obtuse characters have definite static outlines.

Naturally, the speech and behaviour of the guardians in the manner of obtuse characters is premeditated. Through this type of speech and behaviour, they involve the other characters in their vocation and destiny. For example, Julia, who is "a good mimic" and who never misses anything "unless she wants to," (P.126) is apparently an unlikable woman. She has the habit of poking into other people's business and has no regard for veracity as is evident from her return for her umbrella to Edward's apartment. Similarly, Alex indulges in intrigue, deception and subterfuge and meddles with others' affairs to their desperation. Projecting himself as "a famous cook" (P.140), Alex gets into the kitchen of Edward's apartment, embarrasses him by pointing out the inadequacy of the provisions and leaves him only when the extremity

of Edward's discomfiture is reached.

Essentially, both Alex and Julia are intelligent and judicious, first, because they admit their deceit and intrigue, and, secondly, because they use their allegedly objectionable activities that involve the other characters into their therapeutic design. Their fatuousness is only a façade for achieving very serious purposes and aims. Julia can discuss problems with Reilly at his level of awareness. She can even encourage him when in weaker moments he needs encouragement. Thus, when Edward and Lavinia have left Reilly's office, she comes and says,

"Henry, get up.
You can't be as tired as that. I shall wait in the next room, and come back when she is gone." (P.184)

Similarly, Alex, whose "forte is outside relations," gradually reveals himself as a man both of thought and action with wide-spread connections and recognized administrative capabilities. As Joseph Chiari has pointed out Alex, "though he has no winged feet, behaves as a modern Mercury who knows and sees everything." Accordingly the guardians appear "as a close-knit trio of enlightened humans who enjoy using their talents and awareness to help others become similarly enlightened."

Julia and Alex become meaningful through their association with Reilly who employs his psychiatry in a meta-psychic way. He is critical of the method and scope of psychoanalysis and refuses to make use of it for his therapeutic/redemptive purposes. Explaining the difference between his meta-psychiatry and psycho-analysis, he says,

"I always begin from the immediate situation
And then go back as far as I find necessary
You see your memories of childhood—
I mean in your present state of mind —
Would be largely fictitious; and as far your dreams,
You would tell amazing dreams, to oblige me,
I could make you dream any kind of dream I suggested
And it would only go to flatter your vanity
With the temporary stimulus of feeling interesting. (PP. 174-175)

In short, his meta-psychiatry is an amalgam of Christian
mysticism, therapeutic abreaction and Buddhism because his most
significant statement "Go in peace. and Work out your salvation with
diligence" (P. 183) is the summary of Lord Buddha's last message:

All component things must grow old and be dissolved again;
Seek ye, for that which is permanent, and work out your
salvation with diligence. 1

Psychiatry forms the core of Reilly's therapeutic/redemptive
vision and acquires in the process what Heilman has said, "a spiritual
dimension." 2 Even so, psychiatry does not become religion and Reilly
fails to become a "whole Christian man" as Arrowsmith mistakenly
believes him to be. Indeed he is a very ambiguous man, his ambiguity

2. Robert B. Heilman, 'Aesthetics and the Cocktail Party' in Comparative Literature Vol. 5, 2, Spring 1953 P. 45
falling only a bit short of spirituality. His taking of gin and water in place of wine in the cocktail party denotes on his part a def sacrification from Christianity, however slight. Then he sings a ballad which is scurrilous in tone and sacrilegious in meaning. Evidently, Reilly's relationship with other characters does not parallel that between God and man. It is that of "rescuer and healer who moves in an atmosphere of mystery." At one place his method seems "the Devil's method" - a remark the humour of which hinges "on the popular tendency to link anyone who manipulates the emotions of others with witchcraft or black magic." In keeping with his ambiguity and mystery he suggests to Edward and Lavinia that they should "make the best of a bad job," and salvage themselves by realising that they both have "the same isolation" or "the shadow of desires of desires." (P.182) At the same time, he impresses upon them that their business is not to clear their conscience but to learn to bear the burden of it, i.e., they should not evacuate their unconscious as Freud's Therapy by Aversion may suggest, but should enrich it with more and more of dreams and memories so that the unconscious may gradually become spiritual. Obviously, this involves a great risk because it means going back

"To the stale food mouldering in the larder
The stale thoughts mouldering in their minds.
Each unable to disguise his own meanness
From himself because it is known to the other.
It is not the knowledge of the mutual treachery
But the knowledge that other understand the motive
Mirror to mirror, reflecting vanity." (P.192)

The role that is suggested to Celia is of potential sainthood. Celia confesses to Reilly that she suffers from "an awareness of solitude" (P.185) "a sense of sin" (P.186) on account of which a burden of emptiness, of failure weighs her down since she has failed in winning Edward's love. She finds it impossible to reconcile herself to human condition in the way in which Edward and Lavinia have done. On her analysis of her situation, Celia is suggested to make "a terrible journey" (P.190) that takes her to the stage of transhumanisation. Like "a woman under the sentence of death," (P.209) Celia pays the highest price in suffering. She is crucified by the wild tribe-men near the ant-hill in the wild island of Kinkanja to which she has gone as a missionary nurse.

Her martyrdom is meaningful inasmuch as Edward and Lavinia realise that they are to some extent responsible for her martyrdom. It is beneficial to Peter as well because from now onwards he comes to realise the use-value of his profession of film-making, of which only the exchange-value had so far impressed him. In spite of the tragic incident towards the end, the play transcends tragedy because it gives a feeling of metaphysical fulfilment.

No doubt, the playwright has tried his best to assimilate these two movements into one moment. But they remain separate from each other, so that the real defect of the play lies in that "it presents the life of the common routine and the way of beatitude as totally discrete." Edward and Lavinia remain robots throughout. Behaving like obtuse robots

1. Denis Donoghue, The Third Voice, Princeton 1959 P.125
in the beginning, they change only into transparent robots towards the end. As D.J. Enright has pointed out, "What is so objectionable about Edward and Lavinia is their simple stupidity. In the beginning they resemble the stock nagging couple of a smart Hollywood comedy and in the end they resemble the stock domesticated couple of the same film." Enright's censure of Edward and Lavinia may be exaggerated, but basically it is true.

Similarly, in Celia's death "the playwright's deliberate plan of celebrating the idea of Christian sainthood" is clearly beyond doubt. As Stephen Spender has pointed out,

"Celia is not martyred as the result of any action contained within the life of the play. She is simply a martyr by vocation and having decided in the course of her interview with Reilly on the nature of her calling, she goes to a place called Kirkanja, outside those Cocktail Party lives, where she is crucified by the natives. It is true that she has occupied in doing charitable work among the natives, but this makes the death no realer in terms of the action of the play, in which these natives are only involved in order that her crucifixion at other hands may be described."

So the impression that Celia's martyrdom produces is that she is not a martyr in the sense that she is criticising the world and the world criticising her by martyrdom. Instead it is that "she is a martyr by

vocation and the natives are midwives of her death."

Both movements have a common origin in as much as they develop from an acute awareness of life in the super-city. In the process of elaboration one movement tends to raise this life from the world-historical moment to the transhistorical plane and the other denies it by regarding it as no more than an interregnum. Instead of putting the historical duration and philosophical nature of this life into an immanent/historical pattern, the playwright concentrates upon its philosophical nature and makes it a metaphysical moment, as is evident from the fact that the dramatic pattern of the play reflects mythical and ritualistic proportions as a backward dimension in time.

The mythical proportions derive from the *Alcestis* of Euripides. Though the playwright was determined to take them "merely as point of departure, and to conceal the origin so well that no body would identify them," these proportions are very much in evidence. As Thomas E. Porter has pointed out, "The structure of the *Alcestis* follows the ritual pattern of the tragedy with satyric variations: Agon, Death, Resurrection, Marriage and Komos. Eliot borrows elements of the *Alcestis* plot: the death-motif, resurrection by the Heraclean figure, Sir Henry; the wedding of Edward and Lavinia in spirit and in truth." Like Alcestis, Lavinia departs from the house of her husband. Whereas Alcestis leaves behind her mourning husband and goes to the region of death to lengthen his life, Lavinia leaves the house of her

inane husband to make him realise the inanity of their married life. To Admetus hell is to live separately from Alcestis, while to Edward

"Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections." (P.169)

While in separation from Alcestis, Admetus develops a sense of humiliation — a sort of humility, Edward experiences "loss of personality" that can reduce him to "the status of an object" or to "a set of obsolete responses." (PP.135-136)

Alcestis leaves her husband's palace and goes to the actual region of death while Lavinia leaves her husband's apartment to go to a hotel suggested to her as sanatorium by Dr. Heilily. Though defined as a metaphysical sojourn in the region of death, her disappearance is qualitatively inferior to the departure of Alcestis. In fact, the qualitative difference between the two is not unrelated to their characters. Alcestis is an ideal image of wife and "marriages in which women like her are the life-partners are," as Pheres says, "profitable to mankind." Without an iota of Alcestis's grandeur, Lavinia, as Heilman has observed, has "only a glimpse of generosity." So instead of according with the whole range of her prototype's personality she remains a feeble figure when she has "remarried" Edward. On the other hand, Celia tends to come into accord with the sacrificing half of Alcestis. The contrast between the two aspects, immanent as one in Alcestis but divided as two in Celia and Lavinia, is so marked that "Eliot's treatment

1. Euripides, Alcestis included in Seven Famous Greek Plays, New York 1950 P.266
2. Robert B. Heilman, 'Alcestis and The Cocktail Party' Comparative Literature (Spring 1955) P.110
of Lavinia's activities is for the most part comic while his presentation of Celia's history is in a tone of high seriousness."

