Towards a new kind of sublimity: liturgy and incarnation in the dramatic work of T.S. Eliot

Orr, Marilyn Iris

TOWARDS A "NEW KIND OF SUBLIMITY":

LITURGY AND INCARNATION IN THE DRAMATIC WORK OF T. S. ELIOT

MARILYN IRIS ORR

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

The University of Durham
Department of Theology

1981

ABSTRACT

Towards a "new kind of sublimity":
Liturgy and Incarnation in the Dramatic Work
of T. S. Eliot

Marilyn Iris Orr

This thesis examines T. S. Eliot's last four plays, written for secular theatre with a view to the dramatization of Christian truths. It focusses on the liturgy, which is the Church's corporate dramatization of faith in worship of God; and the Incarnation, which is the basis for Christian faith and liturgy, and which provides the Christian dramatist with a model for bringing words to life in dramatic action.

The first chapter begins with an introduction to the Christian liturgy, and specifically the liturgy of the Church of England which Eliot joined in 1927, and its relationship to drama. This is followed by an introduction to Eliot in terms of the development of his faith, as this is reflected in creative and critical works, with a focus on his understanding of the liturgy and the Incarnation. These provide him with a basis for dramatic efforts, with redemption as his subject.

Each of the four chapters that follow deals with a particular play in this light. The Family Reunion (1939) is seen to reflect a primitive understanding of the Incarnation and the liturgy, which corresponds to an undeveloped sense of drama. The Cocktail Party (1949) manifests a focus on the Incarnation and Passion of Christ which results in a more fully conceived Christian understanding and a more fully conceived play. The Confidential Clerk (1953) is a technically refined product but a lack of dramatic life reflects Eliot's still limited sense of the implications of the Incarnation. The Elder Statesman (1958) reflects Eliot's deepened understanding of the Incarnation and its basis of love. Its story is analogous to the Incarnation of Christ and provides a context out of which liturgical rites evolve.

The plays reflect a development in Eliot's Christian understanding in their movement towards simplicity of style and language, towards an appreciation of ordinary life, towards experienced faith and away from intellectualism. With the last play this development is still in process, but the process itself is illustrative of redemption.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

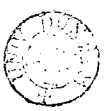
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the liturgical presence in the plays that T. S. Eliot wrote for the secular theatre. "The drama was originally ritual ...", he wrote in 1923; "drama springs from religious liturgy", in 1928; and, in 1949, "What poetry should do in the theatre is a humble shadow or analogy of the Incarnation ...".[1] These suggest a development of his interest from ritual to liturgy and the Incarnation which is reflected in the plays.

We begin our study with an introduction to the Christian liturgy. Because of Eliot's adherence to the Church of England, and its off-shoots in the more Catholic wing of the Church of England,[2] the text for our discussion will be the formulation of the liturgy that was established for that Church in 1662.

Eliot became a member of the Church of England in 1927. It is reasonable to assume that he was exposed to the 1928 Alternative to the Book of Common Prayer, especially since that version was in fairly common usage in the Catholic wing of the Church. However, as we have no reason to think that his experience was confined to either the 1662 version or the 1928 Alternative, we will use the earlier version as our basic text and refer to the other as it seems appropriate.

Eliot's work predates any of the alternatives produced by the Church in more recent years. The fact that there has been a liturgical revolution that has led to the Alternative Service Book (1980) indicates a change in thinking that sets his plays in a liturgical context very different from our own.



From our introduction to the liturgy we will proceed to a discussion of the relationship between liturgy and drama, and thence to Eliot's understanding of this relationship, and to his plays.

Because, as Gregory Dix says, "the study of liturgy is above all a study of life",[3] in all its growth and change and multiplicity, it is more easily described than defined. He calls it "the worshipping act of the Body of Christ towards God, by which His eternal kingdom 'comes' in time."[4] Another writer makes this attempt: "it is the communal celebration by the Church which is Christ's body and in which he with the Holy Spirit is active, of the paschal mystery. Through this celebration, which is by nature sacramental, Christ, the high priest of the community, makes present and available to men and women of today the reality of his salvation."[5] Liturgy is more than the prayer of the Church; it is more than its language. It gives shape to Christian worship of God, providing a structure of words and actions designed to facilitate the meeting of God and his people at "the throne of the heavenly grace."[6] The liturgy evolves as men seek to perfect their worship and its expression. At the same time, it is a corporate and universal act, declaring the "inescapable solidarity of all christians"[7] of all the world, of all the ages. Thus, carrying the weight of the history of the Church, it is an organic and dynamic thing. It is as a work of art of many hands, always awaiting completion and perfection. It reflects the participation of countless men through the ages and grows and deepens with each affirmation. Although the liturgy is only a shadow of the original, with the reality only as of drama

in comparison with a historical event, there is a sense in which it becomes more and more substantial with every re-enactment. It is, in fact, dependent upon the participation of God and of every individual for its present actualization. The mysterious relationship between the event and the liturgy is such that the projection of the shadow and the performance of the drama invests the eternal event with its present reality.

The Church believes her liturgy to be a formalized and elaborated working upon a pattern of words and actions instituted by her founder and inspired by his Spirit. It is his natural offspring, a child of his creation and not a product of her construction. Just as it traces its origins to specific historical occasions, its structure takes its shape from the arrangement and ordering of specific historical events and vital concepts. The central action of the liturgy is the Eucharist which represents the central action of the life of Christ Incarnate, his death and resurrection for the redemption of men. The particular way in which events are recorded and concepts represented in the liturgy reflects a particular interpretation of the meaning of the history of mankind and the Church, in the light of creation and redemption. Although the liturgy is composed around the particular events in the life of a particular man at a particular time and place, the identity of this man as the consummation of all life and all history accords the liturgy a universal and eternal significance. Because of him, the Eucharist has "this power of laying hold of human life, of grasping it not only in the abstract but in the particular concrete realities of it, of reaching to anything

in it, great impersonal things that rock whole nations and little tender human things of one man's or one woman's living and dying - laying hold of them and translating them into something beyond time."[8] The Incarnation of Christ implies this very particular concrete personal reality, and this universality, in the mutual illumination of time and eternity, of human and divine.

The liturgy is as a kind of picture of the Incarnation, and of the Christian understanding of man himself, in whom the earthly and heavenly meet. Its curious doubleness reflects its dual origin, at the hand of God and man. The term "coinherence" which Charles Williams applies to the nature of Christ might be applied to the interpenetration and mutuality of the dual nature of the liturgy. It is at once a private and individual act and a corporate and social act, and thus bears witness to the relationship between man and man and between man and God. It reflects as well a curious balancing of public and private interests. What is an intimate avowal of love between Christ and his bride is read to the watching world as a proclamation of his largesse and accessibility. The liturgy is also doubly composed of a spiritual and physical dimension. Material elements lend substance to what is immaterial; material elements are informed with immaterial reality. This illustrates the quality of contingency that is basic to the liturgy and to the Incarnation. Both express the ultimate and absolute contingency of man the creature, dependent upon his creator. At the same time, the voluntary contingency of God, who submits himself to flesh for the embodiment of spiritual realities, is represented. This man who "was not merely a man, but God incarnate and

representative Man", whose "complete sacrifice of himself to God is the potential redemption of all human circumstances, of the whole of time and human history",[9] this man "did not cling to equality with God" but "humbled himself" and was born in the likeness of men.[10] This paradox, that is the Word become flesh of the Incarnation, is the burden of the Christian liturgy.

Drama is of the essence of liturgy whose words and actions compose a dramatization of the redemption of the world, which is the purpose of Christ's Incarnation. Whether or not it can be affirmed with quite the confidence of "E", of Eliot's "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", that "drama springs from religious liturgy", the relationship between the two has long been widely recognized as ancient and deep.[11]

The starting point of the relationship is perhaps man's consciousness of himself as a being who is separate from the world around him, and of the world around him as something which exists in its own right, independently of him. Whatever its motivations, and whether they are common or distinct, man's response to this consciousness is basic to both liturgy and drama. Both represent and reorder something of the world, and reflect some conception of the relationship between man and the world.

Liturgy and drama each consist in a certain order of words and actions. Their common subject, man and his world, is dramatized in the form of myths, whose action consists in rituals and whose language is images and symbols. All is ordered to a certain rhythm, the pulse of life itself, with which Eliot says, it all begins.[12] The landmarks of man's life are

birth, marriage and death. These events are the beginning, the middle and the end of the story of human experience. The basic units of meaning by which primitive man structured his experience, for purposes of liturgy and of drama, are thought to have been myths.[13]

Myths are narrative accounts without inherent historical actuality depicting some aspect of human experience. The components of myth are archetypes that symbolize or embody particular elements of the reality it represents, and archetypal patterns by which the reality is organized and given shape. A myth is a kind of distillation of experience which expresses its essential structure. It is a concrete version of something which exists only in abstract terms. It is the kernel of meaning that may only live and move and have its being as it is clothed in the particularities of experience. It is in a sense the meeting-place of the physical and the metaphysical, and thus is a kind of image of the mysterious nature of man himself. Each man is Everyman and yet not any man at all except as he lives out the particular uniqueness of his experience: as he becomes more and more himself, he becomes more and more Everyman. A like paradox is evident with regard to man's experiences: the more unique and particular an experience is, the more universal and common it is seen to be, and the closer does it approximate what Karl Mannheim has called a "primordial experience".[14] Myths consist, in his terms, in the "primordial images or archetypes" that depict and organize these experiences. A myth is a strange admixture of the concrete and the abstract, the particular and the general, and from this it derives its peculiar quality of reality.

Drama and liturgy are each dependent for their development on a common mythology. Within this, symbols function as vehicles of meaning. They act as interpreters for man, providing terms of references for translating his experience into understanding. They allow men to conceptualize, focus and organize fragments of reality, "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history",[15] into a whole pattern. "Human kind cannot bear too much reality" and these containers of meaning offer man a sense of order and control. This is true at an individual level as well as at a social level. Around particular symbols or configurations of symbols are myths that tell the story of some aspect of reality that is fundamental to a person or group of people.

Mannheim identifies the "archetypal or primordial experiences" of which myths are made as essential to society and to human life itself. In Diagnosis of Our Time, he writes:

> It is their disappearance without anything to take their place which leads to the disintegration of modern life-experience and human conduct. Without paradigmatic experiences or consistent conduct, no character formation and no real human coexistence and cooperation are possible. Without them the universe of discourse loses its articulation, conduct falls to pieces, and only disconnected bits of successful behaviour patterns and fragments of adjustment to an ever-changing environment remain ... This only atomizes the life of the individual and replaces the idea of a character by a kaleidoscopic concept of life; it makes coordination of social action equally impossible ... 16

The relationship between drama and liturgy, and their integral relationship to life is pointed up when he says that these experiences "lend life a dramatic significance", and goes on:

> Cooperation and common action in society are only possible where the same things mean more or less the same experience to everyone in society ... paradigmatic meaning is attached

> not only to static things but also to processes. Collective action will move towards a climax, and it is this dramatization which makes for real participation. 17

As examples of "archetypal or primordial images" he cites "the Hero, the Sage, the Virgo, the Saint, the Repentant; or, dominating the realm of the Christian imagination: Baptism, Absolution, Agape, the Eucharist, the Good Shepherd, the Cross, Redemption."[18] A common system of meaning, then, makes both liturgy and drama possible. Indeed the language of drama consists in a structure of rituals, images, symbols, not to mention words and actions, that have become conventions and "conventions", Northrop Frye says, "are descended from myths".[19]

The existence of myths and rituals and symbols, and conventions, as well as language itself, is in part to be explained by the phenomenon that repetition of an action or sound reinforces its significance and elaborates its meaning, such that in time the action or sound evokes the reality it originally only described and pronounces the significance and the meaning with which it has been invested. This is an operating principle of religious liturgy as well as of Eliot's plays. In liturgy and drama, common structure and repetition to enforce its rhythm breed familiarity and participation. They release the peculiar magic that is operative in liturgy and drama, the power of word and action to actualize what they describe and dramatize.

The Christian liturgy is, in fact, the dramatic presentation of a religion that is built upon a belief in the power of the word and action. The Church was given life through the drama of redemptive word and action and sustains her life only as she participates in it. Her scriptures

outline "the way of life" and her founder has "the words of eternal life". Drama and life were forever bound together when "God spoke ... and it was", and when "the Word became flesh" in Christ. The liturgy is meant to invoke this mystery. Inherent in its design is the belief that worship is fundamental to the nature of man. Its patterns are meant to provide a form for the expression of a natural impulse.

The Christian liturgy not only proclaims but actualizes the triumph of life in Christ, to the glory of God. As Christians are drawn into the structure that it provides, the Church behaves as if she were the worshipping community that she is intended to be. As she enacts the drama of redemption she is acted upon, becoming transformed into the body of Christ. At the same time each person becomes, as the liturgical drama is enacted, the worshipping creature that he is meant to be and is thus transformed little by little, from glory unto glory, into the image of the one in whose life and death he participates, in whose image he is made. The liturgy echoes the faith spoken in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven ... for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory ...". It is at once a proclamation of an accomplished fact, an affirmation of an ongoing reality and a wish for a forthcoming consummation. In her worship the Church dramatizes the presence of the kingdom for which she waits, which came once and for all time with Christ's Incarnation and death.

Thus the structure of both liturgy and drama can be seen to be primary. Essential to their structure is a recognition of the separation between man and his world that amounts to a

recognition of the spectator-participant dichotomy that is fundamental to both liturgy and drama. At the same time the structure facilitates and orders a relationship between man and his world, thus allowing for and encouraging participation. Although form may be a hallmark of liturgy and drama, the impulse towards participation is its impetus and rationale. For primitive man, this impulse is widely believed to have been rooted in his sense of his own integral relationship with the world and of the sacred and significant character of life and the world. In Christian liturgy the fundamental structures and patterns of primitive liturgy are affirmed and redeemed. Continuity with pre-Christian understanding is based upon a belief in the redeemer of the world, who is also its creator. The craving for participation is answered in the Incarnation, through which God's participation with man and His creation and man's participation with God and with the world and with one another are affirmed and established.

The human element in the form of liturgy is redeemed by the participation of Christ, as his Incarnation becomes its cornerstone, its beginning and its end. The Christian liturgy is in a sense the descendant of the worship of primitive religions, for it is still the worship of men whose significant events are birth, marriage and death. It includes rites for the sanctification of these events and provides a place for their celebration. There is, however, one crucial difference: rather than being built around events in the lives of men, it is built around events in the life of the man Jesus Christ. It is composed of the significant events in the life of the Church in relationship with him. A special kind of birth,

marriage and death, determined by the Church's relationship to her "maker and husband" is celebrated in her liturgy.

The relationship between God and his Church and its members is structured with the help of the sacraments. A sacrament is defined by the Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."[20] In Augustine's description of a sacrament as "the visible word",[21] the liturgy itself, with its dramatic essence, is captured. The Anglican tradition recognizes two essential sacraments: Baptism, which signifies "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness", by which "we are hereby made children of grace"; and Holy Communion, which is "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits we receive thereby ... the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ".[22]

In Baptism, the believer is identified with Christ, in whose death the "old Adam" of his flesh is put to death and in whose resurrection "the new man" of his spirit is given life.[23] He is "regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church".[24] Thus, having been "made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven",[25] he is directed by God's grace "to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him".[26] Baptism signifies the entrance of the believer into the life of Christ and his Church. He who was born of the flesh is "born again ... of water and of the Spirit."[27] This is represented in the liturgical drama of the baptismal rite: water is poured to signify regeneration; the sign of the cross signifies the

faith of Christ's Church with which the baptized person is identified; and it is all done "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."[28]

Because of the unique importance of the sacrament of Holy Communion, which signifies the Christian's ongoing participation in Christ, we will engage in a fuller discussion of it after we have dealt with other aspects of the liturgy.

Besides the two official sacraments, other liturgical rites have been created by the Church, in order to ask God's blessing upon significant events in the life of his people.[29] Confirmation establishes the Christian in his commitment to Christ and his Church. The decision made in Baptism, which is often taken on behalf of the candidate, is confirmed by the "new creature" himself. He confesses his faith, affirming the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and their summation in Christ's command to love God and one's neighbour, as well as his understanding of the sacraments. The drama of confirmation is performed by the candidate and the Bishop, in the essential presence of the Church and with the participation of God. "Do ye here", the Bishop asks, "in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism ...?"[30] The laying on of hands is the liturgical action in confirmation.