The division of the prototype into two types accords with Eliot's world-vision which believes in the historical diminution of human personality. But it would have been more balanced if Lavinia had been shown grappling with the disorder and futility of life. In the absence of this positive aspect, the play gets afflicted with "a crude disparity of tone" and the last act with "the accusation of being not a last act but an epilogue." In that case the need to give Celia's martyrdom a gruesome description would not have arisen.

An important reverberation of *Alcestis* is produced by Reilly, the uninvited guest, who in his eccentric behaviour --- his apparently intemperate habits and tendency to burst into song, is modelled upon Heracles. Like the hero-god of the Greek-play, Reilly drinks wine (in his case gin) and sings irreverent songs. Drinking of gin with water indicates the slight degeneration that has accrued to him, the saviour. This reflects upon his therapeutic/redemptive potentiality, as he makes it clear in his confession to Julia:

> And when I say to one like her
> Work out your salvation with diligence, I do not understand what I myself am saying. (P.193)

In spite of these limitations, Reilly plays a more comprehensive role than Heracles. Heracles is only saviour while Reilly is saviour/

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2. Ibid P.128
redeemer. He is not just Heracles but Heracles-plus-Pheres, having joined the function of telling the truth to the saving of the lives of others. "Honesty before honour" (P.177) is what he suggests to everybody and what reconciles Edward and Lavinia to their daily life and Celia to her ordained destiny.

Some minor reverberations of Alcestis are also to be noticed. Admetus and Pheres blame the death of Alcestis on each other. Correspondingly Edward and Lavinia discuss the causes which might have dissolved their marriage. The metaphysical remarriage of Edward and Lavinia is, in a way, reminiscent of the reunion of Admetus and Alcestis in the presence of Heracles. Lastly, as there is a sacrificial feast at the end of Alcestis, similarly there is the cocktail party to end Eliot's play. As C.H. Smith has pointed out, it is a modified Komos, "a triumphal marriage procession, like that at the end of the ritual drama when all the guests of the first party, except Celia, appear before the beginning of the second."

The convention of the Dionysian worship and the structure of the New Comedy also impart mythical proportions to The Cocktail Party. Eliot acquires the impulse for absorbing the ritualistic proportions from the ethnographical studies of Frazer and their interpretations by Miss Harrison and F.M. Cornford. Evidence of it is available from Eliot's understanding of the scope of Frazer's work:

"Frazer's facts suggest that archaic and contemporary behaviour are always juxtaposed in contemporary consciousness.

and that a poet can further refine the juxtapositions ... to disclose a ground of identity and to reveal the presence of a third entity, a metaphysical community of all men."

The third entity or metaphysical community referred to in the quoted passage above, Eliot realises by relating all the characters to prehistoric prototypes. From this relationship there emerges a pattern behind a pattern based upon marital maladjustment. The stock-characters speaking stichomythically, strike as inane and reflect adversely on the pattern of the play. Consequently, the play emerges as "a comedy in a number of related senses: a drawing-room comedy of marital misunderstanding, a proto-comedy with ritual overtones, a divinia-comedia."

The characters of The Cocktail Party hearken back to their comic prototypes through anagonrisis or comic discovery, ritual celebration or ritual bondage and movement from illusion to reality. In this way the Old Man, the Young Man, the Old Woman, the Maiden, the Doctor and the Cook, are, respectively, the prototypes of Edward, Peter, Julia, Lavinia/Celia, Reilly and Alex. The correspondence between the characters and their prototypes is so powerful that the characters do not merely reflect but tend to merge into a mythical clan in a trans-historical way. As George T. Wright observes, "Eliot hardly cares for the individual quality of his characters, what he cares about is the relationship to certain enduring archetypal roles. They act consequently, if they act at all, in conformity to the demands of their roles rather than from what we

1. T.S. Eliot 'London Letter' The Dial LXXI October 1921 P.453
2. Thomas E. Porter, Myth in American Drama, Ludhiana (India) 1969 P.56
This is inevitable because Eliot's mode of perception is determined by hindsight rather than foresight. For a person whose Angelus Novus thus looks to the past "an object or an act becomes real ... only insofar as it initiates or repeats an archetype." In his view "reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation; everything which lacks an exemplary model is meaningless, i.e., it lacks reality." Constructed thus, the characters of The Cocktail Party lack the psychic potential to cope with reality. With strong inclination to introject the reality of the past, they acquire impressionistic proportions to the extreme of dispersion in a moment of crisis or predicament.

No wonder, these characters articulate themselves in a low mimetic mode. In a "deliberately flattened tone" they speak verse "so meticulously balanced, in statements that oppose paradox to paradox and leave, as it were, a resultant to emerge" in an ambiguous and paradoxical way. He has laid down for himself in this play the ascetic rule to avoid poetry which could not stand the strict test of utility." Observing this ascetic rule, the verse has "chasteness, restraint, terseness and precision." It is lucid and flexible, ranging from the staccato tone of telephonic talk to the inbreathing tone of a deep confession. This flexibility can very well be grasped by comparing and contrasting the

Following utterances:

(i) Hello, Julia, are you there? ...
   Well, I'm awfully sorry to have kept you waiting;
   But we ... I had to hunt for them ... No, I found them
   ...Yes, She's bringing them now ... Goodnight." (P.155)

(ii) It's not the feeling of anything I've ever done
   Which I might get away from, or of anything in me
   I could get rid of - but of emptiness, of failure
   Towards someone, or of something, outside of myself. (P.188)

In the first utterance Edward is talking to Julia and in the
second Celia is confessing her sense of solitude to Reilly. The syntax
of both the utterances is derived from the same austere, transparent and
conversational structure of contemporary language. In the first it is
the immediacy of verse to the language of conversation that is explored
in the incoherent and inconsecutive tone of daily discourse. The
impersonal, colourless and opaque language of the matter-of-fact life of
the super-city that this verse employs can end in nothing but "flaccidity,"
as John Peter has analysed it.

In the second utterance, the effort is to bring out music latent
in the language of conversation. Employing language reverberating the
spiritualised unconscious of the super-city, this type of utterance
suffuses itself with anti-poetry. This helps in articulating Being
rather than Becoming and emphasizes intense austerity that holds "the
invention of metaphors and similes... to be a luxury, a self-indulgence."

   1968 P.74
Metaphors, etc. are the prerogatives of Becoming because they appropriate space; Being projects only depth and has, therefore, nothing to do with metaphorical syntax. It upholds a naked and austere syntax which, when the occasion is apposite, may make use of myth and symbolism. In moments of predicament this anti-poetry delves deep into the angst of the character. The in-depth delving by Celia in the passage below indicates the achievement of this anti-poetry:

I cannot argue.
It is not that I am afraid of being hurt again
Nothing again can either hurt or heal.
I have thought at moments that the ecstasy is real
Although those who experience it may have no reality
For what happened is remembered like a dream
In which one is exalted by intensity of living
In the spirit, vibration of delight
Without desire, for desire is fulfilled
In the delight of loving. A state one does not know
When awake. But what, or whom I loved,
Or what in me was loving, I do not know
And if that is all meaningless, I want to be cured
Of a craving for something I cannot find
And of the shame of never finding it. (P.189)

In comparison with it, utterance, such as the following, made in the form of conventional poetry, looks artificial and uncontrollable:

O God, O God, if I could return to yesterday
Before I thought that I had made a decision.
What devil left the door on the latch
For these doubts to enter? And then you came back you
The intense austerity of the language of *The Cocktail Party* prevents words from evoking amplitude. The pattern of this play is evocative only of depth, indicated by the symbol of the journey that pervades the play at several levels with several types of significance. At the physical level, Julia, Alex, Peter and Celia travel to Edward's apartment to escape boredom and tedium. Interestingly enough they travel by taxi which, being symptomatic of the life of the super-city, cannot salvage them from its hell-like congestion. Peter and Celia travel to the cinema which submerges them in the crowd instead of salvaging them from it. On the contrary, Lavinia journeys to the symbolical underworld of death and comes out with the awareness,

"I shall always tell the truth now."

"We have wasted such a lot of time in lying!" (P. 164)

Similarly, Edward, sitting in his house, makes a mental journey and becomes deeply aware of his depersonalisation. To crown them all, Celia journeys to a distant island in the far east and passes between

"The scolding hills,

Through the valley of derision, like a child sent on an errand

In eagerness and patience." (P. 193)

Her "terrifying journey" (P. 190) transhumanises her and to some extent illuminates Edward and Lavinia who stay at home, and Peter who journeys from England to California and back again in pursuit of professional adaptability.
The symbol of the journey reflects three image-patterns raised upon the antinomial relationship of darkness and light, ill-health and health, and obtuseness and enlightenment. In the beginning, Edward, Lavinia, Peter and Celia are completely in the dark. Edward asks Reilly if he is "to remain always lost in the dark." (P.136). Lavinia's indifference towards Edward's adulterous relationship with Celia, is symptomatic of her blindness to its consequences.

Similarly, when Celia becomes indifferent to Peter, she seems to him to have "simply faded into some other picture." (P.142) Moreover, Celia admits that, before Lavinia's disappearance, she had been living with Edward as if in "a dream", and she has faced "real reality" (P.151) only when he has shown himself to be incapable of loving her.

Collateral with these images are those which contrast illusion and reality, make-believe and knowledge, placid assumption and realisation, and disillusionment and assurance. When all these characters journey from darkness into light, they become at once knowledgeable, perceptive and profound. Thus as Edward, Lavinia and Peter attain half-sight, Celia is rewarded with full vision. Similarly, Edward, Lavinia and Peter come only within the possible range of spiritual illumination but Celia attains beatitude in the Christian sense of the word. Reilly calls her martyrdom "triumphant" (P.210) because it has the potential of sainthood that she is asked to cultivate with diligence.

Compared with Edward, Lavinia, Peter and Celia, the guardians are one-eyed or partially blind. As Reilly discloses about himself,

"As I was drinking in and water
And me bein' the One-Eyed Rilaiy

..............................
..............................
Tooryooly torry-iley

What is the matter with One-Eyed Riley? (P. 137)

while Julia is practically blind without her glasses,

"... I must have left my glasses here
And I simply can't see a thing without them," (P. 136)

Alex cannot find a double boiler precisely because he is one-eyed or partially blind. As Thomas E. Porter has pointed, "The one-eyed Guardians are better than the ordinary people, Edward and Lavinia, who are in the dark. In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king. Because they are in the world, this trio is fallible and their knowledge is limited; because they are not of the world, they exercise a power that is prophetic. They can manipulate the rest of the company because of their knowledge of the Christian heritage."  

Such use of language and imagery makes the poetic and dramatic patterns of the play mutually mediating, and the dramatic pattern extracts a "given significance from the fussy detail, the seemingly empty chatter, the farcical proppings," of the naturalistic design, 2 and imparts "bitter intensity recalling Strindbergian dance of death" to the poetic design of the play. It anticipates the theatre of Beckett and Pinter who, however, deal nihilistically with the problems tackled metaphysically in The Cocktail Party. Accordingly, it forwards the most satisfactory working out of poetic/dramatic design from naturalistic dramaturgy and anti-naturalistic poetry.

1. Thomas E. Porter, Myth in American Drama, Ludhiana (India) 1969 P. 71
(iv) The Confidential Clerk

While resolving the predicament of the life of the super-city, in *The Cocktail Party*, Eliot has arrived at two alternative imperatives, i.e., either a viable raison d'être for living within the structure of super-city itself should be found or recourse should be made to the wilderness which, nevertheless, has the aura of spiritualised or christianised super-country. Only by adopting one of these alternatives can man cease to be an inhabitant of the non-world in which he is alive though not living in the actual sense of the word. Life then does not remain for him an inexorable existential situation or what Heidegger calls "*dasein*", the falsity of which is such "that as long as it is what it is, *dasein* remains in the throw, and is sucked into the turbulence of they, inauthenticity." When his existential situation is thus transformed, man becomes aware of his destiny and vocation, and his newly acquired awareness has the potential to bring redemption.

In *The Confidential Clerk* the imperative suggested is that man should imbibe this awareness by living within the structure of the super-city itself. The world of the super-city is denoted here by commerce and the world of spiritualised super-country by art. This is a dexterous way of joining the two worlds because "the world of Art, unlike the world of Martyrdom and Beatitude, is at one and the same time special enough to embody the higher reaches of aspiration and yet within the imaginative range of a secular audience." When man starts living in this unified world, the ethos of spiritualised or christianised super-city becomes part and parcel of his life. He can get into tune

with this ethos either by limiting himself to his self-sufficient private self or by enclosing himself into a place which is to all intents and purposes, the objective correlative of his privacy. When he does so he becomes aware first of his vocation, then of his destiny, or of his destiny through his vocation because vocation has the aroma of super-city in the same way in which destiny has of the super-country.

To work out this theme comprehensively, Eliot draws the subject-matter of the play from the most common aspect of the life of the super-city. This aspect is of trade and money flourishing upon the market or the economic terrain convertible into its political and philosophical moments because its "unitary centre" is "value" as "hegemony" and "praxis" are centres of the political and philosophical moments. When this controvertibility is taken to be feasible, the essential aspects of the market, the economic terrain of the super-city, are treated in their historical context. Such a historical context is, for example, created by a critique of political economy which "analyses in a realistic way the relations of forces determining the market, it analyses in depth their contradictions, evaluates the possibilities of modification connected with the appearance and strengthening of new elements". However, when it is taken for granted as by classical economics, that this controvertibility is not feasible, the essential aspects of the market are taken to be "eternal and natural". When this is the presumption, the verity of human relationships is read in these essential aspects of the market.

In *The Confidential Clerk*, Eliot bases man's relationships on these essential aspects which are amorphous, unpredictable and indeterminate in their manifest form and automatic, predictable and determinate in their latent form. No wonder, the inter-personal relations of the characters of the play are conditioned by these essential aspects in an indirect way as the inter-personal relations of people coming across one another upon the economic terrain are conditioned in a direct way. Thus Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth have a life of wedlock for twenty-five years, but a veil of complete lack of mutual understanding extends between them. Similarly, the relationship between Sir Claude and his daughter Lucasta is so ambiguous that she is generally regarded as his mistress. In the same way, S. Kaghan is ultimately to prove Elizabeth's son, but at the moment their acquaintance is a travesty of mother-son relationship. To add further to the ambiguity of the situation, Colby is the son neither of Sir Claude nor of Lady Elizabeth though they believe him to be their son.

These conflicting aspects of the economic terrain do not let Eliot affirm "the possibility of intimate and satisfying companionship in love" between Colby and Lucasta. In the dialogue that takes place between them, Colby recognizes the possibility of Lucasta accompanying him into the garden of his inner life and making his garden "a part of one single world" (F.246) as Eggerson's garden seems to him to be. So "walking down an alley" (F.246), he becomes aware of someone walking with him, and while playing upon the piano with Lucasta by his side, it seems to him that there is "..... neither solitude nor people." (F.242) However, this relationship does not grow into love though it has the erotic potential to do so. At first it is put aside with the false discovery
that Lucasta is Colby's half-sister and their love can be nothing but incest. Later, when it is proved that Lucasta is not Colby's half-sister, and the incest business is shown not to exist, Colby is made to take "the disclosure of his paternity only in its bearing on his vocation and not at all on his possible love for Lucasta."

Instead of regarding this affair as controvertible into its political and philosophical moments and thereby entitled to the plenitude and scope of the whole human world, Colby and Lucasta confine it to the small world of their private selves where it divests itself of its social significance and relevance. Rather than become subjective/objective through the exercise of their will and initiative, they become subjective or subjectivistic by avoiding to impart social significance to their love. Thus the whole affair is like a contract which comes to an end at the opportune moment.