Confession is intrinsic to the Christian faith and the life of the Church. It gives expression to the acknowledgement of sin, the will to repent and the assurance of forgiveness that are components of redemption. Corporate confession is part of the worship of the Church, and central to the Communion service, and individual confession is part of the ministry of Christians to one another, as well as being a

particular function of an ordained priest and, although not explicit, sacramental confession to a priest is part of the Catholic practise, with which Eliot was associated. The words of corporate confessions express the abandonment to God's mercy that is man's funamental posture in the drama of redemption. "We have erred and strayed like lost sheep ... And there is no health in us ... We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, ...", they say; "We do earnestly repent. And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings ...".[31] The priest, having joined in confession, stands then and faces the congregation to dramatize the forgiveness of God that he pronounces. Confession also represents the convergence of the liturgical and dramatic impulse in the fostering of relationship, between God and man and between man and man.

Another significant milestone in the lives of men is marked by the Church in her liturgy in the solemnization of the promise made by a man and a woman in marriage. Although it is not a sacrament in the official sense in the Church of England, the Church sees marriage as "an honourable estate, instituted by God ... signifying the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church" and thus a "holy estate" for which she asks his blessing.[32] In "holy Matrimony", the Church represents the redemption of the union of man and woman that is their natural desire. "It was ordained", the priest says "for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name ... for a remedy against sin" that married persons might "keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body", and for their 'mutual society, help, and comfort ..."[33].

Thus it signifies the redemption of the flesh and of human relationships, and the sacred character of human life itself. Their verbal pledge of love, honour, comfort and faithfulness is symbolized and dramatized in the actions of the liturgical drama. The woman is given to the man by her father or friend when the priest, representing God and the Church, places the woman's right hand in that of her intended husband. A ring "given and received is a token and pledge" of the "vow and covenant" they have made.[34] They kneel to ask God's blessing and their hands are again joined by the priest to signify that they are one in God's sight: "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."[35]

The dramatic character of the liturgy demands a human locus to act for "Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4: 13) and represent his Body. Consequently, the liturgy includes rites for the ordination of priests, deacons, bishops and others who are called to a role of particular responsibility within the Church.

The final landmark on the human journey through this world is solemnized in liturgical rites for those approaching death and for the burial of the dead. Because for the Christian death is the beginning of a new life in eternity, the liturgy directs men to see sickness as an occasion for the recovery or affirmation of spiritual health, and death as an occasion for regeneration or the affirmation of eternal life. Suffering is put in the context of God's mercy and goodness and power: "whom the Lord loves he chastens".[36] And "Death is swallowed up in victory",[37] attained for the faithful by Christ in his suffering and death. His are the words of eternal life: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith

the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."[38] Words and action again accord: "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust", the priest says as earth is scattered on the casket and it is buried. Thus is the spirit "delivered from the burden of the flesh" and lives with God "in joy and felicity" in his "eternal and everlasting kingdom."[39] It is significant to note that, although closely resembling the 1662 Order for the Burial of the Dead, the 1928 version tends towards the Catholic view, in including some prayer for the departed. When the priest says "Grant unto him eternal rest", the answer is "And let perpetual light shine upon him."[40] We will find allusions in Eliot's plays that are reminiscent of this.

Thus the Christian liturgy orders and dramatizes man's life in terms of his relationship with God, his father, his creator, his redeemer. The relationship is based upon this God becoming man in Jesus Christ and, as one writer puts it:

> ... the Incarnation makes possible, indeed demands, the sacramental vision of reality. The flesh, the world, things, are restored to dignity because they are made valid again ... No thing is insignificant ... whether he defines it or not, the Christian is compelled ... to believe in existence, in the act of existence. He is compelled to believe in the particularity, the uniqueness, the value, of things ... all things have their own separately structured, intrinsic actuality and value, while at the same time they participate proportionately in larger relationships and values which are moral and spiritual without ceasing to be actual, specific, concrete. The Word is made flesh without ceasing to be the Word. Nor is the flesh fleshless ... 41

The primitive sense of sacred significance is affirmed and redeemed in the sacramental perspective that characterizes Christian understanding, based as it is upon the Incarnation. The liturgical year, presenting, as Eliot says, "the full

drama of creation",[42] reflects the belief that God the redeemer of the world is God the creator, as creation is affirmed and redeemed. The Church year embodies her alternative perception of the world, by which she perceives a supernatural structure enclosing and ordering the process of nature, an eternal dimension informing and fulfilling the process of time and history. In it the Church accepts the realities of the natural earthly world and recognizes their spiritual meaning. She correlates natural and supernatural phenomena, offering an integrated picture of the spiritual and the empirical. Into this apparently "endless round" of season following season and day following day, this relentless and consoling rhythm of life and death, the creator of the world has entered. He breaks into the circle and encompasses it. The beginning and ending of his life in time give continuity and direction to life itself, because there is no beginning and no ending to his life in eternity. His participation in time and history redeem them for eternity. The Incarnation "absorbs, sacramentally, the cosmic into the historical order".[43]

According to the tradition of worship to which the Church of England belongs, the moment of Christ's escape from the bondage of mortality and temporality is celebrated on "Easter-day, on which the rest depend".[44] It proclaims the triumph of life and the sovereignty of God, which comprise the central and unifying theme of the Christian year. It provides for the calendar the reference point, the basis for understanding, and the key for interpretation that this theme provides for the reading of life. It is the event around which all other events move. Built into the very structure of her calendar,

then, is the Church's understanding not only of time and history but of life itself. The Church year, that is, is as much an interpretation of historical events as it is a recounting of them. Events are not seen apart from their meaning, but in terms of their meaning. The liturgical calendar attempts a translation - a carrying across - of the past into the present and the present into the past. This interplay is effected within the Church and the individual as they participate in the presence of past events. Although the objective and ultimate significance of the past events remains unchanged, their significance to the Church is enriched and deepened with every recollection. The structure of the Church year draws participants into a sense of involvement in a relationship that is older than themselves. In interpreting events simultaneously in terms of past, present and future, in the light of eternity, the Church year reflects this unique interplay: enfolded together and unfolded together, what always was, is now, and ever shall be.

The liturgical year is "admirably calculated to bring before us, year after year, the principle facts of the gospel history, and the important doctrines connected with these facts" such that the Christian might "commemorate Christ's living here on earth" and be directed "to live after his example".[45] Through the re-creation of the past something new is created in the present and the seeds are sown for future re-creation. Thus the theme that Easter proclaims - the triumph of life and the sovereignty of God - runs through the structure of the year, reconciling past and future, time and eternity, at the point of intersection in the present. The liturgical calendar is a kind of dramatization of present

redemption, making possible a relationship between alien orders of existence.

The interaction that is seen to exist between the temporal and the eternal is reflected in the harmonization of the natural and the supernatural that is attempted in the Christian year. "It does not correspond with the civil year, because the Church, in numbering her days, and measuring her seasons does not so much regard the sun in her firmament, as the Sun of righteousness, her saviour; counting our year from him, who began at the season of advent to rise upon the world, and as the 'Day star on high', to enlighten them that sat in spiritual darkness."[46] This is a statement whose imagery expresses the interrelationship of the natural and that which is beyond the natural. The natural world, in giving her an earthly sphere of existence, in a sense recreates the supernatural, without which, of course, the natural world would not exist. The "seasons" of the Church bespeak not an anti-natural but a supernatural order, to be seen over and above and through nature. The natural and the supernatural are meant to serve as interpreters of one another. Thus Lent derives its name from the Saxon word for Spring and is recognized not only as a season of spiritual mortification in preparation for the rebirth of life, but also as an opportunity for asking the creator-God to be merciful in this season, when new life is threatened by natural forces of destruction. The creator and the redeemer are one God; the process of creation is the process of redemption. The theme of life is again seen as undergirding the Christian understanding.

In the Church year, the interrelationship of liturgy and life is evident, as is the relationship between liturgy and drama. Both re-present life, affirming it and re-creating it through the projection of a certain order that allows participation. Liturgy takes the form of drama because redemption is meant to be experienced, not merely spoken of and seen. The very structure of the Church's year, as well as her weekly and daily round of services, fosters the experience of redemption. She provides a form through which the Christian may "redeem the time" by the integration of his relationship with God into the course of his days and weeks and seasons. The redemption of time is implicit in the sacramental perspective that shapes the Christian liturgy. It "views time as dependent for meaning on eternity ... Every moment in history, every human action, is infused by a discoverable universal and permanent significance without loss of its unique actuality, its historicity."[47] Thus, because Christ in his Incarnation redeemed time, the liturgy is not only composed around the special events that we have noted, but is integral to each and every day. This is given formal expression in services for morning and evening prayer, through which the liturgy invites worshippers to begin and end each day, and go through each day, in communion with God.

In the penitential preface to the offices of the Book of Common Prayer, these prayers begin with the acknowledgement of God in his holiness by man in his sinfulness. Standing on the promises of God, man confesses and repents of his sin and receives the assurance of forgiveness. This opens the way to God for those who "assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to

set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul."[48] Praise and thanksgiving resound in the liturgy of these services. "We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord"; "My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour."[49] In his worship, man identifies himself with all creation: "All the earth doth worship thee"; "All ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever ... O ye Sun, and Moon, ... ye Winter and Summer ... ye Green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord"; "Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is: the round world, and they that dwell therein."[50] And he identifies himself with all who praise God, "Angels ... Cherubim, and Seraphim ... the glorious company of the Apostles ... the goodly fellowship of the Prophets ... the holy Church throughout all the world",[51] and all who have ever obeyed God, "Spirits and Souls of the Righteous ... holy and humble men of heart".[52] He claims Abraham as his forefather, and speaks the words of Simeon and Mary, "Servants of the Lord".[53] Thus the liturgy dramatizes the redemption of man and his incorporation into the Body of Christ. And in his worship, man achieves his true end, for, as Irenaeus says, "It is the living human being who is the glory of God."[54]

If the end of worship is the glory of God, its premise is his character of holiness and love. That he is worthy to be praised, and willing to accept our praises makes liturgy, and a relationship between God and man, possible, and indeed "very meet, right, and our bounden duty".[55] The basis of our

relationship with God is the Incarnation of Christ, who reconciled us to God when he brought together in himself humanity and divinity, love and holiness, thus affording our redemption. And the basis of it all is God's love: "Loving-kindness and truth have met together;/ Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Ps. 85:10) Man can be saved, to worship God through his Saviour, because the holy God is his redeemer, "And", as Isaiah puts it, "your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth." (Is. 54:5). Worship begins, then with God's grace. We receive his forgiveness on the basis of Christ's sacrifice for us, and God's promise to honour and accept it. And we must ask his grace even to come and praise him: "O Lord, open thou our lips. And our mouth shall show forth thy praise."[56] We presume upon his faithfulness whenever we come "unto the throne of heavenly grace".[57] "We do not presume to come ... trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies." We come because he is "the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy."[58] Our own prayers, and that of the Church in her liturgy, are possible and right because of the God who is "Creator and Preserver of all mankind" is "Most Gracious"; he is not only "Almighty God" but "Father of all mercies". And we pray to him as our father through Jesus Christ his son, "our most blessed Lord and Saviour",[59] who has made us sons of God.

The Lord's Prayer, in which we address God as "Our Father", the modern Communion Service reminds us, "as our Saviour taught us", [60] and as he has made possible, is part of every liturgical service. Our participation in redemption is dramatized as we speak the words of the children of God that

we have become through our faith in Christ. Peter says: "you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:10) Paul's words are similar: "now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace ..." (Eph. 2:13,14). The Lord's Prayer embodies the most compact form of the liturgical expression of the reality of redemption. Affirmation of God not only as sovereign Lord and creator but as Father resolves the dichotomy between man and the world in a relationship of love. The forgiveness that distinguishes the relationships of Christians gives present reality to the redemption that has been effected by the participation of God with men. Participation in the drama has made sons of those who were spectators.

The Church attempts to make present the reality of redemption through the liturgy. Speaking the words of redemption to the rhythm of creation and life she encourages participation in the drama of redemption, directing her people to the creator who is also redeemer. Written into the very contract of creation, essential to the very makings of the earth, is his promise,

> While the earth remains,
> Seedtime and harvest,
> And cold and heat,
> And summer and winter,
> And day and night
> Shall not cease.
> (Genesis 8:22)

Recognition of this covenant is recognition of the sanctity of life. Implicit in it is the recognition of the worthiness of its creator - the starting point for the worship of the Church,

even as it was for primitive man. Through its worship and its liturgy the Church hopes to evoke the recognition of the One with whose blood the covenant is sealed, he who is the beginning and the end, the root and the offspring, Creator and Redeemer.

As we shall see, Eliot's drama seeks to imitate the liturgy in this, by illumination of the continuity between pre-Christian and Christian understanding, and that between liturgy and drama and life. In his plays we shall trace his development towards an understanding of the basis of this continuity in the affirmation and redemption of life that is effected in Christ's Incarnation, his death and resurrection, the event around which the liturgical drama turns.

The continuity with the past and with pre-Christian worship conveys the triumph of life and the sovereignty of God the life-giver. At the same time it provides a framework for the profound and absolute discontinuity that is declared in the uniqueness of the Incarnation of Christ. This is something utterly new, though foretold and adumbrated through history and creation. This is something that changes the world such that it is never the same again, though to all appearances it goes on as before. The Eucharist, in which is concentrated the whole drama of redemption that the Incarnation begins, is the focal point of this "newness" in the Christian liturgy. It is the act to which all other liturgical acts point and from which they derive their meaning.

It will already be clear that the liturgy is not a series of words and actions which are deemed meaningful in themselves or by virtue of a magical accruing of meaning by

repetition. It is meaningful, ultimately, because it is built around the Eucharist which originates in our Lord's last supper and his express command to "Do this" in remembrance of him. As his was the original action that symbolized and interpreted the ultimate action of his sacrifice, so the Church in the Eucharist symbolically reenacts and reinterprets that sacrifice. The Eucharist interprets the liturgy, explaining how the triumph of life and the sovereignty of God which is her theme are accomplished. The creator of the world becomes its redeemer and the rhythm of life and death is shown to be resolved in his death and life. The Eucharist recalls the particular moment at which the drama of creation that the liturgy represents was invested with a particular and totally new meaning and significance. It identifies the spirit of life that infuses the liturgy as the spirit of Christ. The Eucharist gives a particular and universal interpretation to the sacrifice of Christ, and thereby to the mystery of life and death.

If the words and actions of the liturgy have an inherent meaning it is because at a particular moment, recalled in the Eucharist, Christ broke through the cycle of life and death and endowed them with a particular meaning. He gave back to creation the meaning that had been lost to it, taking the responsibility for all of life through the loss of his own. If the words and actions of the liturgy are being realized in their repetition it is because the sacrifice of Christ realized them once and for all. The dynamic of transformation and conformation is progressive and directed because it began at that moment and is moving towards a particular and universal

end: the reflection of his image in a redeemed creation. As Dix says:

> ... the purpose of God in man's creation to His glory is fulfilled in the eucharist ... in which the defiled 'image of God' is restored in men by the reception afresh of the one archetypal image, and mankind renewed and 'gathered into one' is presented to the Father 'in Christ' as the 'one new man', His recovered 'son'. 61

The Eucharist is dramatic not for spectators but for participants. The passion of Christ which it evokes symbolically remains a drama in which he is the only participant. The Eucharist action, on the other hand, is not a drama at all, in that there are no spectators. Everyone is an actor in the drama, or he is excluded from the reality of the action. When Eliot says that "the consummation of the drama ... the perfect and ideal drama, is to be found in the ceremony of the Mass"[62] he is commenting upon the curious relationship that exists between life and drama. As Aristotle identified drama, so could the Eucharist be described as "the imitation of an action". It is at the borderland where life and drama interpenetrate that liturgy finds itself. The Mass transcends drama because of the ingredient of life which makes it distinct from art. In the Mass the action which is imitated is an ongoing action, which is itself the imitation of a completed action. It is the quintessential liturgical act, in which life and art are most fully themselves, and come closest to transcending themselves. The Mass is the consummation of the dramatic impulse which "springs from religious liturgy".[63]

Worship and drama are both responses to the realization of the self as subject and object, spectator and participant. Any

action requires a degree of integration of these two. The Passion of Christ required their complete integration: the subject of creation became its object; the ultimate spectator of the drama became its participant. The Mass, then, is "the perfect and ideal drama" because it imitates the only perfect action. The transference of roles is recalled in each performance when man, who is always fundamentally the object in his relationship with God, and always participant in the drama of creation, is involved in the re-presentation of the drama at which he is subject and spectator and God himself is acted upon in man's stead. Christ stood in man's place and made to God "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."[64] In the Mass, man participates in the dramatization of the action which he can only watch, that of his own redemption. Yet, it is the nature of this participation which is most revealing. He participates only as he acknowledges that he cannot act for himself but must allow the Actor to represent him. Thus spectator and participant, subject and object, are reconciled and the worshipper is integrated into the action of Christ.