In tune with their relation grown upon the terrain of the market is their relationship with their inner selves. Colby feels his inner self rent with a crisis of creativity that he explains in his dialogue with Sir Claude as under:

I know
I should never have become a great organist,
As I aspired to be, I'm not an executant;
I'm only a shadow of the great composers.
Always, when I play to myself,
I hear the music I should like to have written,
As the composer heard it when it came to him;
But when I played before other people
I was always conscious that what they heard
Was not that I hear when I play to myself. 
What I hear is a great musician's music 
What they hear is an inferior rendering. (PP.237-238)

This crisis of creativity occurs to Colby in the field of music which now is neither his profession nor vocation. This crisis is a moment of his subjective self; but it is as well a moment of the objective world of modern music. In fact the subjective causes of its occurrence can no longer be separated from the objective causes. As T. W. Adorno has said,

"It would be superficial to condemn this inclination as Alexandrian and civilising in Spengler’s sense, as though the composition no longer had anything of its own to say and therefore attached itself parasitically to something already lost. Such concepts of originality are derived from the bourgeois concept of property; unmusical judges condemn musical thieves. The basis of the tendency is technical in nature. The possibilities of invention or discovery, which seemed unlimited to aestheticians in the age of competition, are limited in the scheme of tonality: on the one hand they are defined, to a large extent by the dissected triad, on the other by the diatonic succession of seconds. At the time of Viennese Classicism, when the former totality was of greater importance than melodic inspiration, the restrictive narrowness of that which lay at the disposal of the composer had not yet been felt. With the emancipation of the subjective melos of
The Lied, however, the barriers became ever more perceptible: composers were forced to rely upon inspiration — as in the case of Schubert and Schumann. The scant material, however, was so totally exhausted that no further inspiration could come forth which had not been present previously. They, therefore, absorbed the depletion of this supply into a subjective relationship and then constructed their thematic motives — more or less openly — as quotations with the effect of the recurrence of the familiar.

This crisis can be resolved only if the musician exercises his creative self within the bounds of music in such a way that it does not remain confined in its previous heteronomous structure. Only then can music triumph over the inhumanity of the world and the mediocrity of the musician. This is particularly so in the case of modern music which illuminates the meaningless world. As Adorno has conclusively remarked, "Its fortune lies in the perception of misfortune; all its beauty is in denying itself the illusion of beauty."

Colby does not think that his crisis is subjective/objective as Adorno shows it as symptomatic of the whole of modern music. Instead, he has traced this crisis to his mediocre self only as Sir Claude had done years back with respect to pottery. Admitting that his love for "form and colour" (P.236) on occasions transfigured him "in the vision of some marvellous creation" (P.237), ultimately Sir Claude came to

2. T. H. Adorno. Ibid P.133
realise that pottery was something for which he lacked the essential artistic skill. There is so much identity of views between them that Colby seems to translate in terms of music what Sir Claude says in terms of poetry.

Such a subjectivistic approach is shown towards their own problems by Lucasta, Lady Elizabeth and B.Kaghan as well. With intuitive understanding of the role of creative imagination in the life of a person, Lucasta shows deep sympathy for Colby in his moment of crisis of creativity. This does not, however, influence her own awareness of life in any way. Gluttonous and garrulous, she puts herself forth as "a bastard" and "debit item" (P.249) in the cash account of Sir Claude. Similarly, frustrated in her desire to inspire an artist, Lady Elizabeth has started believing in reincarnation and taking interest in mind-control, etc. Claiming to have "business ability" (P.283) B.Kaghan shares no interest with anybody. He excludes himself so much from others that even his language does not coincide with that of other characters.

By reason of the inability of the characters to convert their economic terrain into political and philosophical moment, The Confidential Clerk becomes a farce of the classical pattern. The farcical moment of the play is evident from the fact that "as the action of the play is very subservient to the plot, character-development in the play has been relegated to a place of secondary importance". Through "flat and 1 featureless individuals", the plot of the play hinges upon "the characteristics of lost children, searching parents and mistaken identity." While working itself out, this farcical moment entangles

itself into the machinery of "illegitimacy, mistaken identity, the long-lost child, the dishonest-nurse, the astonished parent." Even when there is development in the plot, the play is not diverted of its farcical character for no one gets what he had desired. Lady Elizabeth gets for her son B.Kaghan whom she thoroughly dislikes and who dislikes her in return. Sir Claude has to be reconciled to accepting Lucasta as his daughter whom from the beginning he has known her to be his illegitimate daughter. Even Colby, in his heart of hearts, is not satisfied with having the dead Mr. Cuzzard, the "disappointed musician" (P.286) as his father. While becoming "an organist of a cathedral" (P.288) he substitutes himself for Mr. Eggerson's dead son.

However the play is not a farce in the usual sense of the word even though the farcical moment continues from beginning to end. It is an "ontological farce" as Gunther Anders would like to call it. As applicable to this play the word farce is reminiscent of "the high respect for farce that Eliot shows in his dramatic essays, where he speaks of it as the creation of a distorted but self-consistent world found in Rabelais, Dickens, and even Marlowe." For example, he regards Marlowe's work as farcical which "like some great painting and sculpture, attains its effects by something not unlike caricature." From this point

of view, The Confidential Clerk is "a different kind of farce, a comedy in which the structure has been deliberately over-complicated, and so turned up one notch from the conventional well-made play into parody of such a play."

Georges Cattaui calls it "light and sparkling, and yet poignant like a Mozart quartet or a sketch by Toulouse-Lautrec." Georges Cattaui is brilliantly correct in drawing analogy for the play from painting and music. As he himself has explained Toulouse-Lautrec has revealed through his sketches that "there are no noble subjects in art; that the meanest object, the humblest tool, can be given grandeur in painting; that in the trivial details of modern life, even in machines themselves, may be found as much poetry and beauty as in the most treasured antique jewellery." Similarly Mozart's quartets are marked with "compositional flexibility and effervescence and prove him to be a "pure musical peinture." This way their sketches and quartets are traditional and original like The Confidential Clerk itself.

While becoming an ontological farce or a serious parody of the conventional farce, the play remains in "the central tradition of European comedy, which first-flowered in Greek New Comedy, was transplanted to the Rome of Plautus and Terence and thence shed its seeds in all the countries of Europe, springing up early and late, for

instance, in Shakespeare's nursery. The strain grew sickly until Oscar Wilde cross-fertilised it with the comedy of manners and developed a brilliant new species in his hot house."

Thus become an ontological farce, the play gives a first impression of something like frivolity, i.e., the underpattern of serious meaning is "almost completely integrated with the pattern of event."

When this underpattern is decoded, it is found to be a sense of vocation "patterned upon the relationship of Heavenly Father."

If properly cultivated, this sense of vocation overwhelms a person with filial piety which is devotion to his father as his progenitor which binds him with the gods, to whom such an attitude is pleasing; to fail in it would be to be guilty of impiety also towards the gods." Such filial piety imparts metaphysical proportions to vocation as, for example, music becomes meta-music for Colby in the sense that in its practice he concerns himself not with its ontology, but with its mystery.

When such filial piety and sense of vocation are imbibed, there is occasioned imperatively an understanding between persons of one generation and those belonging to older and younger generations. Evidently, such a type of understanding develops between Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth. When the veil of misunderstanding is removed they come to realise the complexes from which they have suffered. Lady Elizabeth divulges that Sir Claude had always made her feel that she "was not worth talking to" (P.268), while Sir Claude discloses that she always made him

feel that her "interests were much too deep for discussion" (P.268). When at last it is proved that their natures are complementary, they feel that it does matter whose son Colby is declared to be; so long as he is of any one of them, he is theirs without any discrimination or distinction. "Whatever happens/ he shall be our son" (P.268), is her significant remark in this context. When it is proved that B.Kaghan is Lady Elizabeth's son but Colby is not Sir Claude's son, her heart goes out in sympathy for her husband. Then to Eggerson she says, "Yes, my poor Claudel Do try to help him, Eggerson." (P.289)

The type of understanding that develops between Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth is supplemented by one between them and their children. For example Lady Elizabeth's aversion to B. Kaghan changes into an affectionate understanding and she becomes fondly considerate towards Lucasta as well. Addressing them both she says, "And I'm very glad you're announcing your engagement, Lucasta, I shall take charge of your wedding."(P.283)

Towards the end of the play she wins Sir Claude to her way of considerate behaviour which elicits good response from Lucasta and B.Kaghan. Thus their last conversation shows them as members of a well-knit family:

Lady Elizabeth: I suppose that's true of you and me, Claude.

Between not knowing what other people want one,
And not knowing what one should ask of other people,
One does make mistakes. But I mean to do better,
Claude, We've got to try to understand our children.

Kaghan: And we should like to understand you ----

I mean, I'm including both of you,
Claude — and Aunt Elizabeth.
You know, Claude, both Lucasta and I
Would like to mean something to you — if you'd let us;
And We'd take the responsibility of meeting it.

(Lucasta puts her arms around Sir Claude)

Sir Claude: Don't leave me, Lucasta.

Eggerson! Do you really believe her?

(Eggerson nods) (P.291)

As Sir Claude, Lady Elizabeth, Lucasta and B. Kaghan realise themselves by integrating into a family, Colby redeems himself by leaving the family of Mrs. Guzzard. Consequently he joins a cathedral but life in the cathedral does not isolate him from the stream of social life as Celia is isolated by her departure to Kinkanja and Harry by his departure to an indeterminate place. While living in the cathedral, he is expected to keep up contacts with Eggerson who, though the only Christian character in the play, takes part in the affairs of the world. Thus redemption in the play entails awareness of social life, through living it. This, in short, is the truth-content that as underpattern emerges from the subject matter taken from the life of the supercity.

A backward dimension in time but with simultaneous meanings, accrues to this underpattern from Ion of Euripides which the design of the play articulates forcefully but inobtrusively. Ion, to which The Confidential Clerk owes "the infra-structure of the action", has several parallels with it. As philip R. Headings has remarked, "In addition to the lost children, the searching parents, and the mistaken identities,

the casts of characters and the basic plots are similar." In *Ion*
Xanthos, whose marriage to Creusa the princess of Athens, has produced
no children, goes to the Delphic Oracle to invoke blessings upon himself
and his wife. Apollo, who several years back had ravished Creusa and
begotten Ion, declares that Xanthos should adopt as his son the person
whom he first encounters on leaving the precincts of the temple. As
Apollo has contrived this person happens to be Ion. At first Ion hesitates
to accompany Xanthos to Athens probably because he does not want to
forsake the tranquillity of the Delphic temple for the disturbance of
Athens. However, he agrees to go to the court when Xanthos impresses
upon him the need to accept his destiny. As he had apprehended, Ion has
no easy time in Athens. Creusa regards him as usurper and tries to get
him poisoned through her old servant. Luckily Ion survives and his
situation improves when Pallas Athene appears on behalf of Apollo and
confirms that he is Apollo's son begotten of Creusa. Now Ion accepts
the knowledge of his inheritance and agrees to succeed Xanthos to the
throne of Athens.

Thus *The Confidential Clerk* acquires this underpattern from
Ion which deals with the identity and parentage of a young man. Whereas
in *Ion*, the discovery of these factors concerns the fate of the kingdom,
in Eliot's play it relates to the angst of a few individuals. Thus the
scope of this discovery is reduced in spatial aspect which is in keeping
with the world-vision of Eliot that hinges upon the monad-like existence
of man in the modern times. Likewise, Ion is diffracted into Colby and
B. Kaghan: Colby inclined to the tranquillity of isolated living and

B. Kaghan committed to achieve his purpose through social living. This diffraction is again in keeping with the disintegration of the personality of modern man. Similarly, fathers of Colby and B. Kaghan were artists, musician and poet, respectively. They professed the arts of which Apollo was the god, no matter that they practised them at a mediocre level while Apollo embodied them at a consummate and sublime level. A similar link is visible between Mrs Guzzard and Pallas Athene: Pallas Athene is an exalted goddess but Mrs Guzzard, "the dishonest nurse and the fairy god mother" in one breath, earns her livelihood by looking after the illegitimate children of others.

There are other, albeit, minor reverberations of Ion in the body of The Confidential Clerk. Like Xanthos, Sir Claude presumes that Colby is his son and tries to conceal this cherished presumption from his wife. Like Creusa, Lady Elizabeth has strong but frustrated material instinct and her visits to clinics in search of skills in spiritual remedies are only the depraved surrogates of Creusa's pilgrimages to holy places. Similarly Colby has psychological inhibitions corresponding with the religious and spiritual reservations of Ion.

The concord that prevails completely between Ion and The Confidential Clerk shows the dramatic unity that, as Helen Gardner has pointed out, "Mr. Eliot has not achieved before in a play." Elaborating her observation further she writes,

"No single one of the characters has a monopoly of wisdom or virtue, and no character exists simply to be despised or guyed. Each in his or her own way has glimpses of the truth and each is capable of suffering, because capable of love."

In other words, the theme is diffused in the whole design of the play. Naturally this diffusion imparts a lot of dramatic felicity to its plot. The play has a very natural beginning and the dramatic contrivances, B.Kaghan's entry with a loud knock and Lady Elizabeth's sudden arrival, are extremely relevant and natural. The duologues form the acme of dramatic dexterity: beginning at an informal note they reveal the inner selves of the characters where their sufferings and sorrows lie hidden even from themselves. Usually they start as conversation between two characters but as they come into being they encompass into their fold the living and the dead with whom their destinies are intertwined.

For example, the duologue between Sir Claude and Colby starts as an exchange of views over the confusion caused to their programme by the sudden arrival of Lady Elizabeth. They discover that their innermost selves are identical inasmuch as they have aimed at similar goals and suffered similar failures. Similarly, the duologue between Colby and Lucasta starts with Lucasta's appreciation of the musical composition that Colby has played upon the piano. As the duologue goes on, Colby almost falls in love with her and begins to feel that she is the person who is fit to be his life-long companion. But the mention of the living that this duologue contains, shatters the possibility of their love and marriage.

The net result of this smooth diffusion is that dramatic articulation remains at the conversational level with "the lowest multiple of poetry and drama" or more exactly dramatic poetry. Only at places in the duologues does this articulation become poetic by circumscribing round a formed symbol, i.e., the secret garden.

For example, enamoured of Colby, Lucasta expresses herself poetically:

"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." (P.245)

Accepting her compliment, Colby responds to her in the same poetic tone:

You may be right, up to a point.
And yet, you know, it's 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,
And there I am — alone in my garden,
Alone, that's the thing. That's why it's not real.
You know, I think Eggerson's garden
Is more real than mine. (P.245)

The image of the garden here does not reflect the cumulation of social experience and wisdom. It is, instead, a personal symbol with discontinuous but multiple implications developing from "a burden of meaning far beyond the meaning it has for everyone else." 1

Where this symbol does not occur, the language is transparent, precise and chaste and combines reticence with rigour. Like the language of Marianne Moore, it has "precision rather than purple" including verse as speech and altogether excluding verse as song. In other words, this language is of non-poetry in verse which pruned and chastened "offers no

1. Genesius Jones, Approach to the Purpose, Hodder Stoughton 1964 P.186
opportunity for elevated poetic speech." So much so that "the most moving encounters between Colby and Sir Claude, and Colby and Lucasta, are so restrained and controlled, that the actors can not attempt "to raise their voices and speak the lines as obvious verse, without getting out of character."

Eliot achieves this nearness to speech or what Valery might have called "magnetism of the voice" through his usual method of writing lines of varying length and varying number of syllables, with a caesura and three stresses. The caesura and the three stresses go on changing places, when intense expression is the aim the caesura and the stresses are brought closer by reducing the number of unstressed syllables. This reduction of the intervening space tightens the rhythm and intensifies the expression. Elsewhere the caesura and the stresses are kept at distance and extension of intervening space lengthens the rhythm and slackens the expression.

For example the following articulation denotes intense expression:

... There are occasions

When I am transported ---- a different person,

Transfigured in the vision of some marvellous creation,

And I feel what the man must have felt when he made it. (P.237)

As against it, the following piece of conversation is quite antipodal to it in rhythm and expression:

This is Mr Eggerson, Mrs Guzzard;

My confidential Clerk. That is to say

Colby's predecessor, who recently but he knows

the whole story

For very many years. So I asked him to be present
I hope you don't mind. (P.277)

In a major portion of the play, the language is of non-poetry
but in no way can it be held to be equivalent to prose. This is because
symbiosis of elliptical and complementary sentences imparts an immediately
indicative and distantly subjunctive context to the speeches and duologues
of the characters. As Sean Lucy has explained,

"..... One can feel its potential power in the ease with
which it bridges the minor shifts of mood and intensity ....
in the complete lack of strain with which it deals with
themes and emotions which would cause difficulty in prose,
and in its unifying effect on the play as a whole through
its underlying rhythm."

Corraborating Sean Lucy's view, Joseph Chiari observes,

"..... to say that The Confidential Clerk could have been
written in prose or that it could have carried more poetry,
is to ask for something very different from what the author
tried to do or would have been willing to do. The kind of
poetry which some poetry-lovers would wish to see on the
stage cannot be associated with themes like that of The
Confidential Clerk or The Elder Statesman. It could only
be associated with heroic or emotion-laden themes, with
highly individualised and partially symbolic characters,
which require another poet-playwright and, above all,
another public."

No doubt the non-poetry of *The Confidential Clerk* is distinct from prose in its rhythm, tone and tempo. However to associate the anti-poetic poetry of *The Elder Statesman* with the non-poetry of *The Confidential Clerk* is to be charitable to Eliot's penultimate writing and uncharitable to his swan song in the genre of poetic drama. In *The Elder Statesman* Eliot again reclaims antipoetic poetry that he had put to use in *The Cocktail Party*. So in his last play he tries to come out of the blind alley into which non-poetry has led him in this play. Since the effort is only half-hearted, even there

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

---

In *The Elder Statesman*, Eliot develops further the theme of redemption that in *The Confidential Clerk* he has worked out as realisation imbibed by the members of family. Here realisation changes into love which, according to him, is the *sumnum bonum* of life. In fact, realisation, through what Eric Fromm calls "its basic elements ... of care, responsibility, respect and knowledge", is only basis of love which is the same whether it is mother's love for the child, man's love for fellow-man or erotic love between man and woman.