Participation in the Mass is of a unique character, of which dramatic art can offer only a "humble shadow or analogy".[65] The categorical distinction between God and man is such that in this divine drama he is the only Actor. Man can only dramatize the dramatization of his action: such is his reality in comparison with the reality of God. God acts; man imitates the dramatization of the action. At the same time the dramatization offers an image of the means through which Christians participate in the inimitable action.

Participation in the Eucharist is unique in that by faith, union with Christ has been achieved, and the Eucharist re-enacts this participation of human with divine that Christ's Incarnation and redemption accomplished. It also dramatizes the way by which Christians participate in Christ's sacrifice, in death of self in love. Thus the Eucharist is the imitation of the original action even in its creation of faith. This is dramatized in the Eucharist when participants offer themselves to God, thus making their own "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving".[66]

The Mass can be seen as the consummation of the drama in the sense that it dramatizes an action into which all creation is gathered to be redeemed. When Eliot calls it "a small drama, having all the unities",[67] part of his meaning is perhaps to be found in the fact that the Mass recollects the event into which all times, all places, all actions, all sentiments, all creatures were absorbed. The Father sent the Son, Paul says, "to reconcile all things to Himself." (Col. 2:20) It is, however, the dramatization of that event to which he refers. The unities are the conventional unities of time, place and action or sentiment, which are fundamental enough to him to be regarded as "laws of nature", and united enough to be "three aspects of one law", working together for a single effect.[68] At one level there is obvious unity of time, place and action in the Mass in that it dramatizes an event which occurred on a particular night in a particular location for a particular purpose. However, because this event interprets another event and therefore refers beyond itself, there is inherent in it the violation of the unities of time and place. In a single action, the Eucharist

dramatizes an action and also its interpretation and thus transcends the bounds of time and space. In the Eucharist, the Church recalls an event which had not yet happened; she reenacts symbolically an action which was at its enaction yet a promise. It therefore contains the past, present and future in a curious imitation of the action itself. It offers an image of the faith that believes the promise of a kingdom which is at once present and yet to come. The command to "Do this" in remembrance of an action which had not yet happened not only violates the unities of time and place but dissolves time and space as we know them. It focusses all time and space on the single unrepeatable action that happened once and for all, and it expands the action until it contains all time and space and the ongoing process of creation. The Mass dramatizes at once the obedience to the command and the perpetuation of the command. It interprets the action as at once unique and universal, completed and unending. The Eucharist, Dix says, reflects the "'once-for-all' quality in consequence of which there is (paradoxically) something new but permanent in eternity, just as there is something new but enduring in time." It is "the supreme expression" of what he calls "this double and mutual repercussion of time and eternity upon each other in that act of God which is the redemption of the world by Jesus of Nazareth."[69]

In a sense, time and space are undone in order that the action might be complete. Dramatically speaking, the violation of the unities of time and place in the performance of the Mass furthers the unity of action or sentiment and thereby the unity of the Play as a whole. The unity of sentiment is achieved in the Mass through its dramatization

of a concentrated experience of life, death and resurrection. As such it expresses all the joy of life and the sorrow of death. Because of the peculiar sense in which it recalls an event which has yet to happen, it dramatizes life and death and resurrection simultaneously, thus imitating the absorption of death into life and the unity of creation and redemption which the coming of Christ effects. "For in Him all things were created ... in Him all things hold together"; "In Him we have redemption through His blood." (Col. 1:16,17; Eph. 1:7)

Eliot takes his description of the achievement of the unity of action from Butcher's edition of the Poetics:

> First, in the causal connection that binds together the several parts of a play - the thoughts, the emotions, the decisions of the will, the external events being inextricably interwoven. Secondly, in the fact that the whole series of events, with all the moral forces that are brought into collision, are directed to a single end. The action as it advances converges on a definite point. The thread of purpose running through it becomes more marked. All minor effects are subordinated to the sense of an ever-growing unity. The end is linked to the beginning with inevitable certainty, and in the end we discern the meaning of the whole. 70

On the basis of this standard, the Mass can be seen to be "the perfect and ideal drama". The liturgy provides the program of "external events" and correlating words through which the thoughts, emotions, and wills of the people are bound up with the action. Its structure draws them into concentration on the action and participation in it. The offering and consecration of the bread that is broken and the wine that is poured out are the actions that converge on the "definite point" of Christ's death. The "single end"

to which all the events and moral forces are directed is achieved when they are received as Christ's body and blood. This is the climax of the action to which all preceding actions lead and from which all succeeding actions flow. This is the purpose for which the drama is performed. Because, however, its purpose is to recollect what is itself a recollection and interpretation, it is not to be contained in itself, but to point outside itself. Its purpose is to evoke the meaning of the action that it remembers. Because it dramatizes a command to repeat its own action, the Mass at the same time fulfills its purpose in obedience to the command and in the perpetuation of the command. This unique concentration of action with inherent interpretation and perpetuation lends the Mass the intensity which is crucial to drama as Eliot sees it.[71]

One purpose of the Mass is the actualization of redemption in the hearts of worshippers: the drama is performed in order that the spectators might participate, as we have seen. Thus each person is himself the theatre wherein 'The end is linked to the beginning" of the Drama. Perception of the unity and the meaning of the drama is uniquely dependent upon his participation: it is only as it is realized in his experience that it is understood. "The meaning of the whole" that it evokes must be interpreted by his faith. In "the prayer of humble access" we ask our Lord that we may so "eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us."[72]

The unity of the Mass is furthered at an individual level as each person is united with Christ and at a corporate level as believers are knit together by a single action to form his body. "The Church is in the sight of God the Body of Christ; at the eucharist and by the eucharist for a moment it truly fulfils this, its eternal being; it becomes what it is."[73] As they act together, believers are acted upon to become God's kingdom come. The purpose of Christ's action is realized in the Eucharist as participants unite to become the new humanity for whose creation he died and rose again. "Though we are many we are one body," as the modern Communion Service has it, "because we all share in one bread."[74] (1 Cor. 10:17)

As the disciples on the road to Emmaus "recognized him" as the crucified and risen Lord when he broke bread for them, so the Church recognizes the living presence of the Lord in a unique sense in the Eucharist. Because he incorporates into his body everyone who participates in his sacrifice, the Mass is the celebration of the Church of all the ages. The historical reality of Jesus implies a particular beginning and a continuity which the present Church manifests. His metahistorical reality implies existence beyond the historical Church, "the blessed company of all faithful people", and indeed beyond history and time itself, in the "everlasting kingdom".[75] The dramatic unity and intensity of the Mass is heightened, then, as it is seen to involve the participation of the whole Church, in a single and comprehensive action. It is the drama of all who have ever done this in remembrance of him, as well as all who have ever obeyed God's command, by faith believing his promise.

The unity of the Mass fosters and is fostered by the existence of a set of symbols and concepts to which meaning is ascribed. These also serve to unite the Mass to the rest of the liturgy and help to locate them in wider contexts of worship and of humanity. This can be illustrated using the symbols which are central to the Eucharist, the bread and the wine. These were invested with a particular meaning and significance by Christ at the Last Supper. Rather than being static or abstract, however, it is the nature of symbols and of the life of Christ that their meaning and significance, though fixed and complete in themselves, continue to be apprehended in new and fresh ways. At the same time, as the bread and wine are met in other liturgical contexts, there occurs a mutual enriching of the symbols and the settings in which they figure. When we read, for example, of the feeding of the five thousand or the changing of water into wine, we bring to that story and take from it a deeper meaning than the mere words can express because of our experience of the bread and wine.

Through the consecreation of elements which are meat and drink the Eucharist is translated by the bread and wine into the larger context of communal worship, in which the sacred meal has been since primitive times central to society, as the expression of dependence upon one another and upon the earth. "It is in the sacred meal that man sees the sacredness of life, dependent upon one who is almighty and all good ... To recognize the sacredness of a meal as being the highest form of human activity is to recognize man's total dependence, both for his creation and continued existence, upon a God who is at the same time apprehended as the one

who possesses the fulness of life."[75] The Jewish Passover meal was such a meal and when Jesus blessed the bread and wine at the Last Supper he was acknowledging and thanking the creator in the customary way. The symbols of bread and wine carry with them all this significance and meaning as well. It is to this that Christ adds the radical interpretation to be read into their subsequent use, that of their representation of his body and blood.

Moreover, the bread and wine tie the Eucharist firmly into the most fundamental and yet ordinary aspects of human life. They represent eating and drinking, always the expression of communal fellowship and good cheer, of sharing a meal on the basis of the congenial acceptance upon which society is built. More fundamental still is their representation of food and drink, and thus of life itself: "as our bodies are by the Bread and Wine", so "our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ" receive "the strengthening and refreshing" that we need.[77]

When Jesus used bread and wine to interpret his forthcoming sacrifice, he drew upon all that was implied in them and added new implications. In affirming and endorsing these elements, with their accumulated implications, as good gifts from God, he was signifying the continuity between his action of redemption and God's actions in creation and history. These "wholly earthly elements" re-present "that return of the eternal within the temporal"[78] which is Christ Incarnate. His consecration of them establishes the continuity between his action of redemption and God's actions in creation and history. It also establishes

the value of man as God's creature, and of creation itself, awaiting redemption. The affirmation of the symbols of bread and wine affirms the essentially historical and creational character of redemption. At the same time with the infusion of new meaning as his body and blood, Christ is redeeming the created order and establishing the basis for its redemption in his Incarnation and death and resurrection. In this is represented a picture of the Incarnation. As Eliot describes it: 'The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.'[79] In its continuity with pre-Christian ritual patterns, the liturgy affirms life itself, on the basis of the redemption in Christ. And in its transformation and reinterpretation of existing patterns it fulfills the promise that is inherent in them, as the one who keeps the promise is identified as the one who made it. The liturgy gathers into itself all pre-Christian patterns of worship, images, rituals, symbols, and myths, to be redeemed. As C. S. Lewis says:

> Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, <u>without ceasing to be myth</u>, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It <u>happens</u> - at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definite historical consequences ... By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth; that is the miracle. 80

The advent of Christ Incarnate into the midst of history and into the midst of life finds a parallel in his advent in the life of every believer, whether this is discernible in terms of chronology or not. Once and for all and continuously, he is breaking into the midst of things. In various ways Christians discover and explore the implications of his coming. In a sense they continuously reorient their lives according

to this Incarnational focus, as the reality of Christ is projected backward into their past and forward into their future, as well as into the present circumstances of their living and being. The light of Christ shines into each individual world just as it came into the whole world, illuminating the latent meaning of each life, even as it illuminates that of creation and history. Eliot's plays reflect the way in which the searching light of Christ illuminates the meaning of redemption for him.

With this sketch of the Christian liturgy and of the relationship between liturgy and drama as our background, we can explore briefly Eliot's understanding of liturgy in relation to drama, and its development towards an understanding of his drama and of himself in relation to the Incarnation of Christ. This will provide the context for our study of his four plays for secular theatre.

Eliot's interest in liturgy develops out of the quest for order and the belief in religion that are for him bound up together and bound up with life itself. "The Wasteland" of 1922 expresses his sense of the need for a personal, social and cosmic order. In the following year he praises Joyce's Ulysses and endorses the mythical method as "a way of controlling, of ordering, or giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[81]

He had long been interested in primitive myth and ritual and the phenomenon of religion itself[82] and, also in 1923, he writes of the fundamental connection between ritual and

drama, suggesting rhythm as primary and ritual actions as prior to the reasons for them, though only perpetuated as meaning is accorded. In this essay, "The Beating of a Drum", drama is proposed as beginning with movement in rhythm: "The drama was originally ritual; and ritual, consisting of a set of repeated movements, is essentially a dance." When he goes on to say that we retain the reasons "but we have lost the drum",[83] the very primitive sense of order that he desires for the stage is evident. In 1922 he had written in The Criterion a tribute to Massine, whose "inhuman, impersonal, abstract" quality of acting with "the abstract gesture ... which symbolizes emotion" rather than expressing it, points the way for "the future stage". A contemporary ritual drama is his goal for the theatre:

> The realism of the ordinary stage is something to which we can no longer respond, because to us it is no longer realistic. We know that the gesture of daily existence is inadequate for the stage; instead of pretending that the stage gesture is a copy of reality, let us adopt a literal untruth, a thoroughgoing convention, a ritual. For the stage - not only in its realistic origins, but always - is a ritual, and the failure of the contemporary stage to satisfy the craving for ritual is one of the reasons why it is not a living art. 84

In all these the poet who sacrifices emotion for the sake of order, through what he has called the "impersonality"[85] of the artist, is recognizable. Impersonality is also a quality that he identifies in an essay of 1924 as essential to the action of a "strict form of drama"[86] that he envisions. And it is in looking briefly at some of his dramatic criticism that the struggle in which he was engaged can be identified as very deep and intense indeed. It is in its attempt to imitate life that provokes Eliot's attraction to and repulsion from

dramatic art, and in his dramatic criticism of this period an ambivalence to life itself is exposed. In 1919 the language of his essay "Ben Jonson" expresses the dilemma. "The creation of a work of art, we will say the creation of a character in a drama," he says, "consists in the process of transfusion of the personality or, in a deeper sense, the life of the author into the character." His discussion of Jonson's creation of characters by simplification heightens the mildly shocking effect of this analogy. Its elements include "reduction of detail ... seizing of aspects relevant to the relief of an emotional impulse ... making the character conform ...", all summed up in "stripping".[87] A more appropriate model than transfusion would surely be birth or conception, where the violence of life is part of a natural process and results in the birth and growth of a new creature.

Other essays further the impression of ambivalence. In 1920 he says that characters need not be "true to life" and in the same essay that "... the typical figure in a drama is always particularized - an individual";[88] in 1924 he recognizes "actual life" as the material for drama, from which an abstraction is constructed;[89] by 1930 he is saying "characters should be real in relation to our own life, certainly ...".[90] Perhaps the most telling sentence of these essays is found in "Four Elizabethan Dramatists" (1924), where he roundly declares his objection to interpretation: "performance of a play", he says, "is an alteration or interruption" of the "direct relationship between the work of art and myself".[91] This is reminiscent of an essay in 1920 in which he had confessed that "refined automatons"[92] would be required for the poetic drama he envisioned.

On the one hand it is an objection to any interpretation but his own that these reflect, but in a deeper sense it is an aversion to the incarnational principle that is fundamental to drama: without interpretation, without translation of the words on a page to action on the stage, performed by flesh and blood actors, there is no drama. What Eliot would obstruct is the life process by which the play is recreated as life and the spectator is recreated as participant. He abhors the medium of particular concrete individual humans, by which the word is bodied forth. At the root of his ambivalence towards drama, then, is a fear of nature and of life in its actuality. Deeper still is a fear of death. In The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933) he speaks wryly of the poet's task as "turning blood into ink".[93] Transfusion is an image which suggests one way that he can cope with this and survive. But what is required, as he ultimately understands, is not a transfusion but the death of the creator for the sake of the new life of his creation. It is this that is accomplished in the release of the work of art for performance and interpretation, as the dramatist relinquishes his own authority over the material and frees the work to be interpreted again and again. It is the risk that this entails, the risk of its being misunderstood and lost, that constitutes real death of his own pride and his own self. In giving his dramatic creation life he loses his own individual life and partakes with creation and audience in a new corporate life. This involves faith, humility and love and will be seen as analogous to the challenge that the Incarnation of Christ presents to Eliot at a spiritual level. The struggle that is apparent here is resolved painstakingly and through the

"faith" in the Incarnation that leads him into drama and into Christianity. His development in the two areas is concurrent and integrated, as we shall see, as the difficulties and solutions for both are found to be related.