Eliot believes that by its completion in authenticity and intensity, love changes into meta-love as psychology and art change, respectively, into meta-psychology and meta-art in *The Cocktail Party* and *The Confidential Clerk*. When man is overwhelmed with meta-love, he spontaneously experiences the inter-play of immanence and transcendence in the sense that

"Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter."

In fact, this is the state that comes to occur "not in sequential time but in timeless moments of intuition which gather in themselves the simultaneity of all the attributes and relationships of the experience loved." At this stage love divests everybody of his possessive instinct but most of all it is the father who is thus divested. Being a modern surrogate of the primal father, he is apt to regard this instinct as universal in space and eternal in time whereas

2. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, New York 1943 PP.17, 18
the primal father regarded it sacrosanct because it brought him dividends in terms of power and pleasure through his domination of the men-folk and women-folk of the family. Life was then lived at the autochthonous level and the libidinal instincts of his wives as well as daughters were centred upon him.

Naturally it was a hegemonic offence unpalatable to the subaltern condition of the sons. They revolted against this ruthless domination to which the sons were subjected, they revolted against the father and subsequently their revolt drove the primal father to egoistic/passional consternation and the sons to a feeling of liberation. The primal father was saved from dissolution by his ego which, as Freud has pointed out, has "the task of representing the external world for the id and so of saving it; for the id blindly striving to gratify its instincts in complete disregard of the superior strength of the outside forces, could not otherwise escape annihilation." Thus the ego dethroned the pleasure-principle and substituted the reality-principle for it. But the ego was also modified because this substitution entailed serenity on the part of the father and reconciliation on the part of the sons.

With temporal and spatial variations, this life-process of primal times, forms the core of the subject-matter of The Elder Statesman in which Lord Claverton is the modern surrogate of the primal father. The terrain of this subject-matter is provided by political situation in the super-city in which a "diplomat" is likely to be taken as "a realistic politician". In fact they are not identical because the

diplomat tries to change "effectual reality" for the sake of his personal ends only. Unlike him, a realistic politician "wishes to create a new balance of forces. Therefore he bases himself on effectual reality regarding it not as something static or immobile but a relation of forces continually in continuous motion and shift of equilibrium."  

Lord Claverton is not a realistic politician in Gramsci's sense who may look at the political moment with the foresight of a man identifying history with philosophy. In fact, he is not even of the "political elite" of Eliot's hindsight who, in spite of his "universal concern with politics," may uphold "not the unity of organisation but the unity of nature," denoting further development of culture in organic complexity: culture at a more conscious level, but still the same culture. Due to his diplomatic nature Claverton goes out of the order of politics when he realises that he has committed such mistakes as had better remain anonymous. As Gomez tells him plainly,

"I dare say you did some mistake, Dick...  
That would account for your leaving politics  
And taking a conspicuous job in the city  
Where the Government could always consult you  
But of course didn't have to take your advice."(P.310)  

Thus the epithet "statesman" is given to him in pejoration. In the same pejorative way the word "elder" is attached to this epithet. He is not elder in the sense of being aware of tradition which is "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the...

P.172  
2. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, London 1962  
PP. 84,117,120
Instead his forte of being elder lies entirely in believing that others must be exploited for self-aggrandisement.

From the stand-point of foresight as well as hindsight, Lord Claverton's personal politics cannot but be disapproved. Foresight will not approve because his politics is a vulgar form of Ceasarism which, instead of being "quantitative/qualitative" and representing a passage in which innovations are so numerous, and of such a nature that they represent a complete revolution, is "in a limited fashion quantitative." It represents no passage from one type of State to another, but denotes only evolution of the same type of self-interest along unbroken lines. Hindsight disapproves of his activity because "being occupied with humanity only in the mass; it tends to separate itself from ethics." Its unethical stance "does not unite, it divides" and the division unleashes disruptive forces, particularly in his own self.

At antipodes to the Archbishop in Murder in the Cathedral, Lord Claverton has "a prudent devil" (P.309) in himself. He has all along imposed himself upon those who have helped him and shunned those who have sought his help. Even his relations with his wife, daughter and son have essentially been political in the limited and quantitative sense of the word. His married life has "not been altogether happy" (P.311) and he has adopted his wife's name because this adoption has

helped him rise in the political hierarchy. As long as they lived together, they understood neither the volitions nor the inhibitions in their mutual relations. There always lurked "a deep silence" between them and when she died, she lay

"Completely without interest in the life that lay behind her
And completely indifferent to what lay ahead of her." (P.342)

Similarly Lord Claverton's attitude towards his daughter, Monica, is possessive though she is discreet enough in her sensitiveness and subtlety to impart to it an aroma of deep love and affection. She is prudent enough to understand her father's need of her. As she explains to her fiancé, Charles, who complains of Lord Claverton's "calm possessive air" (P.298), there are "several good reasons" (P.299) for her being with her father. One reason is "his terror of being alone" because

"In the life he's led, he's never had to be alone,
And when he's been at home in the evening,
Even when he's reading, or busy with his papers
He needs some one else in the room with him,
Reading too - or just sitting - someone
Not occupied with anything that can't be interrupted
Some one to make a remark to now and then.
And mostly it's been me. (P.299)

The second reason is apparently opposed to the first: "it is his fear of being exposed to strangers" (P.300). The third is that he is far more ill than he actually seems.

In fact, the first two reasons are not each other's opposites
because politics as appropriation has been Claverton's only strong point. Political activity is "precisely the first moment or first level; the moment in which the superstructure is still in the unmediated phase of mere wishful affirmation, confused and still at an elementary stage." Since Claverton has been using this moment or level only for appropriating people to aggrandise himself, he has had around himself people symbolising not the popular will of humanity but the conglomeration of adulators and admirers. With the passage of time the wish to be thus surrounded, adulated and admired had become a reflex with him. Now when he has retired from politics, it is irrelevant on his part to hold on to this reflex and in his effort to divest himself of this reflex, he has isolated himself in his house. Because the whole process involves much more than simply retiring from a job, Claverton nurtures himself upon an illusion, by looking at his previous photographs, going through his previous speeches and ruminating over his previous achievements. He seeks relief in the exercise of comfortable memory. So comfort-seeking ruminations is precisely his gesture in the beginning. But memory, as Walter Benjamin holds, cannot be "the true measure of life." What to talk of profession, it cannot be vocation either. So for all this, he experiences loneliness like a nightmare.

The fear of being exposed to strangers is the antecedent of first the reason. In his effort to make comfortable memory the measure of his whole life, Claverton confines himself as far as possible to a life

of isolation. His dread of strangers is shown in his hypersensitive concern for his son Michael. He is all the time apprehensive that Michael is on the verge of repeating the mistakes which he had himself committed during the days of his youth. No wonder, Michael is an inferior analogue to his father. His rash driving and involvement with girls, form the simulacrum of his father's experiences, and justify Claverton's obsessive anxiety about him:

"I hope, he's not had another accident.
You know, after that last escapade of his,
I have lived in terror of his running over somebody,"
(P.327)

and

"Perhaps he's in trouble
With some woman or other." (P.327)

This obsessive anxiety drives Michael into a borderline situation wherein he regards himself as superfluous in the eyes of the world. In his desperate effort to salvage himself from this superfluity, he is led to embrace paternal and maternal surrogates in Gomez and Mrs Karghill. This desperate effort of his so much precludes his filial obligation that he evinces no interest in Claverton's offer of reconciliation.

Gomez and Mrs Karghill are spectres from Claverton's past. They are also related to him politically in the broad sense of the word. They try to appropriate him to their desolate selves but in the process draw no material gain. Stressing their spectral aspect, D.W. Harding has observed,

"They are ... like the Tempters of Murder in the Cathedral who bring Becket glimpses of his past phases and present
potentialities. The Tempters have something of the same tone, sinister in its assumed geniality, and something of the same perkiness of rhythm in their speech as Gomez and Mrs Karghill. To Beckett they brought temptations that had to be resisted. He had to pass beyond them to greater austerity. For Claverton the healing process is exactly the reverse; he must accept Gomez and Mrs Karghill as part of his past life and forgive himself."

Lord Claverton accepts "these self-justifying humanbeings" as "instruments of grace" as Harry ultimately accepts the Furies in The Family Reunion. This acceptance entails for him complete reversal of what he has upheld throughout life. No wonder his meetings with Gomez and Mrs Karghill are important from the point of view of locale, gesture and gesticulation, etc.

Claverton meets Gomez in the library which is the fittest place for him to exercise comfortable memory. He is busy reflecting over the rigmarole of pleasant memories when suddenly and unexpectedly Gomez assaults the world of his privacy. A guest who feels more at home at the host's house than even the host can do, he utilizes his gesture of assertion to the maximum extent. In a cynical and sardonic way he reveals to Claverton the corruption to which he subjected himself by possessing Gomez under the garb of friendliness. He is not wrong in his accusation because if the preconditions of friendliness

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are that it "does not consist in doing small things casually, but in
doing the very greatest things as though they were the smallest ...
that it does not abolish the distance between human beings but brings
that distance to life", he surely has failed to fulfil "the minimum
programme of humanity."

Claverton's conversation with Gomez is an excruciating effort.
Actuating the cinematographic technique of the flash-back, their
conversation pinpoints Gomez's petty-bourgeois origin that had brought
him under the malignant influence of Lord Claverton. Claverton
appropriated Gomez in such a way that he made him adopt "expansive
tastes" (P.309) in adolescence and indulged in "defalcation and forgery"
(P.310) in early manhood.

In the highly urbanised and legally structured system of the
supercity, this adventure of Gomez was bound to prove a misadventure.
He had to emigrate to San Marco, a less urbanised and more jettisoned
country of Central America, where he could indulge in this adventure
with far less fear of being brought to book. Assuming a different name
and fabricating different personality, he indulged in "systematic
corruption" but by "remaining on the right side of law" (P.305). For
twenty years he has been away from his native country and now when he
is back he feels a stranger here. He claims Claverton's company
ostensibly to attenuate his feeling of loneliness but essentially to
accentuate Claverton's guilt-complex. Like a cinematographic close-up
his conversation centres upon an incident when Claverton, then Dick,
ran over an already dead man but refused to stop the car for fear of

1. Walter Benjamin, Understanding Brecht, NLB, London 1973 PP.73,74
owning the responsibility for the accident.

Rendered without an argument by what D.E. Jones has called "the bitter cynicism" of his adversary's talk, Claverton accepts Gomez as a spectre of his past. While on the one hand this acceptance shows Gomez as a sinister individual on the other, it underscores Claverton's humanity and humility. As Joseph Chiari has remarked, "He is no prig like his distant relation Harry Monchensey; he does not try to be a saint or to blame anyone for his failings; he only blames himself, even if he overstresses the blame." The sinisterness of Gomez becomes further noticeable for the fact that but for Claverton's failing as a friend, he must have remained a petty-bourgeois and never risen, even in a foreign country, to a higher stratum in society. The fact that though aware of his contingent role Claverton never stresses it, shows that he is "very human .... mon semblable mon frere, leaving out the hypocrite which he is not." Instead, "he is too clear-sighted for that and too intent on his moral responsibilities."

Claverton's humanity and humility are brought into focus even more by his encounter with Mrs Karghill, the female counterpart of Gomez. She meets Claverton in the sanatorium where he is expected physically and mentally to recollect "temporary failures, irreflective aberrations/reckless surrenders, unexplainable impulses" (P.340) rather than pleasant memories over which he has been ruminating in his library. Metaphorically, a Thames-daughter of the play, Mrs Karghill is still fascinated by her previous name Maise Montjoy. She had this bewitching name as a music-hall actress when after her seduction by Dick, she

extracted from him a large amount of money by holding out the threat of blackmail. In spite of its disconsolate end, the affair still lurks in her memory. Hurting it out as if it were a fixation, she confesses

"Men live by forgetting —— women live on memories,"(P.323)

and

"— you touched my soul ——

Pawed it, perhaps, and the touch still lingers."(P.325)

The reason for this fixation may be that Claverton as Dick had not valued her love qualitatively. His valuation of it was markedly quantitative, i.e., he could have married her if the marriage had been politically helpful. Since it could not be so on account of her family-background being petty-bourgeois, he did not marry her but ended this brief infatuation on a note of mutual satisfaction. Now in spite of her two marriages which have brought her financial dividends, this memory still haunts her. Quoting a friend, she tells him that "he has been kept from real vice, like Baudelaire's lecteur, not by virtue, but by the counter-vides of laziness and cowardice:" "That man is hollow". That's what she said.

Or did she say "yellow"? I'm not quite sure."(P.321)

Listening to her Claverton feels that while he has so far been trying to show only a profile of himself, her penetrating remarks forward a frontal view of his inner self. He accepts her also as a spectre of his past, further impelling him "to win pardon, compassion and true humility by achieving self-awareness." Through confession and

contrition, this impulsion imparts to him an elongated posture reminiscent of El Greco's personages who seem to experience this elongation with far greater intensity. In Claverton's case this elongation is signified by his standing posture under the beach tree and of its impulse from within by his confession to Monica and Charles.

The experience of confession and contrition makes Claverton an "Ibsenian character" with "extra-naturalistic dimensions." As a result, the play acquires a well-knit design with mythical proportions. It does not become a montage even though it makes use of the flash-back and the close-up because in montage "the juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resembles not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot — as it does a creation. It resembles a creation — rather than a sum of its parts — from the circumstance that in every juxtaposition the result is qualitatively distinguishable from each component element viewed separately."

This is precisely not the case because by thinning out brute motivation, the playwright has conferred on the characters "a luminous miracle play simplicity." Claverton's humanity and humility remain comparatively hollow because they are not contested by vanity or "an exaggerated opinion of one's own importance" implicit in passing a general moral judgement upon one's life as a whole. Similarly, the characters tend to oversimplify their relationships at the moment of

2. Serge Einsenstein, The Film Sense, Faber & Faber, London (N.D.) P.17
crisis. Claverton's relationship with his wife gets only casual mention; the moral complicity of his relationship with Gomez and Mrs Karghill does not show itself in all its convoluted complexity; and it is sheer sentimentalism in which his relationship with Monica has its beginning and end. It is only Claverton's relationship with Michael that keeps up its psychic gravity and dramatic momentum and does not let the third act become an epilogue.

However, this well-knit design of the play transfigures itself through the mythical aroma that emanates from it. The mythical aroma is of Oedipus at Colonus supervening into the design of The Elder Statesman in a "structural and qualitative" way. Both the plays hinge upon hero's transfiguration consequent upon his sufferings. Having realised that he has acted heinously in killing his father and marrying his mother, Oedipus gorges out his eyes and wanders about like a beggar stricken with penitence and affliction. Claverton does not suffer so overwhelmingly as Oedipus because Eliot's historical sense, or rather historicist sense holds that modern man has lost the physical and spiritual strength to suffer like the mythical personage. So Claverton's successful failures and failed successes have combined to make him a pitiable being.

To bring their likeness and unlikeness further into focus, Eliot has imparted to Gomez and Mrs Karghill something of the authenticity of the mythical Furies. Whereas the Furies in Oedipus at Colonus embody the irrevocability of man's relationship with nature, Gomez and Mrs Karghill annihilate themselves into the subjective.

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distortions of Claverton's mind, the cause of his isolated individuality. Being subjective and distorted Gomez and Mrs Karghill only accuse Claverton while the Furies, being the ideal image of the autochthonous culture, both accuse and excuse Oedipus. This isolation of Claverton's individuality accords with Eliot's historicist vision which can read nothing but negative significance in flux and history.

Eliot's historicist vision contributes no less in determining father/daughter and father/son relationships. In Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone not only serves her suffering father but she suffers along with him because devotion to the pater familias is the core of her being. Since daughter here is a humanbeing in her own right, Sophocles creates both qualitative and a quantitative scope for her devotion to manifest itself. For example Antigone is devoted to her father to the absolute extent, but Ismene is distracted from exercising such devotion by several extraneous factors.

In The Elder Statesman the qualitative aspect of this relationship is deepened but its quantitative aspect is narrowed. Instead of being only Antigone's surrogate, Monica is "Antigone-Marina" because she simultaneously looks after and regenerates her father. However, she has not to exhaust the possibilities of her faculties as Antigone has to do because only a very short duration of time is allotted to her for this purpose. As a result, her role is more symbolical than actual because being over-determined, symbol can connote its possibilities without denoting them. Her role being over-determined, Charles, her fiance, does not act as Ismene though conceptually he adjusts himself in that role. Unable to choose an independent role for himself, he

undemurringly assumes the role that Monica has chalked out for herself.

Both Oedipus and Claverton have sons with whom they enter into bitter recriminations. Having agreed with the citizens of Thebes that Oedipus be turned out of the kingdom, Polyneices had behaved ignobly. In this way he had behaved as the antithesis of Antigone who, despite everything, had kept her father's company. Now oblivious of his whole ingratitude, he has come to his father to seek his blessings to regain the throne usurped from him by his younger brother. But bitter over his son's past treatment of him, Oedipus curses him and drives him away.