Even in 1923 Eliot's instinctive sympathy with the life in art that is represented in participation of the artist with his audience augures well for the desire for life that is stronger than fear. That is when Marie Lloyd's death finds him praising the very personal artistry of the music-hall comedienne, whose uniqueness lay "in giving expression to the life of that audience ... in expressing the soul of the people." She not only, he says, made them happy, but also represented a "moral superiority" that consisted in "her understanding of the people and sympathy with them, and the people's recognition of the fact that she embodied the virtues which they genuinely most respected in private life ..."[94]

The dilemma which will be seen to be fundamental to Eliot's dramatic and theological development is nicely caught in these statements from 1922-3, which predate any public venture into the theatre or the Church. On the one hand he recognizes "that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art." And the working man who when he "joined in the chorus" at the music-hall was 'himself performing part of the act"[95] is following his primitive ancestors who danced to the beating of a drum. At the same time, perhaps simply in relegating such participation to primitive culture and "the people" - from both of which he is separate - and in taking refuge in the "inhuman, impersonal, abstract" emotion and order, he is confessing the aversion to human personal

concrete particularity that is a stumbling block to his experience of drama and Christian faith. Drama is distinguished among the arts and Christianity is distinguished among religions for just such incarnational reality.

Since it is the relationship between his faith and his work, and specifically his dramatic work, rather than his faith as such that is the subject of our study, we confine ourselves to highlighting significant pointers to the nature of that relationship.[96] It is important to note that Eliot's religious background was essentially an ethically based rather than doctrinally or spiritually based one, and that the doctrinal deficiency, from a Christian point of view, of his Unitarian heritage could be summed up in its lack of belief in Christ and the Incarnation. As he later describes himself, he combined "a Catholic cast of mind, a Calvinistic heritage, and a Puritanical temperament."[97] The difference emerges in the Christian's acknowledgement of the sin that categorically separates himself and God, a separation only reconciled in the Incarnation. Eliot's understanding of the feature distinguishing his Unitarian Puritan heritage from the Christian heritage finds expression on a scrap of paper from 1923 or 1924:

> There are only 2 things - Puritanism and Catholicism. You are one or the other. You either believe in the reality of <u>sin</u> or you don't - that is the important moral distinction - not whether you are good or bad. Puritanism does not believe in sin: it merely believes that certain things must not be done. 98

The other side of the Christian understanding of sin, of course, is the understanding of grace that is given shape in Christ's Incarnation, as he ultimately understands.

In 1926, when Eliot is still publicly outside the

Christian fold, we find him writing of Lancelot Andrewes and his Nativity Sermons. The seventeenth century Divine spells out in rich and lucid terms and tones the nature and meaning of the Incarnation, with an intellectual and aesthetic and spiritual vigour and depth that charmed Eliot, whose heritage was "empty of beauty".[99] Eliot bears witness to the fact that "Phrases such as 'Christ is no wild-cat ...' or 'the word within a word, unable to speak a word', do not desert us ..."[100] in the phrases of his own "Gerontion" which echo those of the Elizabethan preacher. That Eliot became "saturated ... in his prose"[101] is evident in the echoes of Andrewes with which "Journey of the Magi" opens. The poem is written in the year that marked Eliot's choice of the way of journeying that Andrewes had described so compellingly for him.

1927 finds Eliot not only becoming a British citizen and a member of the Church of England[102] but also producing the second "Fragment" of Sweeney Agonistes, his first dramatic endeavour. The convergence of his interest in order, in religion and in drama, always in evidence, is pronounced concisely in this. These interests continue to develop concurrently. He is provided with a new basis for their development, individually and together, in the Christian myth which he comes to believe as the true myth of God Incarnate. The story of Christ wins his allegiance, offering him the order for which he hungers, an order that is fixed and eternal and a myth that is sufficient to embrace and express the entire story of mankind. It also offers him the means to resolve the ambivalence that is fundamental to his response to drama and to life. And in his entrance into the Christian Church, and his concurrent entrance into the

theatre, his will to overcome the fear that stalks his personal and dramatic quest through faith and love is signalled. The Incarnation is the Christian answer to the duality between the human and divine realities, as it proclaims in the particular concrete historical personal human substance of one man the redemption of flesh and of time and of life itself. It is some time before Eliot comes to feel the truth of the doctrine which his mind accepts in becoming a member of the Church. His resistance to the Incarnation in all its particularity and flesh and blood is the theological equivalent of the stumbling block that we have identified as fatal to his dramatic impulse.

For a time liturgy itself provides a measure of satisfaction. At this time the distinguishing feature of liturgy for him is form rather than that "participation" which, on the basis of the Incarnation, distinguishes liturgy which is Christian. Integral to his growth as a dramatist and his growth as a Christian is his sense of order. The three come together, in 1926, in the word "liturgy" which appears as the antithesis of realism in an essay on dramatic form that introduces his mother's dramatic poem, Savonarola. In his description here of the play which "like a religious service, should be a stimulant to make life tolerable and augment our ability to live",[103] and in his reiteration of the primacy of rite over its interpretation and meaning (although, without the meaning, the acts would cease, he says), the formal and intellectual quality of his sense of faith, which suggests an interest in religion per se, and a like quality in his sense of drama, are apparent.

This impression is heightened if the words of 'The Journey of the Magi", written also in this year of commitments, can be taken to reflect the author's journey to faith.

> A cold coming we had of it,
> Just the worst time of year
> For a journey, and such a long journey:
> The ways deep and the weather sharp,
> The very dead of winter ...

The lingering questions of the convert sound in the Magi's ambivalence:

> ... I would do it again, but set down
> This set down
> This: were we led all that way for
> Birth or death? 104

For his first venture into theatre, Eliot looks for models to ritual drama, in which the primal connection between liturgy and drama is assumed.[105] It supplies the basic structure, themes and imagery for his plays, and the development of his understanding of redemption is reflected in the process by which these structures are redeemed. The music-hall is as significant an influence in this first dramatic effort, and this combination of ritual and music-hall nicely captures the two aspects of art and life - represented in form and participation - that he is seeking to reconcile. The Fragments of a Prologue and an Agon, produced in this year and the next, sound in their pounding rhythms the Magi's sense of the indistinguishability of life and death, and the horror of both, as well as the recurrent abhorrence of the flesh,[106] and a sense of the impervious power of time and the bondage of mortality. Sweeney's words are grim:

> Birth, and copulation and death.
> That's all, that's all, that's all, that's all.
> Birth, and copulation, and death.
> ...

Death or life or life or death
Death is life and life is death
I gotta use words when I talk to you
But if you understand or if you don't
That's nothing to me and nothing to you
We all gotta do what we gotta do ... 107

Hardly the joy of the new convert to Christ, but rather a lingering agony which finds consolation in the sheer rhythm of life, is echoed here, underneath the grim determination to live by the truth, however stark and however costly it may be.

On his journey towards spiritual peace, Eliot takes a significant step several months after his Baptism and Confirmation into the Church of England, in March, 1928, when he makes his first formal Confession and is freed from a haunting sense of guilt. He writes to a friend "of his extraordinary sense of surrender and gain, as if he had finally crossed a very wide, deep river, never to return."[108] In each play people are released from spiritual bondage through the ministry of another person, a secular equivalent of a Confessor, who hears their confession. The development of this concept of sin, of confession, of forgiveness, and ultimately of grace, will be traced through the plays, as Eliot gradually realizes the implications of redemption, in the establishment of the sense of peace and freedom that comes with forgiveness.

Also in 1928 liturgy is again a focus in the "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" in which the dilemma that we have identified is focussed, as participation is seen as the feature distinguishing drama and religious liturgy. One of the speakers offers the Mass as "the consummation of the drama, the perfect and ideal drama ... having all the unities" and the Church year as representing "the full drama

of creation."[109] It is here that we find argued that "drama springs from religious liturgy", contrary or at least differing from earlier less dogmatic statements of the association, although safely stated as one opinion in a dialogue. And the liturgy, with music and ballet as aesthetic expressions of it, is again proposed as the model for modern drama, in reaction to realism. But, though related, liturgy and drama have between them, it is argued, a fundamental "difference in attention": "A devout person in assisting at Mass, ... is participating", while a theatre-goer is merely "attending a drama" as a spectator. Yet, though the distinction is attempted, and our craving for religion is proposed as distinct from our craving for drama, one operating on a divine level and the other on a human level, both are essential to our humanity. "And we crave some liturgy less divine, something in respect of which we shall be more spectators and less participants."[110] In this the divine and liturgical character of drama, compelling merely a less intense participation than the divine liturgy of the Mass, is affirmed, and the distinction between liturgy and drama is left to seem more of degree than of kind.[111] Thus once again the quality of participation emerges as germane to liturgy and drama and the ambivalence of Eliot's response to it is apparent.

Something of his struggle is expressed a year later in "Second Thoughts about Humanism", in terms of a rift between his intellect and his spirit. He writes:

> Most people suppose that some people, because they enjoy the luxury of Christian sentiments and the excitement of Christian ritual, swallow or pretend to swallow incredible dogma. For some the process is exactly opposite. Rational assent may arrive late, intellectual conviction may come slowly, but they come inevitably without violence to honesty or nature. To put the sentiments in order is a later, and an immensely difficult task: intellectual freedom is earlier and easier than complete spiritual freedom. 112

Evident here is his recognition that Christian commitment demands that the spectator become the participant. This essay not only manifests the dualism of thought and feeling but assumes "the dualism of man and nature" as a presupposition, and only logical on the basis of a belief in the supernatural.[113] "Ash Wednesday" (1930) records the agony of the believer who has to supply his emotional response:

> Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
> Upon which to rejoice. 114

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933) restates the dualism, of the poet whose work expresses "felt" beliefs rather than "held" beliefs.[115] When in 1935 we find Eliot asserting that "The common ground between religion and fiction is behaviour" and declaring his desire for "a literature which should be unconsciously, rather than deliberately and definitely, Christian ...", an integration is underway: he is in fact proposing the conversion of held beliefs into felt beliefs, through an awareness of "what we are" and a striving towards "what we ought to be".[116] His art is beginning to take its place in a broader scheme that is ordered by his faith. By 1939, as he writes in the Preface to The Idea of a Christian Society, he has come to reject the dualism, the "possible separation of religious feeling from religious thinking". The integral relationship

between behaviour and belief that is a fundamental idea in this book - "behaviour is as potent to affect belief, as belief to affect behaviour"[117] - signifies the integration, of thought and feeling, of word and work, of divine and human realities, that is occurring in the heart of the artist. And this integration, with the ascendance of Eliot the participant over Eliot the spectator, is the fruit within his imagination and perception of the Incarnation of Christ which resolves the dualism, providing the basis for reconciliation.

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, though positing the dualism, also suggests that all poets long for the sort of integration that Marie Lloyd had achieved, in being a "popular entertainer" and an artist, as well as a philosopher in the sense that her work reflected certain beliefs. Implicit in his suggestion that 'The ideal medium for poetry ..., and the most direct means of social 'usefulness' for poetry, is the theatre"[118] is the value of participation in art - to the artist, his work, and society. Drama is thus a logical extension of this incarnational understanding of art, but even more so of the Incarnational understanding of Christianity.

In his 'Choruses from The Rock," written in 1934, are expressed his still halting commitment to the Incarnation. This is reflected in his maintaining his stance as poet, contributing to the theatre rather than fully participating in it. The words of the Choruses express the spiritual counterpart. Still in rather abstract, inhuman, impersonal terms, the Incarnation is affirmed as the central fact that interprets all others and offers the meaning which links feelings with beliefs, drum beats and ritual motions with

their reasons:

> Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time,
> A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history: transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time,
> A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning.

Yet still the effect of the Incarnation is limited: it is the "Word" that is spoken to those who are "bestial ... carnal, self-seeking ... selfish and purblind as ever before", whose being is "negative"; "Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their march on the way that was lit by the light; ...".[119] Though the basis for their relationship is understood, the separation between human and divine is still distinct. The "moment", the "Word", the "light" is not tasted, perhaps, but heard and seen, not so much felt as held. The Word does not become flesh but speaks to it.

The myth of Christianity is the myth of the Incarnation of Christ, the Word of God made flesh to dwell among men, full of grace and truth. And drama is the art that in a unique sense reenacts the Incarnation, as actors being the words of the dramatist to life, by word and action. That God has revealed himself and that communication is possible are basic presuppositions of the Incarnation and, in imitation of these, the dramatist makes bold to reveal himself and communicate with his audience ("I gotta use words when I talk to you"). More than that, the participation of God with men in the Incarnation of Christ signifies reconciliation, so that different orders of existence - flesh and spirit, temporal

and eternal, secular and sacred - are reconciled in God made man. Thus the dilemma of the relationship between thought and feeling is reconciled in the wedding of grace and truth, and the question of the use of art is resolved in the vocation of service.

The Incarnation of Christ also signifies the establishment of the relationship between God and man, on the basis of love, and it sets up a dynamic of relationship between man and man as well as between man and God. The dramatist imitates this activity in attempting to establish a relationship with his audience which generates relationships between actor and actor and between actor and dramatist, with the added dimension of the relationship between them and the audience. Christian dramatists are thus afforded a unique advantage and charged with a unique responsibility, in that the drama of the Incarnation offers them a model and an impetus for the creation of characters and relationships and situations.[120] Given the integral relationship of word and works that is particularly pronounced in drama and is, as we have seen, fundamental to Eliot's sense of art, and faith, and life, his plays provide an index of the development of his understanding and experience of the Incarnation and its implications, in his art and life. The nature of the Incarnational art of drama and of Christianity is such that each of the plays not only expresses and depicts a model of the Incarnation but is itself that model, in whatever stage of development we find its creator to be.

Thus it is in the theatre that the reconciliation between art and life is to occur for Eliot, as his poetry and his belief and his humanity are integrated together. The structure and the language of the plays reflect its development. There

is a "doubleness" built into them that corresponds to the duality that we have identified in Eliot's understanding, emerging as a dichotomy between poetry and philosophy, art and life, thought and feeling. In the plays it is a doubleness consisting of the "natural surface appearance"[121] of "daily existence"[122] that is the stock-in-trade of realistic theatre, and a deeper inner reality, understood as of essential and significant reality. It reflects the duality of form and realism and form and content. Again Eliot's antipathy towards ordinary life and his refuge in an abstract, impersonal, inhuman level at which art may be seen as separate from and superior to life are evident. But again, the movement into drama signifies a movement towards the resolution of this dichotomy as well, and the plays reflect the process by which the sense of "doubleness" is integrated into a unified perception.

"Doubleness" is a dramatic technique that corresponds to the technique of dualism that is basic to Eliot's attempt to perceive and demonstrate order in life. It is an idea that recurs in various guises throughout his dramatic criticism. In 1924 an essay on John Marston introduces the Elizabethan dramatic technique in terms of doubleness:

> It is possible that what distinguishes poetic drama from prosaic drama is a kind of doubleness in the action, as if it took place on two planes at once ... In poetic drama, a certain apparent irrelevance may be the sympton of this doubleness; or the drama has an under-pattern, less manifest than the theatrical one. We sometimes feel, in following the words and behaviour of some of the characters of Dostoevsky, that they are living at once on the plane that we know and on some other plane of reality from which we are shut out: their behaviour does not seem crazy, but rather in conformity with the laws of some world that we cannot perceive ... In the work of a genius of a lower order, such as that of the author of <u>The Revenger's Tragedy</u>, the characters themselves hardly

> attain this double reality; we are aware rather of the author, operating perhaps not quite consciously through them, and making use of them to express something of which he himself may not be quite conscious. 123

In 1944 he speaks of characters in similar terms. In the Introduction to Bethell's Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, he says that a verse play "should remove the surface of things, expose the underneath, or the inside, of the natural surface appearance. It may allow the characters to behave inconsistently, but only with respect to a deeper consistency. It may use any device to show their real feelings and volitions, instead of just what, in actual life, they would normally profess to be conscious of; ...".[124] And in "The Need For Poetic Drama" (1936) he says, "underneath the action, which should be perfectly intelligible, there should be a musical pattern which intensifies our excitement by reinforcing it with feeling from a deeper and less articulate level."[125] This deeper level is seen in terms of the unconscious; its natural language is poetry, with its model music; its action is ritual-like, modelled after dance.

These comments flow out of the early understanding of "John Marston", in which Eliot goes on to put the "doubleness" in a larger perspective. In discussing Sophonisba, he writes:

> In spite of the tumultuousness of the action, and the ferocity and horror of certain parts of the play, there is an underlying serenity; and as we familiarize ourselves with the play we perceive a pattern behind the pattern into which the characters deliberately involve themselves; the kind of pattern which we perceive in our own lives only at rare moments of inattention and detachment, drowsing in sunlight. It is the pattern drawn by what the ancient world called Fate; subtilized by Christianity into mazes of delicate theology; and reduced again by the modern world into crudities of psychological or economic necessity. 126

In "Poetry and Drama" (1951), he speaks of this "pattern" as an "order", which it is the responsibility of the artist to impose upon reality, in order that he might be "thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality ...".[127] It is this responsibility that the plays explore and the development of his sense of this order that they reflect.