Like Polyneices, Michael is also in conflict with his father. But he is unlike Polyneices, in that he is not responsible for this conflict whose roots go to the coldness that prevailed between his father and mother. As Monica remarks,

"Poor Michael! Mother spoilt him
And Father was too severe — so they are always at loggerheads. (P.299)

Thus injustice has been done by Claverton to Michael rather by Michael to Claverton. Feeling alienated from the father in the beginning and spurning him towards the end, Michael goes away even though by then the father has realised his mistake:

1. Claverton's injustice to Michael remains within the limits of the Christian ethos. For example it is not rigorous to the extent to which it is under the burden of Jewish ethos in Kafka where in Walter Benjamin's words (Illuminations P.114) fathers "batten on their sons, lying on the top of them like giant parasites. They not only prey upon their strength, but gnaw away at the son's right to exist ... The sin of which they accuse their sons seems to be a kind of original sin."
I have something to say to you,
Michael before you go. I shall never repudiate you
Though you repudiate me, 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.(P.350)

Surely this change accords with life in the super-city where "the modern father is not an affective representative of the reality-principle, and the loosening of sexual morality makes it easier to overcome the Oedipus complex: the struggle against the father loses much of its decisive psychological significance."

Along with these factors common to both the plays, The Elder Statesman makes certain exceptions particularly in avoiding Tiresias and Creon as characters. In fact, Claverton needs "no Tiresias to reveal to him the truth of his guilt; he knows it perhaps with a rather disproportionate sense of its importance, for it is at all moments difficult to cast the same severity as he does upon the minor failings of his youth." A man of the super-city, Claverton is in need of awareness rather than of knowledge, of self-knowledge rather than information to be supplied by a third person. Similarly "there is no need of a Creon" because the gods are to be invoked — if at all — only obliquely and apologetically". And this invocation requires no

valency to balance itself with some hegemonic structure. Likewise, no chorus is required because the wisdom that Claverton is to imbibe, has to be the epic side of the truth of his own experience.

Love is the verity of the wisdom that Claverton imbibes after much self-mortification and self-realisation. Laying bare the essence of it to Monica, Claverton remarks,

"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.
It is worth while dying, to find out what life is.
And I love you, my daughter, the more truly for knowing
That there is someone you love more than your father —
That you love and are loved. And now that I love Michael
I think for the first time —— remember, my dear,
I am only a beginner in the practice of loving ——
Well, that is something." (P.354)

No doubt Claverton's discourse echoes the meaning of love contained in the final words of Oedipus:

"One word
Makes all those difficulties disappear:
That word is love."

Nevertheless Oedipus and Claverton envision differing ontologies of love. Oedipus regards it as elixir required to permeate all human

1. Oedipus at Colonus English version by Robert Fitzgerald, New York 1941 P.130
relationships actuated by the family, the state and civic society. Claverton takes family as the node of love and social and political spheres are according to him extensions of the family life.

Thus, love in The Elder Statesman is a metaphysical and eternal zeitgeist while it is a philosophical and universal weltanschauung in Oedipus at Colonus. No wonder its characters, in stead of realizing their being through becoming, are

"Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being." 

These characters do not, of course, become stereotypes, but they do not become differentiated personalities either. They remain subdued individuals in whom "spasms of the soul" are more powerful than "spasms of the diaphragm." Naturally, these characters vary from one another but their variety, being more of the soul than of the body, is a subdued one. This subdued variety is reflected adequately in the language of these characters wherein

"Lord Claverton's slightly stilted manner of speech, with its steady rhythm and careful choice of word — the result of years of responsible public speaking — is contrasted, for instance, with the manner of Gomez, whose flexible, wily, insinuating rhythm is balanced by raciness of idiom, and with that of Mrs Karghill, who flits or gushes, but almost never rises above the commonplace phrase that such a person would subsist on. She probably has the most characteristic style of any

1. T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, New York 1943 P.8
characters in the play, and her loquacity has a very amusing extension in Effie, whose comments are always so much to the purpose that one begins to wonder whether she is not, like Mrs Gamp's friend, a convenient second self, even though there is evidence for her existence. Successful though Mrs Carghill and Effie are as comic creations, however, they do not entirely hide the risk the poetic dramatist takes in emulating the banality of ordinary speech. We recall that Shakespeare was able to use prose for such characters and that, in any case, he tended to exploit the picturesque potentialities of vulgar speech."

In an interview, Eliot himself has confessed, "The Elder Statesman goes further in getting more poetry in, at any rate, than The Confidential Clerk did." For example, Monica speaks poetically when she reflects over the mystery of love:

It crept so softly
On silent feet, and stood behind my back
Quietly, a long time, a long time
Before I felt its presence. (P.298)

Similarly, Mrs Karghill is quite poetic when she talks in retrospect of her love-experience. But most poetic of them all is Claverton when he feels exasperated to know that Michael is going indeterminately to a foreign country:

2. 'Donald Hall's interview of T.S.Eliot' included in Writers at Work, Penguin Books London 1972 P.124
Oh Michael! If you had some aim of high achievement
Some dream of excellence, how gladly would I help you!
Even though it carried you away from me forever
To suffer the monotonous sun of the tropics
Or shiver in the northern night. (P.333)

Quite distinct from these poetic moments are the anti-poetic moments wherein Claverton descends down to the rock-bottom substratum of his existential condition. To bring these moments to life, he employs diathetical language and photographic imagery such as in the following passages:

It's like telling a man he mustn't run for trains
When the last thing he wants is to take a train for anywhere! (P.302)

How gladly would I face death! But waiting, simply waiting
With no desire to act, yet a loathing of inaction.
A fear of vacuum, and no desire to fill it.
It's just like sitting in an empty waiting room
In a railway station on a branch line,
After the last train, after all the other passengers
Have left, and the booking office is closed
And the porters have gone. (P.302)

To work out the isolation of the moment, Claverton employs the language of the film-shot where the verb is without the object or the predicate is without the subject. However, the grammatically incomplete sentences are so folded within grammatically complete sentences that they are able to perform their indicative function with great dexterity.

The image employed at such a moment is the photographic one.
which though "enters the consciousness and perception through aggregation, every detail is preserved in sensations and memory as part of the whole." As Serge Eisenstein has further remarked, "This obtains whether it is a sound image — some rhythmic or melodic sequence of sounds, or whether it be a plastic, a visual image, embracing in pictorial form a remembered series of separate elements."

Claverton's image of the desolate railway station aggregates the visual after-image of trains receding into the horizon and auditory after-image of foot-steps vanishing into silence. The total impact of the aggregation of these parts is powerful enough to imprint itself as what Adorno would like to call "the ancient symbolism of the voyage" converging on the dead end of "death symbolism."

Correlative with the aggregate photographic image is the symbol of the beech-tree, the door and the garden, etc., which works out the subjunctive tone originating from the indicative pattern but all the time having the urge to transcend it. Charles and Monica significantly use such symbols to identify the transfiguring grace that has accrued to Claverton after the self-mortification to which he subjected himself for self-realisation. As Charles observes,

"He's a very different man from the man he used to be. It's as if he had passed through some door unseen by us and had turned and was looking back at us with a glance of farewell." (P.354)

Similar is Monica's observation:

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1. Serge Eisenstein, The Film Sense, Faber and Faber, London (N.D.) P.23
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. (P.355)

These poetic and anti-poetic moments are borderline
situations of the pattern which essentially is couched in non-poetry.
This non-poetry cannot be confused with prose. As Alverez has remarked,
"There is always an element of design in it, which goes with the
earlier experimentation and with the formal perfection he has attained."
This element of design is worked out through the rhythmical flow and
transparent tonality of this non-poetry.

Obviously, Eliot seems to have given as much attention to the
versification as to the structure of the play. All the same, Eliot
does not feel to have attained his aim. As he himself remarks, "I
don't feel that I've got to the point I aim at and I don't think I
ever will, but I would like to feel that I was getting a little nearer
to it each time." What poetic-dramatic pattern this aim could have
realised, is difficult to envision. Eliot has himself left his own
vision of it on a note of speculation. Anyway it could not have been
the pattern of montage though from Murder in the Cathedral onwards he
more and more appropriates the cognate principles of montage to the
pattern which is dramatically naturalistic and poetically anti-
naturalistic at the same time. The pattern of montage can be realised

in its wholeness only by a dramatist, who like Brecht may believe in the historical immanence of reality. For Eliot immanence of reality is only a point of departure to realise its transcendence into eternity. No wonder, he has the instinct to regard the montage as a method to capture the infinite, sudden or subterranean connections of dissimilars, but at the same time to annihilate it for transfiguring reality with eternity. Unlike Brecht, his effort is not poetically and dramatically to match the present development of film and radio in theatre which can be "the only theatre for our time." In Eliot's case it is more appropriate only to speculate,

"For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business."

2. T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, New York 1943 P.17