In 'The Aims of Poetic Drama" (1949) Eliot identifies poetry as the language which opens up this multi-levelled reality: "It is in fact the privilege of dramatic poetry", he says, "to be able to show us several planes of reality at once." It is the language which takes us beyond the surface reality to "the dignity of dance or liturgy, with a gaiety which is in all great poetry, and the greater seriousness behind the gaiety."[128] As we have seen, music and dance represent the closest approximation of the ideal form that liturgy embodies for Eliot. They represent man's basic response to life, that begins with rhythm. Poetry exists at the "frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist",[129] where dramatic poetry allows us "at its moments of greatest intensity" to "touch the border of those feelings which only music can express."[130] It opens up for us the "peculiar range of sensibility"[131] that exceeds the merely conscious and makes us aware of the "pattern behind the pattern" of which he speaks.

Poetry also offers an analogy to the balancing of form and realism that the doubleness technique is meant to facilitate, in its balancing of form and content. It represents form in a play and the process by which it is integrated into the action reflects the integration of form into reality that is Eliot's goal. It is ideally suited for this task as in

itself it is constituted of just such a struggle to relate form and content, or at another level its essence and its use. This analogy is explored most fully in"The Music of Poetry" in 1942, though the theme of music and dance, as symbolic of the ideal wedding of form and content and form and freedom, runs through much of Eliot's work, creative and critical.[132]

In 1927 Eliot had written: "Dramatic form may occur at various points along a line the termini of which are liturgy and realism ...".[133] Liturgy is not art, but it serves to mark for him the extremity beyond which form has exceeded the demands of art. It is useful as an analogy to the ideal form that is the opposite of realism. "In genuine drama", he continues, "the form is determined by the point on the line at which a tension between drama and realism takes place." Form at a given time should "occur" at that point where the attraction of each pole is the strongest, the point at which it is as realistic as it can be without ceasing to be liturgical and as liturgical as it can be without ceasing to be realistic. The tension point is determined by the needs and values of the age. Guidelines are suggested in the "Dialogue": "When the age has a set religious practise and belief, then the drama can and should tend towards realism; I say towards, I do not say arrive at ... The more fluid, the more chaotic the religious and ethical beliefs, the more the drama must tend in the direction of liturgy."[134]

Analogous to this criterion is the one set down in "The Music of Poetry" to offer guidelines for the task of the poet, as the needs of the age vary: "At some periods", Eliot says, "the task is to explore the musical possibilities of an established convention of the relation of the idiom of verse

to that of speech; at other periods, the task is to catch up with the changes in colloquial speech, which are fundamentally changes in thought and sensibility."[135] This too is a question of form and freedom. What Eliot seeks, for poetry and for drama, is a contemporary form, strict enough to allow flexibility and the greatest freedom for the artist.[136] The poem, or the play, should "occur" at the tension point on the line between convention and experimentation. The dramatist and the poet are both charged to work towards creating a new sense of form where there is none or to establish existing form, depending on the needs of the period. If form is inherent in the art and thought and sensibility of the day, the poet and the dramatist should strive towards convention and realism; if there is no established sense of form their task is to develop one, at the expense of convention and realism. The current state is indicated by the popularity of the ballet, the closest approximation of pure form in the performing arts. In the modern age, the dramatist's route is towards liturgy, while the poet's is towards music. Liturgy marks the point at which drama ceases to be drama, even as music marks the point at which poetry ceases to be poetry. When there is music in our speech, poets can begin to imitate speech in their verse; until then it is their task to teach our speech to sing. Similarly, when there is a sense of form in life, dramatists can begin to imitate life in their plays; until then it is their task to teach us a sense of form. In an age where form is to be pursued, poetry will tend towards musical patterns and rhythms and primordial imagery, drama will tend towards poetry and the exploration of conventions and primordial myths and rituals.

The integration of the use and essence of poetry, expressed in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism as art in the service of humanity and best executed in the theatre, is explored further and put into a larger context in 1945 in "The Social Function of Poetry". The function of poetry is, more specifically and directly than for drama, to the language - "first to preserve, and second to extend and improve" - but through the language to society.[137] Although its primary purpose is to give pleasure, our pleasure is in part a response to being taught.[138] The poet's task of opening up that deeper level of reality is here understood as directed towards a social purpose: "In expressing what other people feel he is also changing the feeling by making it more conscious; he is making people more aware of what they feel already, and therefore teaching them something about themselves."[139] Poetry "makes a difference to the speech, to the sensibility, to the lives of all the members of a society ..."[140] and thus clearly fosters the aims of art and lends itself to the uses of drama.

The development of Eliot's understanding of the task of the poet continues throughout his career and is reflected in his creative work. It is an explicit theme in Four Quartets, which appear at intervals during the earlier days of his play writing. This in itself is indicative of a movement towards the integration of art and life as well as poetry and drama. His first complete play, Murder in the Cathedral (1935), sidesteps many of the problems encountered in an attempt to integrate form and actual life and art and life, simply in being a religious and historical play and therefore separate from ordinary contemporary life.

In Murder in the Cathedral the liturgy is employed as

Eliot's model for the drama of Thomas a Becket's martyrdom to produce a liturgical drama of power and beauty. The suitability of liturgical words and actions and the language of poetry to the subject helps to generate an intensity that contributes to the unity and coherence of the play. And in its Christological orientation the central feature of the liturgy is imitated. The Incarnation is represented in the action of sacrifice and redemption, but most cogently in the participation that links the Chorus to the action, and the audience through them, and in the participation that characterizes Thomas' final victory over temptation. In that he triumphs over himself and the pride that would allow him to maintain the stance of spectator of his experience. In the humiliation that compels participation the Incarnation is most faithfully represented. At another level the Incarnation has not yet resolved the dualism between human and divine realities, however, as the play, in its religious and historical character is addressing a specific audience. In stopping short of the secular and the contemporary world it suggests that Eliot's conception of the Incarnation stopped short of real life. Participation, which is the hallmark of the Incarnational character of drama and liturgy, is still confined to certain prescribed limits.

"Burnt Norton" of 1936, the first of the Quartets, records Eliot's deeper reconciliation with the limitations of humanness in a tenative affirmation of the present, "the enchainment of past and future", which protects from eternity, and the flesh, which "Protects mankind from heaven and damnation". The fact that 'Human kind/Cannot bear very much reality" and that "Only through time is time conquered" are truths which are reconciled for him in the participation in them of Love itself, "Caught in

the form of limitation/Between un-being and being". Although "there is only the dance", in a kind of submission to an "unheard ... unseen" order, the participation of Love itself redeems humankind.[141]

Our study begins with The Family Reunion of 1939, which, as Eliot's first venture into the secular popular theatre, testifies in its very existence to the development that has taken place in his understanding of the Incarnation, both as a Christian and as a dramatist. However, in its reflection of liturgy itself, with a kind of superimposition of Christian ideas, it represents a dramatic model of a pre-Christian liturgy. And this reflects Eliot's primitive understanding of drama's incarnation. Christian ideas like reconciliation and redemption are spoken of but not realized in particular concrete action: the Word does not become flesh. "Doubleness" reflects the reigning dualism between various levels of reality and this is reflected in the lack of viable relationships between the characters, as well as between the play and actual life. Participation, on stage and in the audience, is precluded. Integration of art and life, form and substance, the spiritual and the earthly, does not occur.

Prevented by the war from writing another play, the next three years find Eliot recording in the last three Quartets the continuation of the spiritual journey towards understanding of the Incarnation of Christ. Integrated with this is the developing understanding of the poet, engaged in "the intolerable wrestle/With words and meanings". The poet's ongoing struggle to relate form and content, to find the balance between the use and the essence of poetry, is resolved, even in its unending process, in the analogy he finds in the

Incarnation of Christ. And it is only when "The poetry does not matter", is forgotten, subordinated to something greater than itself, that "every word is at home ... The complete consort dancing together". Faith in the Incarnation teaches him "the wisdom of humility" and the power and primacy of love, the way of "a lifetime's death in love" that he lives out through his dramatic work. And "the impossible union/Of spheres of existence" - of spirit and flesh, of eternity and time, of life and death - is accomplished in the Incarnation, "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood", the order now "heard, half-heard, ...".[142]

Four Quartets records the insight into art and life and into their integral relationship that the forthcoming plays seek to dramatize. Again, the incarnational nature of drama makes demands on the artist that the poet is spared, and thus the plays reflect an experience and a reality that is struggling to ascend to the heights that the words of the poetry describe. The "impossible union" - of life and art, of ordinary life and the aesthetic, spiritual essence - is only to be achieved at great cost indeed.

In writing verse plays the poet is incorporating the task of the poet into the larger task of the artist, while the Christian poet is incorporating his task into the larger task of the Christian artist. He is, as Eliot puts it in "Poetry and Drama" (1951), "deliberately writing verse for other voices" and for an audience; "the problem of communication presents itself immediately". In submitting his poetry to the "law of dramatic relevance",[143] he is in a sense submitting it also to the law of social relevance, offering himself to the service of his fellowmen in a more direct and deliberate sense than he does

in the writing of poetry. The discovery of the relationship between the human and the divine finds an analogy in the relating of form and realism as well as form and content and art and life. The plays seek to order life and to reflect it, to reflect it as they order it; the poetry is integral to this, designed to be poetry and to communicate, to communicate as it is poetic.

The balance between the teacher and the poet is a delicate one and Eliot's tendency to dogmatism must always be kept in check, as we have noted. 1949 seems to have been a year when his balancing of personal and artistic interests was a particularly sound and fruitful one, as art was clearly subordinated to the greater good of life itself. Not only does The Cocktail Party express a new freedom of life and faith, but, in reflecting on that play, Eliot speaks of character as predominant over Ideas, and thus invites his audience to participate. His own freedom inspired his freeing of the play to be interpreted and the audience to interpret.[144] "The Aims of Poetic Drama" incorporates other ideas we have cited but is undergirded by the new focus that The Cocktail Party dramatizes. It makes clear the shift away from liturgy as a general focus to the particular focus of Christian liturgy. "What poetry should do in the theatre", Eliot writes, "is a kind of humble shadow or analogy of the Incarnation, whereby the human is taken up into the divine." Through the medium of verse, he continues, "For a moment life is elevated to the dignity of dance or liturgy, with a gaiety which is in all great poetry, and the greater seriousness behind the gaiety."[145] The acceptance of the medium of incarnation - for faith and for drama - is an affirmation of life itself, that is redeemed

through the participation of Christ in it. The Incarnation is affirmed as the medium through which the dignity and gaiety of liturgy is achieved. Thus is life affirmed as the medium for form, and its agent. Liturgy, and form, are perceived as a result of submission to a larger order, rather than a means to impose an order. The distinguishing feature of Christian liturgy is no longer form but participation.

The Cocktail Party focuses on the Incarnation of Christ and its implications and from that emerges a kind of secular liturgy. Although the "analogy" is still faulty, this play reflects Eliot's attempt to achieve dramatic creation through the medium of particular concrete action and through the participation with one another of different orders - human and divine, secular and sacred, past and present, temporal and eternal. This facilitates the reconciliation and redemption and relationship that the Incarnation of Christ effects. Alongside the fresh insight offered in the "Aims", however, is a lingering problem that is manifest in the limited power of the play. The language of the essay reflects the extent to which "held" belief is not yet "felt". Poetry, he says, is not the means by which the audience is "transported into an unaccustomed, artificial world". Rather, "their ordinary, sordid dreary world is suddenly illuminated and transfigured."[146]

"Poetry and Drama" appears two years later to sharpen and heighten the problem even more. Although the change to "our own" world might indicate some positive change, as Eliot identifies himself with the audience, the world is still "sordid, dreary daily" and only "suddenly illuminated and transfigured".[147] Poetry had offered the dramatist the means to preserve the distance between himself and "the people", his

art from the taint of "actual life", his words from the defilement of flesh.[148] Through it he retained his spectatorial stance. In the process by which the integration of his poetry into his drama and his art into the rest of life occurs, is represented Eliot's growth towards participation, and the integration of the artist and the man. In these essays on poetic drama, however, the underlying dichotomy is still in glaring evidence. The sudden illumination and transfiguration of drama by poetry is a far cry from poetic drama, and that of life by the Incarnation is as far from the reality of the Incarnation of Christ. For the Christian understanding is that the human is not taken up into the divine occasionally or sporadically or only as humanness is denied, but once and for all time and completely. Human life and the world itself, in all its ordinariness, is redeemed and sanctified, such that the extraordinary is found in and among the ordinary.

Most striking in its absence in this second essay is any mention of the Incarnation as a model for poetic drama. Somehow the focus of the Incarnation as the key to embodying life and spirit in flesh, and giving form to dramatic conception has been lost and liturgy again emerges as primary. The apparent loss of Incarnational focus occurs at a personal, spiritual level, as is dramatized strikingly in the content of the next play, and also at a corresponding dramatic level as the focus on form amounts to its employment in the role of content, thus betraying an underlying confusion. At both dramatic and spiritual levels, Incarnation must be the means by which content and life approach liturgy, as the "Aims" had perceived. At the same time, the Incarnation of Christ is not only the beginning of life and art, but is also their end: form and liturgy are

not an end in themselves but point beyond themselves to the essence of life with which they began, incarnate in Christ. "In my beginning is my end ... In my end is my beginning"[149] is the paradox with which the dramatist wrestles, as he seeks to recreate life, out of life and through form, yet aiming not at form but at life, compelled in a sense to trust that as he focuses on life, form will emerge and point beyond itself. There is a sense in which Eliot is not free to allow this process until he has stopped reflecting upon it. The first principle, dramatically and theologically, is faith and trust in the inherent relationship between the divine and human, the spirit and flesh, art and life.

Eliot's lack of this kind of faith is evident, and spoken clearly in "Poetry and Drama", in his description of the function of art. "For it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order <u>in</u> reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed toward a region where that guide can avail us no farther."[150] It is not in imposing an order but in describing and believing in and submitting to an order, however falteringly, that <u>The Cocktail Party</u> and <u>Four Quartets</u> fulfill the function of art. The "perfection of verse drama" that Eliot envisages is "a mirage ... an unattainable ideal"[151] and in that lies the seeds of its own demise. For the Incarnational principle does not work in terms of unattainable ideals but in terms of ideals becoming realized and reality being redeemed. Even to speak in terms of ideals over against reality is a violation of the Incarnation. It is not attained nor imposed, but inherent in the nature of things, and given.

The folly of imposing an order is represented in the next play, The Confidential Clerk (1953). In dramatizing an order that is quite extrinsic to life, this play reverts to errors of earlier work: it reflects a liturgy that is not based upon the Incarnation of Christ. Refuge is again being sought in order, in art, in religion; life is evacuated from them even as Christ is removed from life, leaving only the empty Church. Participation, redemption, reconciliation and relationship, without the substance of Incarnation, are words without life.

The mention of Dante in Eliot's description of the function of art introduces his admiration for Medieval Drama, to which he looked for a model for the creation of his plays. Everyman he proposes in 1924 as "perhaps ... that one play only, (in which) we have a drama within the limitations of art."[152] It is a source for his verse style.[153] Behind this is his admiration for the Medieval world view, particularly evident in his admiration for Dante. Through Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern, written in 1937 and reprinted with his endorsement in 1954, a better understanding of the idea to which he aimed, and an appreciation of its substantial good, as well as its basic flaw, can be gained. Eliot sees the Medieval Morality play, epitomized in Everyman, as a worthy model for contemporary religious drama because of the "fusion" of "religious and ordinary dramatic interest" through which is satisfied these basic and related cravings of human nature. Life was fraught with meaning for Medieval man; the world re-presented an order beyond itself and in serving as an index for a super-natural world achieved its sacredness and significance. The affinity between this perception and that which shapes the liturgy is clear. In terms of an earlier essay, Medieval

dramatic form occurred at a point much closer to liturgy than is the case for modern drama because in doing so it was also realistic, in reflecting the Medieval perception. Thus in writing religious plays the Medieval dramatist was simply reflecting life as he and his contemporaries knew it. Eliot sees the task of the modern dramatist as the education of his contemporaries towards a sense of order and a sacramental perspective, through the production of plays in which a "re-integration" of dramatic and religious interest will inspire a "re-integration of life",[154] based upon a fundamentally religious perception. For this he is required to look to the liturgy for a deeper reality than contemporary realism, in its reflection of ordinary contemporary reality, has afforded. Thus, as he says in "Poetry and Drama", can art bring us to the place where liturgy takes us up, as a change in our perception issues in a change in our lives.[155]

Stated in these terms and in conjunction with the Medival understanding, Eliot's "ideal" seems reasonable. However, the starting point of his pursuit is quite different from that of the Medieval man and violates the fundamental principle of the Incarnation, upon which he based his sacramental perspective. The Medieval dramatist perceived the fundamental created order and his plays, naturally, reflected that perception. Eliot's notion that imposing his own understanding of that order will create its reality for the audience betrays a lack of faith in the intrinsic order and violates that order simply in thinking in terms of imposing, rather than being gripped by it. His sense that the "permanent ... essential" elements of life are separable from ordinary life betrays the lingering difficulty that we have encountered repeatedly, his lack of respect for

ordinary life. When he speaks of drama as allowing people "to achieve greater dignity and significance than they seem to do in their private or indeed public lives",[156] his lack of a sense of their inherent dignity and significance is suggested. Belief in this intrinsic significance and sacredness is a hallmark of the Christian perspective, based on the dignity and significance accorded to life and to flesh when they were assumed by their redeemer.

Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern does suggest, however, the development of Eliot's understanding of the Incarnation with its personal and dramatic implications, in his interest in the integration of life and particularly in the desire to believe in the value and significance of life. His final play, The Elder Statesman (1958) represents the culmination of his theological and dramatic understanding of the Incarnation. His submission to its order is evident in the sacramental perspective with which the play is imbued. The significance, redemption and sanctification of life and time and the world are affirmed. Ordinary life (or, as ordinary a life as Eliot knows) of individuals is affirmed and represented in the particular concrete dramatization of a simple human life, in personal terms. The humility and love and grace that characterize the Incarnation is the basis for reconciliation and redemption, and even a romantic and decidedly human love.

The Incarnation is experienced as the event that effects the "impossible union" of spirit and flesh in humanity, of past and future in "right action"[157] in the present, of death and life in rebirth. And the activity of the Incarnation in the heart of the dramatist is reflected in all of this as the

safety of the spectator role is exchanged for the costly condition of participation,

> A condition of complete simplicity
> (Costing not less than everything) 158

In a sense Eliot's death to himself, in humility and love, allows the life of The Elder Statesman. And in this he is himself a "humble shadow" of the Author of creation, whose Incarnation, in its employment as a model for the creative task as well as for the dramatic action is the play's "beginning". And out of this arises a liturgy that points beyond itself to another end which is also the beginning, the Incarnation of Christ.

FOOTNOTES

1 T. S. Eliot, "The Beating of a Drum", The Nation and The Athenaeum, 6 October, 1923, p.12; "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", Selected Essays, London: Faber and Faber, 1932, p.47; "The Aims of Poetic Drama", Adam, Vol. 200, November, 1949, p.12

2 In 1932 Eliot wrote in a letter: "I was baptized and confirmed into the Church of England; and ... I am associated with what is called the Catholic movement in that Church ...". Quoted in Daniel John Rogers, "Dramatic Use of the Liturgy in the Plays of T. S. Eliot: A Secular Evolution", an unpublished dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1964, p.13

3 Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, Westminster: Dacre Press, 1947 (first published 1945), p.741

4 Ibid., p.393

5 J. D. Crichton, "A Theology of Worship", in The Study of Liturgy, Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, S. J., eds., p.28. London: S.P.C.K., 1978, p.28

6 The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the Use of the Church of England, London: Oxford University Press, first published 1662. The Order for Evening Prayer; The Order for Morning Prayer

7 Dix, op. cit., p.xi

8 Dix, op. cit., p.746

9 Dix, op. cit., p.393

10 Philippians 2: 6, 7, 8

11 See, for example, Jessie Weston, From Ritual to Romance, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957.

12 Eliot, "The Beating of a Drum", p.12

13 See, for example, Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, London: George and Allen Unwin Ltd., 1964 (first published in 1963 by Harper & Row Inc., New York); Hugh Dickonson, Myth on the Modern Stage, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1969; K. K. Ruthven, Myth in The Critical Idiom series, London: Methuen & Co., 1976

14 Karl Mannheim, Diagnosis of Our Time, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1943, p.134. Eliot's interest in Mannheim's work is indicated in

his discussion of it in Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1943, pp.37ff.

It is interesting to note that Jung also speaks in terms of paradigmatic experiences. Something which Eliot might have said is found in Modern Man In Search of a Soul: "... primordial experiences rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the vision of an ordered world, and allow a glimpse into the unfathomed abyss of what has not yet become." (Quoted in T. R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy, London: Methuen & Co., 1956, p.91).

15 Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth", The Dial, Vol. LXXV, November, 1923

16 Mannheim, op. cit., p.134

17 Eliot, op. cit.

18 Ibid.

19 Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965, p.61

20 Common Prayer, p.345

21 Quoted by R. J. Coates, "Sacraments" in The New Bible Dictionary, J. D. Douglas, ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962, p.1112

22 Common Prayer, A. Catechism

23 Ibid, Publick Baptism of Infants

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid, A Catechism

26 Ibid, Publick Baptism of Infants

27 Ibid, Publick Baptism of Such as are of Riper Years

28 op. cit., Publick Baptism of Infants

29 The Roman Catholic Church subscribes to a belief in seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony. 'High Church" Anglicans, of which Eliot was one, would tend to subscribe to a more "sacramental" view than is the official position of the Church of England

30 Common Prayer, The Order of Confirmation

31 op cit., The Order for Morning Prayer; The Order for Evening Prayer; A General Confession

32 Ibid., The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony

33 Ibid.

34 op. cit.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., The Order for the Visitation of the Sick

37 Ibid., The Order for the Burial of the Dead

38 op. cit.

39 Ibid.

40 The Book of Common Prayer with the Additions and Deviations Proposed in 1928, London: S.P.C.K. The Order for the Burial of the Dead

41 Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, Poetry and Dogma, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954, p.9

42 Eliot, "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", p. 48

43 Ross, op. cit., p.9

44 Common Prayer, Tables and Rules for the Moveable and Immoveable Feasts

45 Rev. G. W. Tyrrell, A. M. The Ritual of the United Church of England and Ireland, London: John W. Parker, 1840, pp. 50, 53

46 Tyrrell, op. cit., p.53

47 William V. Spanos, The Christian Tradition in Modern British Verse Drama: The Poetics of Sacramental Time, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1967, p. 29

48 Common Prayer, Call to Worship, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer

49 Ibid., Morning Prayer, "Te Deum Laudamus", Evening Prayer, "Magnificat"

50 Ibid., Morning Prayer, "Benedicte, Omnia Opera", Evening Prayer, "Cantate Domino"

51 Ibid., Morning Prayer, "Te Deum Laudamus"

52 Ibid., Morning Prayer, "Benedicte, Omnia Opera"

53 Ibid.

54 Crichton, op. cit., p.29

55 Common Prayer, The Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion

56 op. cit., Morning Prayer

57 Ibid., Evening Prayer, Morning Prayer

58 Ibid., The Communion, "Prayer of Humble Access"

59 Ibid., Prayers and Thanksgivings, upon several occasions

60 Alternative Service Book 1980, Clowes: S.P.C.K., 1980, The Order for Holy Communion

61 Dix, op. cit., p.751

62 Eliot, 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", p.47. Eliot's use of the term "Mass" is indicative of his association with the Catholic wing of the Church of England

63 Ibid.

64 Common Prayer, The Order for Holy Communion

65 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.12

66 Common Prayer, The Order for Holy Communion

67 Eliot, 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", p.48

68 Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, London: Faber & Faber, 1933 (repr. 1964), p.45

69 Dix, op. cit., pp.747-8

70 Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p.47

71 See, for example, "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" in Selected Essays; "The Aims of Poetic Drama"; "The Need for Poetic Drama", The Listener, 25 November, 1936. Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern. New York: House of Books Ltd., 2nd ed., 1954 (first published 1937)

72 Common Prayer, The Order for Holy Communion

73 Dix, op. cit., p.267

74 Alternative Service Book 1980, The Order for Holy Communion

75 Common Prayer, The Order for Holy Communion

76 Louis Bouyer, Rite and Man, quoted in Crichton, op. cit., p.5

77 Common Prayer, A Catechism

78 Dix, op. cit., p 748

79 Eliot, Four Quartets, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p.190

80 C. S. Lewis, "Myth Became Fact", in God in the Dock, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972, p. 67. (The essay was first published in 1944.)

81 Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth".

82 See, for example "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", p.44; "Euripedes and Professor Murray", in Selected Essays, p.62. In them his familiarity with the Cambridge School of Classical Anthropologists - Harrison, Fraser, Murray, Cornford - is evident. See also 'The Beating of a Drum".

83 Eliot, 'The Beating of a Drum", p. 12

84 Eliot, 'Dramatis Personae", The Criterion, Vol. I, October, 1922. London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1923, p.305

85 "The impersonality of the artist" is one of Eliot's best known phrases. It appears in 1919 in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". "The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done." "Tradition", Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, in association with Faber & Faber, 1953 (repr. Peregrine Books, 1963), p.30

86 Eliot, "Four Elizabethan Dramatists: Preface to an Unwritten Book", Selected Essays, p.113

87 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson", Selected Essays, p.157, 159

88 Eliot, "Philip Massinger", Selected Essays, p.121, 215

89 Eliot, 'Four Elizabethan Dramatists", p.111

90 Eliot, "Cyril Tourneur", Selected Essays, p.185

91 Eliot, "Four Elizabethan Dramatists", p.114-5

92 Eliot, 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama", The Sacred Wood, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1920 (repr. 1932), p.69

93 Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p.154

94 Eliot, "Marie Lloyd", Selected Essays, pp.419, 420

95 Ibid, p.420

96 For a rich discussion of Eliot's spiritual progress towards conversion, and its reflection in his work, see Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977

97 Eliot, "Goethe as Sage", On Poetry and Poets, London: Faber & Faber, 1957, p.209

98 Quoted in Gordon, p.126

99 So Eliot described his childhood in International Journal of Ethics, 27, October, 1916, 127. Quoted in Gordon, p.72

100 Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes", Selected Essays, p.339-40. This indicates that Eliot read Andrewes before the 1923 that Miss Gordon suggests (p.125)

101 Ibid., p.337

102 (p.26) The connection between these two commitments is significant. Lyndall Gordon suggests two reasons why Eliot did not become a Roman Catholic: firstly, the Church of England allows more scope for "individual judgement" of the truth: and secondly: "His confessor said that he saw his conversion as a return to the religion of the remote English ancestors he recalled in 'East Coker'. Eliot was drawn to the Anglican Church through his historical imagination, associating its creation with the reign of Elizabeth rather than with that of Henry VIII. He used to recall with pleasure its flourishing under Elizabeth and the scholar-clerics who had dignified it in the seventeenth century." (Gordon, p.127)
The pervasive nostalgia for the Elizabethan age that we notice throughout Eliot's writing, notable in his enthusiasm for its dramatists as well as its Divines, accords with this view.

103 Eliot, "Introduction" to Savonarola: A Dramatic Poem by Charlotte Eliot, London: R. Cobden-Sanderson, 1926, p.x, xi

104 Eliot, "Journey of the Magi", The Complete Poems and Plays, p.105

105 Students of Greek drama have explored its relation to ritual and myth and have identified, with minor variations, some of the fundamental elements of ritual drama. Eliot, as we have noted, was familiar with the work.
Cornford's outline of the basic structure of Greek comedy is still standard. In The Origin of Attic Comedy he names the following ingredients: Prologue; Parados (entry of chorus); Agon (contest); Parabasis (long passage which cuts the play in two and suspends the action); sacrifice; feast; komos (marriage; festal procession). Gilbert Murray's "Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy" lists these elements as essential: Agon; Pathos of the Year (ritual or sacrificial death); messenger announcing death; threnos (lamentation, with the conflict of emotions in response to the concurrent death of the old order and birth of the new); Theophany (appearance of the god). The last two are found only in the earlier Satyr plays. (Both found in David Ward, Between Two Worlds, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.)

In The Harvest of Tragedy (cited above), Henn offers a list of standard features of ritual tragedy. These are: the slaying of the king; the encounter with the numinous; the Virgin as helper, mediator or mother; the appearance of the magical child; seasonal imagery (particularly denoting rebirth); incident or imagery involving contests of the mythological order (for example an individual fighting alone against many; a dragon or serpent as adversary); involvement of a secret helper; ritual or purification and humbling; apotheosis and resurrection.
See also Jessie Weston, From Ritual to Romance.

106 The text of Sweeney Agonistes is headed by an epigraph of St. John of the Cross: "Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings." (The Complete Poems and Plays, p.115). The uncompleted play reflects a rather bizarre interpretation of the statement.

107 Ibid., p.122, 125

108 Gordon, op. cit., p.131

109 Eliot, "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", p. 48

110 Ibid., p. 49

111 The spectatorial role is championed glibly in "Philip Massinger" (1920): "What the creator of character needs is not so much knowledge of motives as keen sensibility; the dramatist need not understand people; but he must be exceptionally aware of them." (p.212); and in "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" the value of objective viewing of a play is understood: "... it is essential that we should preserve our position of spectators, and observe always from the outside though with complete understanding." (p.40)

112 Eliot, "Second Thoughts about Humanism", Selected Essays, p. 453

113 Ibid., p.447

114 Eliot, "Ash Wednesday", The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 89

115 Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 136

116 Eliot, "Religion and Literature", Selected Prose, p. 34, 41

117 Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, London: Faber & Faber, 1939, p. 30. (Cf. "The Social Function of Poetry"), On Poetry and Poets, London: Faber & Faber, 1957, p. 25

118 Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 153

119 Eliot, "Choruses from The Rock", The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 160, 161

120 Dorothy L. Sayers develops an analogy between the creativity of God and that of the artist in The Mind of the Maker, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979. (First published 1941, Harcourt, Brace, New York.)

121 Eliot, "Introduction" to S. L. Bethell, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, London: Staples Press Ltd., 1944, p.11

122 Eliot, "Dramatis Personae", p.305. Even when he is asserting the value of "ordinary life", the rigour of his distinction of it from the deeper, inner reality, and the rigour of his insistence upon its ordinariness betray his lack of conviction of its significant value.

Not only is "the gesture of daily existence" "inadequate" for the stage, as he says in this essay, but daily existence is "ordinary, sordid, dreary", according to "The Aims of Poetic Drama" (p.12) and "sordid, dreary daily" in "Poetry and Drama" (Selected Prose, p. 75). Though perhaps meant to convince readers of his familiarity with ordinary life, the excessive adjectives convince instead of his own disillusion with it.

123 Eliot, "John Marston", Selected Essays, p. 229

124 Eliot, "Introduction" to Bethell, p. 11

125 Eliot, "The Need for Poetic Drama", The Listener, 25 November, 1936, p. 994

126 Eliot, "John Marston", p. 232

127 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", Selected Prose, p. 81

128 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", p. 16

129 Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", Selected Prose, p. 55

130 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p. 80

131 Ibid.

132 In "The Music of Poetry", the balance between the sound of poetry and its meaning is discussed as analogous to the balancing of form and content, convention and experimentation. "The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context; and from another relation, that of its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to a greater or less wealth of association." (p. 57)

"It is a music of imagery as well as sound" (p.61) and is to be found in the plays of Shakespeare, and ought to be emulated on the modern stage, Eliot believes. Poetic drama's "musical pattern" ("The Need for Poetic Drama", p.994) consists in this "intersection" of form and realism.

The image of "dance" recurs throughout Eliot's work. It is a symbol whose meanings accumulate with each usage, generating the "music" of which he speaks. For example, we have: "... ritual, ... is essentially a dance." "The Beating of a Drum", p.12); "And I must borrow every changing shape/ To find expression ... dance, dance/ Like a dancing bear, ..." ("Portrait of a Lady", The Complete Poems and Plays, p.21); throughout Four Quartets: "Except for the point, the still point,/ There would be no dance, and there is only the dance." (p.173); "... see them dancing around the bonfire/ The association of man and woman/ In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie - ... Keeping time,/ Keeping the rhythm in their dancing ..." (p.178); "... So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing." (p.180); "... where every word is at home ... The complete consort dancing together ..." (p.197); "... the dignity of dance or liturgy." ("Aims", p.16).

Apart from direct references such as these, the image is developed in terms of music, singing, rhythm, for example, as well as in terms of the balance of stillness and motion which appears, for example, as the wheel imagery in Murder in the Cathedral. It represents the individual in harmony with the world, moving in time to the rhythm of life, freedom discovered in form. The discussion of ballet in "Four Elizabethan Dramatists" and the "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" explores this idea.

133 Eliot, "Introduction" to Savonarola, p.x

134 Eliot, "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", p.49

135 Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", p.60

136 The great freedom and innovation of the Elizabethan Age, according to Eliot, was possible "because it had this great form of its own which imposed itself on everything that came to it", so that it "was able to absorb a great quantity of new thoughts and new images". ("The Possibility of a Poetic Drama", p.62). Shakespeare's advantage, and skill, lay in his great ability to work within a given form (Ibid., p.63; "The Music of Poetry", p.60-1). The modern age must work for a "strict form" that allows such freedom ("Four Elizabethan Dramatists", p.113).

137 Eliot, "The Social Function of Poetry", On Poetry and Poets, London: Faber & Faber, 1957, p.20

138 Ibid., p.18. The good poet, Eliot says, "has something to give us besides pleasure: for if it were only pleasure, the pleasure itself could not be of the highest kind." (p.18)

139 Ibid., p.20

140 Ibid., p.22

141 Eliot, Four Quartets, pp.173, 172, 175, 173, 172, 175

142 Eliot, Four Quartets, pp.179, 197, 179, 190, 198

143 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.72

144 In an interview following the production of The Cocktail Party, he says: "It seems to me we should turn away from the Theatre of Ideas to the Theatre of Character ... When the dramatist is creative, then the more creative the dramatist, the greater varieties of interpretation will be possible." An interview with Iain Hamilton published in World Review (9) November, 1949. London: Edward Hulton, 1949, p.21.
This indicates a significant change from the earlier objection to interpretation which we have cited.

145 Eliot, 'The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.12, 16

146 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.12

147 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.75

148 Eliot, "Marie Lloyd", p.420; "actual life" is an expression found in "Four Elizabethan Dramatists", p.111 (Cf. "actual world", "Ben Jonson", p.152). Eliot's distinction between "actual" life and "real" life lends a pejorative tone to the former, in the light of his aversion to "ordinary" "daily" "dreary" "sordid" existence.

149 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.177, 183

150 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.81

151 Ibid, p.81, 80

152 Eliot, 'Four Elizabethan Dramatists", p.111

153 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.73

154 Eliot, Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern, New York: House of Books Ltd., 1954 (first published 1937), unpaginated

155 The function of art, Eliot says, is to impose an order upon reality, that we may perceive an order, that we may be receptive to spiritual reality. ("Poetry and Drama", p.81)

156 Eliot, Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern

157 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.190

158 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.198

CHAPTER 2

The Family Reunion is Eliot's first attempt to dramatize the impact upon the contemporary secular world of God's revelation in Christ. The play takes its beginnings from the classic Oedipus story, as dramatized by Aeschylus in the Orestes. The myth provides what Eliot calls "a vehicle for a situation of universal meeting"[1] which, when translated into contemporary terms, introduces twentieth century man to his ancient forebears, and directs him towards the interpretation of the present in the context of an eternal universal reality. Not only are the ancient and the modern situations meant to illuminate one another; both are meant to be illuminated by a still larger context, the reality of Christ. Both the present and the past are intended to be seen in the light of eternity. In a sense, then, Eliot's task is a double one: to interpret a present and a past situation in terms of one another and thereby expose the underlying and essential reality by which they are related; and to re-interpret both these non-Christian situations in terms of the Incarnation of Christ.

Although, by 1939, he has counted himself a Christian for at least twelve years, Eliot's understanding of the Incarnation is still just taking shape at this time. And although he has been interested in drama for many years, he is still a novice in the theatre. In the unique sense that we have suggested, The Family Reunion gives living shape and expression to its author's theological and dramatic understanding at this time. In 1951, Eliot names as chief among a number of technical flaws the play's "failure to adjust the ancient with the modern".[2] Then in 1959 he puts this criticism in theological

terms and its larger context when he identifies the "confusion" that results from his staying "rather too close to the Eumenides" and thus "mixing pre-Christian and post-Christian attitudes about matters of conscience and sin and guilt."[3] This dramatic failure and theological confusion are symptomatic of the deeper problem that Eliot has in confronting what might be the reality of a Christ incarnate, in the flesh and in the world, in space, that is, and in time.

The Oedipus around whom The Family Reunion centres is Harry, Lord Monchensey, who returns to the family home after an eight year absence, on the occasion of his mother's birthday. As "Wishwood" suggests, it is the "family home" in name only: Harry's father has left years earlier and since died; his younger brothers, Arthur and John, are as quasi-mythical figures who are continually talked of and never appear; his cousin, Mary, lives the similarly mythical "Cinderella" role; his various aunts and uncles are "united in the strife that divided them";[4] one of them, Agatha, is strangely separate; Amy, Harry's mother, not only lives alone but is essentially and tragically alone; and Harry himself has alienated himself from the family by marrying a woman who did not meet with their approval, who has since been drowned mysteriously at sea, in the course of their wanderings abroad. Such is the unpromising potential for the "family reunion". Further to complicate matters and foster discord, Harry is haunted by an over-burdening sense of guilt which, upon his arrival, takes on sensible form in the Furies which appear to him, unspeaking and terrifying, further defining his sense of "solitude in a crowded desert".[5] His agony and confusion are exacerbated by

the romance that had flavoured his relationship with Mary and by the family doctor's report of Amy's approaching death.

Harry's pursuers have been with him a long time, though until now only sensed - "I knew they were coming ... They were always there. But I did not see them."(292) Although he is running from them, however, he is also following them, as they drive him home as a prey into his cave, which is also his refuge. Despite his fear and driven by it, he is grimly and determinedly in quest of the truth that will dissolve the "thick smoke" and cast a steady light through "flickering intervals of light and darkness".(294) That he will speak the truth at the expense of social grace and even human courtesy is clear when he cuts through his relatives' attempts to pretend that "Nothing has been changed" (292) and that everything can go on as before. He is harsh in his rebuttal: "How can you say nothing is changed?/ You all look so withered and young." (292) He challenges them to "get to the point", and will leave, he says, "if you want to pretend that I am another person-". (293) Agatha alone, to whom he looks for support, encourages him to pursue the truth: "If you want no pretences, let us have no pretences", she says. She encourages him to explain: "Talk in your own language". Harry has little hope of being understood:

> All that I could hope to make you understand
> Is only events: not what has happened.
> And people to whom nothing has ever happened
> Cannot understand the unimportance of events. (293)

Trying to explain his sense of isolation and purposelessness and confusion, he almost despairs of communication:

> This is not what matters, but it is unspeakable,
> Untranslatable: I talk in general terms
> Because the particular has no language. (294)

From which he suddenly stops short at a stark particular, as he continues:

> One thinks to escape
> By violence, but one is still alone
> In an overcrowded desert, jostled by ghosts.
> It 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. (294) 6

As predicted the response of his family relegates "what has happened" to unreality. Charles dismisses Harry's "dangerous fancies"; Amy realizes that he is "very tired/ And over-wrought", affected by the sudden change "to our foggy climate", where, after all, the truth is not so clear cut. That he is obviously suffering from some "malady" and "must see a doctor", (296) after he has rested and bathed, is the concensus of all but Agatha, and Dr. Warburton is summoned.

Only Agatha takes Harry seriously and sees his words as a "fragment of the explanation" of which she holds another. She is aware of a larger pattern of which these are part, and encourages him to wait and hope: "There is more to understand: hold fast to that/ As the way to freedom." (296) Harry too perceives his misery as not peculiar to himself but integral somehow to his whole family and the world: "It is not my conscience,/ Not my mind, that is diseased, but the world I have to live in." (295) And in his search for the truth, amid the chaos of his desert wandering, he is affirming the existence of an order in which he longs to participate as he cannot do in the apparent and false one. He longs to restore wholeness of health to "The partial anaesthesia of suffering without feeling" and wholeness of understanding to the "partial observation of one's own automatism". (294) This is indicative of Eliot's attempt to dramatize that "pattern

behind the pattern into which the characters deliberately involve themselves" which he described as dramatic "doubleness".[7] Harry is aware of such a pattern behind his own experience, which is given expression in his perception of the Furies and in his double sense of "what is happening" - what is real and significant - as opposed to "events" - isolated occurrences that are in themselves, apart from the deeper reality and larger pattern, merely "fragments ... shored against (his) ruin",[8] that do not inhere in reality. Agatha makes him "dimly" (296) aware of the relationship between his experience and a wider experience, which later emerges as family history.

Harry's next step on his journey towards the truth is taken in his conversation with Mary, through which another dimension of the pattern in which he is implicated becomes clearer. She represents the past of childhood innocence and freedom and natural, physical life. She identifies herself with "windblown blossoms", who "know/ The wind and the rain" (303): she is the blighted childhood sweetheart, forsaken for a woman of the world. Harry declares to her his objection to his mother's "unnatural ... arresting of the normal change of things".(305) Mary is conscious that her life is somehow arrested:

> Yes, nothing changes here,
> And we just go on ... drying up, I suppose,
> Not noticing the change. (306)

Harry confesses that he had come to Wishwood to "escape from one life to another", thinking "it was a place/ Where life was substantial and simplified" (306). Mary helps Harry to set his own past into the larger pattern of their shared childhood of unhappiness. "I was part of the design/ As well as you", Harry realizes, but this design was an unnatural contrived one,

symbolized in the clearing of the wilderness that they love in order that "a neat summer house" might be "erected 'to please the children'", a design that works against the innocent freedom that was the children's natural order, symbolized in "the hollow tree in a wood by the river", their "only memory of freedom" now (307). Mary challenges Harry to regain hope, unmasking his cowardly self-deception, his tendency to blame anyone but himself, and encourages him to act:

> ... you expected Wishwood
> To be your real self, to do something for you
> That you can only do for yourself.
> What you need to alter is something inside you
> Which you can change anywhere - here, as well
> as elsewhere. (308)

Mary does not understand his fears, but perceives his avoidance of the truth as what generates them:

> You deceive yourself
> Like the man convinced that he is paralysed
> Or like the man who believes that he is blind
> While he still sees the sunlight. (309)

Harry realizes that his pursuers, "always flickering at the corner of my eye", as he says (308), are pointing to that pattern "which we perceive only at rare moments of inattention and detachment, drowsing in sunlight"[9] to which he has responded in fear. Mary points to it with a force that is more gentle but as persistent as theirs, as he says,

> Like someone who comes from a very long distance,
> Or the distant waterfall in the forest,
> Inaccessible, half-heard.
> And I hear your voice as in the silence
> Between two storms, one hears the moderate unusual noises
> In the grass and leaves, of life persisting,
> Which ordinarily pass unnoticed. (309)

He sees his choice to respond to this pattern, which includes the good memories of childhood, in courage and hope instead of fear. Then the implication of this natural order in a super-natural order is illuminated in their poetic exchange. In this

"beyond character"[10] antiphonal exchange, the natural world is portrayed as vibrant with supernatural life and as its embodiment. At this deeper level of awareness, Eliot believes, the spiritual is perceived as natural and the natural world as sacral. Mary says, in a kind of prophetic interpretation of the forthcoming action of the play:

> Pain is the opposite of joy
> But joy is a kind of pain
> I believe the moment of birth
> Is when he have knowledge of death
> I believe the season of birth
> Is the season of sacrifice
> For the tree and the beast, and the fish
> Thrashing itself upstream:
> And what of the terrified spirit
> Compelled to be reborn
> To rise toward the violent sun
> Wet wings into the rain cloud
> Harefoot over the moon? (310)

Human and natural life are perceived as implicated together in a larger supernatural pattern. Spring, the "season of sacrifice" is the time

> For the ache in the moving root
> The agony in the dark
> The slow flow throbbing the trunk
> The pain of the breaking bud. (310)

Mary identifies herself with these creatures and accords them the feelings that accompany the human experience of the natural process, of which we are reminded later in "The agony in the curtained bedroom, whether of birth or of dying" (329).

Harry is for a moment carried away by a sense of natural, physical joy:

> You bring me news
> Of a door that opens at the end of a corridor,
> Sunlight and singing; ...
> ... Singing and light. (310)

The pattern has now grown to include the peace of childhood, and the rhythm of nature and life, but Harry cannot stop there "in sunlight" (311). Mary tempts him: "If you will depend on

me, it will be all right." (311) She offers him an escape into the past, another pattern of unreality. "Is the spring not an evil time, that excites us with lying voices?", he has wondered, suspecting the treachery of the natural order. (309) With the appearance of the Eumenides he stops, reinforced in his determination to seek the truth, whatever the cost in terms of peace and natural love. The Eumenides remind him of an order deeper than these, "deeper than all sense" (311).

Harry has perceived, then, as he tells Dr. Warburton, that "everything is irrevocable,/ The past unredeemable": there is no escape from his "sleepless hunters" into the past, before "The accident of a dreaming moment." (311) His pursuit of the truth takes him next into a discussion with the doctor, in which his sense of being implicated in a cosmic pattern whose dimensions are obscure and whose control is absolute emerges as avoidance of the doctor's topic, his mother's health. "O God, man," he cries, "the things that are going to happen/ Have already happened." (317) Agatha has already chanted a kind of rune that suggests the ritualistic character of action, "a necessary move/ In an unnecessary action, ... that nothing may be left undone."(297) Again, in another incantational piece, she expresses her sense of the pattern in which Wishwood and its inhabitants are caught, this time as a curse, in which supernatural and natural elements are intertwined:

> The eye is on this house
> ...
> May the weasel and the otter
> Be about their proper business
> The eye of the day time
> And the eye of the night time
> Be diverted from this house ... (316)

Eliot's further description of the pattern of "doubleness" is pertinent: "It is a pattern drawn by what the ancient world

called Fate; subtilized by Christianity into mazes of delicate theology; and reduced again by the modern world into crudities of psychological or economic necessity."[11] Harry's sense of being entrapped by the past into a predetermined design of action compels him to seek particular knowledge about his family's past. He hears about his father from Dr. Warburton, while also being told of his mother's approaching death. The doctor tries to encourage him to settle for ignorance and inadvertently discloses the existence of a scandal at the heart of the Monchensey family history. Harry recollects that as a child he was conscious of some truth existing at the fringes of his awareness, just out of reach, and as such reminiscent of the other manifestations of the pattern of truth that he has experienced.

> But now I remember
> ...
> I remember the silence, and the hushed excitement
> And the low conversation of triumphant aunts.
> It is the conversation not overheard,
> Not intended to be heard, with the sidewise looks,
> That brings death into the heart of a child.
> That was the day he died. (319)

This realization brings together fragments of recollected experiences and impressions and he achieves a measure of understanding. "That night", he says, "I felt the trap close". His freedom and innocence ended with his father's life, as did the hope of redemption of the past. Only now, in his quest for the truth about his father - "Did he look at all like me? (321) - is the past reopened and the promise of its redemption reclaimed.

By tempting Harry to avoid the truth, Dr. Warburton betrays his ritual function of medicine man who helps the seeker on his way to spiritual health. Instead he ministers panaceas - 'We're

all of us ill in one way or another" (314) - and resorts to conventions. His question to Harry gives an ironic focus to the question that Harry has been asking himself throughout, and the theme of reality and unreality that weaves in and out of the play; "What I want to know", says the doctor, "is, whether you've been sleeping ...". (312) When he is interrupted at this point we are left with a different question than the one he had formed. Harry has, as we have seen, made a distinction between reality and illusion in terms of "what happens" and "events". His relatives are capable only of events, and they are epitomized by Arthur and John, whom Harry views with disdain and who, in never appearing, bear witness to their insubstantiality. "Nothing can happen/ To either of my brothers", Harry says, neatly relieving himself of responsibility. (321) "If he was ever really conscious", he says of John (324). That they have chosen this prison of unreality is clear to him:

> First of all, you isolate the single event
> As something so dreadful that it couldn't have happened
> Because you could not bear it. (295)

This is how they cope with his wife's drowning, claiming that he suffers from "delusions" when he would take responsibility for it. It is this pervasive spirit of untruth that Harry is struggling to overcome, but he is shrouded in a "thick smoke", confused by "senseless direction", and thus thwarted in his attempt to believe in freedom of choice.

Within this, as we have seen, he is aware of another order. He perceives a level of reality that is separate from what he later describes as "some imaginary course that life ought to take,/ That you call normal" (326). This perception wreaks havoc with his sense of reality, such that he is not sure of

what is real, though he is certain that "What you call the normal", as he tells the unenlightened relatives, "Is merely the unreal and the unimportant" (326). Those who live according to events and avoid reality "have gone through life in sleep", he has told them, when unreality reigns and death is adumbrated; "And also waking", which is a nightmare to him (295). With Mary, his sense of reality is at stake: "What I see/ May be one dream or another ..." (308). He wonders if he can only choose between dreams and never know reality, if only relative unreality can be achieved. What is real is his fear: "if there is nothing else/ The most real is what I fear". He tries, with Mary, to deny his own reality, to be the person he was before being haunted by these creatures of guilt and fear:

> When I knew her, I was not the same person.
> I was not any person. Nothing that I did
> Has to do with me. (311)

He longs to leave himself behind as a "carcase", that he might be free to begin again, "as if nothing had happened" (308). The Furies, as we have seen, will not allow his escape into unreality. And yet he is left even more uncertain of what is real, as he tells the doctor:

> ... perhaps I only dream that I am talking
> And shall wake to find that I have been silent
> Or talked to the stone deaf: and the others
> Seem to hear something else than what I am saying. (318)

It is then that the revelation of the day of his father's death focuses some of his confusion, but the unreality haunts him, as he speaks like a fool or a madman:

> HARRY: Nothing can happen --
> If Sergeant Winchell is real. But Denman saw him.
> But what if Denman saw him, and yet he was not real?
> That would be worse than anything that has happened.
> What if <u>you</u> saw him, and ...
> WARBURTON: Harry! Pull yourself together.
> (321)

In explaining his rather insensitive response to the news Sergeant Winchell brings of his brother's accident, Harry describes his sense of the distinction between what is real and what is apparent and of a multilevelled reality:

> It's only when they see nothing
> That people can show the suitable emotions -
> And so far as they feel at all, their emotions are suitable.
> They don't understand what it is to be awake,
> To be living on several planes at once
> Though one cannot speak with several voices at once.
> I have all the rightminded feelings about John
> That you consider appropriate. Only, that's not the language
> That I choose to be talking. I will not talk yours. (324)

Harry is clearly a creation that arises out of Eliot's sense of "doubleness". He is meant to be an index to "some other plane of reality from which we are shut out",[12] his behaviour inconsistent "but only with respect to a deeper consistency",[13] not to "seem crazy, but rather in conformity with the laws of some world that we cannot perceive",[14] a world from which the Eumenides come, and indicated by Harry's shifting levels of awareness. For all his confusion and doubt, Harry has a conviction of reality and truth that is as a large pattern that will prove to contain and explain all the apparent illusion and chaos, which will restore wholeness, rather than mere "normality" which is no longer sufficient for him. As he tells the others:

> I was like that in a way, so long as I could think
> Even of my life as an isolated ruin,
> A casual bit of waste in an orderly universe.
> But it begins to seem just part of some huge disaster,
> Some monstrous mistake and aberration
> Of all men, of the world, which I cannot put in order.
> If you only knew the years that I have had to live
> Since I came home, a few hours ago, to Wishwood. (326)

Harry's reference to the years that he has lived in these few hours is in one sense an expression of the enormous intensity

of this short time, that far exceeds its apparent potential and apparent duration. We will pursue the implications of this when we turn our attention to the theme of redemption of time. At the same time, this is a reference to the memories that he has relived in coming home, some of which we witness in his conversation, as we have seen, some that are filled in by the Chorus as background to these experiences, and some that are hinted at or unspoken. There is created a whole climate of the past, some specified and some more generally evocative of our own past, perhaps.

Agatha encourages Harry in his pursuit of the whole truth, the complete pattern of experience:

> Whatever you have learned, Harry, you must remember
> That there is always more: we cannot rest in being
> The impatient spectators of malice or stupidity.
> We must try to penetrate the other private worlds
> Of make-believe and fear. To rest in our own suffering
> Is evasion of suffering. We must learn to suffer more.
> (327)

Harry is still desperate, still trapped in "abstractions", bewildered by "a private puzzle" for which he can find no particular language.

> But this is too real for your words to alter.
> Oh, there must be another way of talking
> That would get us somewhere. You don't understand me.
> You can't understand me. It's not being alone
> That is the horror - to be alone with the horror.
> What matters is the filthiness. I can clear my skin,
> Purify my life, void my mind,
> But always the filthiness, that lies a little deeper ...[15]
> (327)

So, movements towards truth have proved only movements away from untruth and he feels no closer to an understanding of the pattern, though more and more convinced of its reality and his membership in it. But he has taken a new particular responsibility, and finds a more honest starting point in a kind of admission of sin. "What matters", what is real, is the sense

of sin that exceeds and includes his own individual guilt, and is the inescapable reality.

It is, then, finally, to Agatha that Harry turns for the unravelling of his "private puzzle" and the "monstrous mistake and aberration". Her revelation of the past includes a disclosure of the "original sin" that is the family curse, in whose bondage Harry feels himself to be. The truth she reveals is simple, concrete, particular, and seems all the more so after the morass of complex, abstract, and generalized evasion from which Harry has been trying to disentangle himself. It comes in the form of a confession: Agatha and Harry's father had been lovers and in his desire to rid himself of his wife he had planned her murder. Agatha prevented this to save the life of Harry, the child Amy carried. Thus is Harry's situation illuminated. The particular quality of his relationship with Agatha is explained by her love for his father, Harry's likeness to him, by her having saved his life. Her strange position in the household is explained. Harry's confused sense of guilt and responsibility, and nightmarish sense of a sin in which he is implicated is explained by the origin in the past of his conviction that he has murdered his wife, in a kind of fulfilment of the curse, or particular actualization of the original sin of his father's desire to kill his own wife. Born to them out of hate, he is as an embodiment of the curse they have incurred, as Agatha later says: "O my child, my curse" (337). Their sin is the desecration of what is meant to be not "chilly pretences in the silent bedroom,/ Forcing sons upon an unwilling father" (340), as Amy describes their union, but the "holy estate" of marriage,[16] established in love. Agatha says: "What we

have written is not a story of detection,/ Of crime and punishment, but of sin and expiation." (333) She confirms Harry's understanding of his share in a corporate sin when Harry says, "Perhaps I only dreamt I pushed her". A new sense of reality follows upon his sense of being part of a larger story: "Perhaps my life has been a dream".

Agatha suggests that his role is to offer "expiation" for the sin that has "come to consciousness" in him to "find expurgation". She describes, as a ritual prophetess, what his task and his purpose may be:

> It is possible
> You are the consciousness of your unhappy family,
> Its bird sent flying through the purgatorial flame.
> Indeed it is possible. You may learn hereafter,
> Moving alone through flames of ice, chosen
> To resolve the enchantment under which we suffer. (333)

And this revelation brings new hope and life to him:

> I feel happy for a moment, as if I had come home.
> It is quite irrational, but now
> I feel quite happy, as if happiness
> Did not consist in getting what one wanted
> Or in getting rid of what can't be got rid of
> But in a different vision. (333-4)

This happiness is in part the "liberty" that the truth brings, whose pain is mixed with the joy of being set free.(334) It is "like an end", as Harry says, "And a beginning", Agatha answers, and is thus fraught with the ambiguity and intense conflict that accompanies a death and new birth. If pain and death are suffered for the sake of truth and freedom and ultimate joy and life, they are transformed through a "different vision" of meaning and become signs of peace and reconciliation. Harry finds comfort and joy in this different vision of understanding and truth, through which he sees the larger pattern that he has sensed. His experience, disparate and mysterious until now, is illuminated and restored to

wholeness through the revelation of its meaning. Having, throughout his life, "had the experience but missed the meaning",[17] his different vision renews and transforms his experience. As he says:

> Everything is true in a different sense
> A sense that would have seemed meaningless before.
> Everything tends towards reconciliation
> As the stone falls, as the tree falls. And in the end
> That is the completion which at the beginning
> Would have seemed the ruin. (333)

Perception of the meaning of things transforms what has seemed "the end" and "the ruin" into "the completion"; falling is perceived as reconciliation. Harry decides to submit himself to the truth revealed, to follow his pursuers, thus transforming his fears into "bright angels" (339). Filled with a new sense of calling, "still befouled", knowing only that he has "made a decision/ In a moment of clarity", (337) he leaves Wishwood to pursue redemption through "worship" (339) and sacrifice. His fears are now replaced by "love and terror/ Of what waits and wants me, and will not let me fall" (339), because "Everything tends towards reconciliation".

This scene of Agatha's revelation of the past is meant to be the climax of the play and the point of integration of various orders of Harry's experience. The revelation of the larger pattern into which Harry's experience fits provides the connection between "events" and "what happens", in terms of their meaning. Reality is reordered so that events take their place in a larger pattern that accords them significant reality in themselves as well as in their function as indices of a larger reality. That is, the specific sins of individuals are related to one another and to the larger pattern in which free individual will works in conjunction with a preexistent order. And individuals are agents of sin as well as agents of

redemption: Harry can suffer for the sins of his parents. He is free and yet responsible; thus the integration of freedom and predetermination is achieved through the function of individual choice. Individual participation in a pre-existent original sin, rather than psychological or economic determinism or a nebulous cosmic fate that relieves man of freedom and responsibility, is Eliot's Christian answer to the human predicament.

At the same time Harry himself achieves integration in his perception and acceptance of his place and role in life. He learns that "right action is freedom from past and future also",[18] as the integration of past and present and future, of time itself, is achieved in this moment, through redemption. Throughout, Harry's quest has been for the truth and he achieves that through facing what has happened in the past and accepting his present responsibility. He has said, "everything is irrevocable,/ The past unredeemable" (315) but with the revelation of the truth and his acceptance of responsibility, he perceives a way of redemption: through his purgatory of suffering the sins of the past and the past itself will be redeemed. And through that, as he has been implicated in sin, he will also be implicated in redemption; so the present and the future will be redeemed by their being invested with their new purpose in a larger order.

This scene should be the climax of the dramatic action. In fact it is not. Rather, it comes as an anti-climax for which there has been a long laborious build-up. As Eliot later said, the play is poorly constructed;[19] there is not enough action to justify the intensity of the verse, and very little "really" happens in a dramatic sense. Even this

"climax", when it occurs is not really action so much as a disclosure by Agatha of the past, that allows Harry new insight. The scene achieves poetic, rather than dramatic, power. The dramatic weaknesses of the play are related to its theological weaknesses. As we have said, Eliot later admitted to his confusion over "pre-Christian and post-Christian attitudes in matters of conscience and sin and guilt".[20] This confusion is evident in his failure to conceive and therefore dramatize a clear sense of the Christian understanding of these things. His understanding of Harry's sin and original sin and their relationship is undeveloped. Having said that, he deserves credit for even entering one of the most complex "mazes of delicate theology"[21]. Throughout the play, as we have seen, the question of what is accidental and what is intentional, and of who or what is in control of it all, are raised. The pattern into which everything is meant to fit, however unclearly, is a theme we have traced. Arthur and John have "accidents" which we infer to be the design of some omnipotent will. Harry's father's intention to kill his wife is recognized as a sin as serious as murder. This recalls Jesus' extension of the commandments to include attitudes of the heart. The old commandment was not to kill; his new commandment is not to be angry, but to love (Matt. 5:21-22). Harry's confusion over whether he did or did not kill his wife is another picture of this: the reality of sin in the world and in the heart seems to preempt the reality of individual sinful acts. Although Harry's final decision seems to be that he did dream of drowning his wife, the facts remain shrouded in a dreamlike haze.[22] Though the reality of sin itself may thus be more readily appreciated,

the specific sins which manifest it are deprecated and trivialized to the point of unreality. Agatha's sense of the predetermined will that is as a curse that will be fulfilled, in one sense testifies to the Old Testament understanding that the sins of the fathers will be visited upon the children, but her passivity rather undercuts the significance of individual freedom, which is the other side of the Biblical understanding. Individual actions are virtually discounted, here, for example:

> Accident is design
> And design is accident
> In a cloud of unknowing.
> O my child, my curse,
> You shall be fulfilled: ... (337)

This is typical of the play's intermingling of two alien perspectives; a sense of fate and a kind of superstitious spirituality are blended with the Christian mystics, whose "cloud of unknowing" had long engaged Eliot's interest.[23] The ritual character of action is meant to be resolved finally in Harry's "decision" (337), his exercise of free choice, but Agatha's pronouncement of the fulfilment of the curse as the last word on the subject reinforces the ritual, rather than the Christian, understanding. Eliot's self-confessed confusion is evident.

Harry's significant choice in a moment of revelation is meant to signify redemption, and to integrate his own experience, as well as the larger pattern of which it is part. Again, dramatic weaknesses indicate theological confusion. The change in his understanding, as we have seen, issues in a change in his life, as he discovers new purpose. This is meant, I think, to indicate that redemption has begun. He sets off, following the Eumenides, with "one itinerary/ And

one destination" (336), saying, "... my business is not to run away, but to pursue,/ Not to avoid being found, but to seek." (338) His immediate experience will be suffering, for himself and for his family ("Love compels cruelty/ To those who do not understand love." (337)), but his ultimate end is "reconciliation" and his ultimate motivation is love. Still, it is vague enough for Agatha to compare it to "a children's treasure hunt" (337). That it is the perception of purpose and meaning, rather than the situation that has changed is evident: "the sleepless hunters" become "the bright angels" that he "must follow", because his perception of them has changed. And his "crowded desert" is still a desert, but now one which he seeks and will inhabit,

> Somewhere on the other side of despair.
> To the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation,
> A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar,
> The heat of the sun and the icy vigil,
> A care over the lives of humble people,
> The lesson of ignorance, of incurable diseases. (339)

The "insanity", the illness, the terror, still exist, but now coexist with love, that is in control and at work to redeem them. There are significant changes in Harry that testify to the work of redemption. His focus is no longer exclusively on himself, as he seems intent to sacrifice himself for the sake of others. At the same time, the extremity and ascetic tone of his description suggests an isolated and insular experience in which others do not figure.[24] The person that we have seen will have to be changed in order to fulfill the role that he describes for himself. Still, he has made a fundamental decision, to stop being an "impatient spectator" and "penetrate other private worlds", to "learn to suffer more" by participating with others in their suffering. (327) And even his realization

about John ("I am responsible for him" (339)) reflects the beginnings of a transformation.

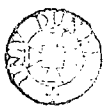
Eliot's understanding of redemption suggests itself, then, as of a rather obscure and romantic character. If we look at his dramatization of the redemption of time, the quality of his understanding will become clearer. There are three orders of time at work in the play. The seasonal round, reflected in much of the imagery that we have noted, situates the play in the tradition of ritual drama. The mechanistic order is in conflict with this, its chief proponent being Amy. Her resistance to death is a resistance to the natural process. "Not yet ... It is still quite light ... Put on the lights ... Make up the fire. Will the spring never come? I am cold" (285) she has said at the opening of the play. She who has lived under the sway of darkness and death now longs for light and life. Her unnatural control over life is such that she is as a "machine", as Dr. Warburton describes her body (320) whose "indomitable will" has kept her alive. Her circular, irrational raison d'être - "I keep Wishwood alive/ To keep the family alive, to keep them together,/ To keep me alive, and I live to keep them" (287) - underlines the death in life of this "family". The clock, the machine to control time, represents her: "I do not want the clock to stop in the dark" (287). It is not the fullness of life that she wants but only "the day expected ... tomorrow assured" (285), only the mechanical succession of days and hours that assure her of her life.

The natural cycle overtakes Amy, as is represented in her birthday cake, which in the end celebrates her death. It

is round like the clock, round because life and death are as a cycle, with life the fuel for death, the old consumed by the young. The candles are extinguished like the light of life that is snuffed out, by the breath of life. The mechanistic order has been subsumed by the larger rhythm of life. Agatha and Mary circle the cake in a ritual that binds the generations together in the completion of the curse that they speak. The curse in "coming/ To complete fruition" takes its place in the natural cycle. 'Each curse has its course" which must be followed. No amount of "reason" or strategy can either divert or undo it (349). The circling signifies that it must be completed and not interfered with; one's best efforts are towards its completion, joining in the circling that it might be fulfilled. Thus it offers a kind of ritualistic picture of the redemption of the past through significant action in the present.

The context into which these two orders fit is the pattern of eternity. The relationship of the two in the temporal order is dramatized in the ritual action, as is their relationship within the eternal order: the significance of the individual life is dramatized in Eliot's ritual "dance" to the rhythm of a "music heard so deeply/ That it is not heard at all, but you are the music/ While the music lasts."[25] This is an image of the place of the individual in the eternal order: time is redeemed as a person exercises freedom within the form of a divine order. Ivy's comment, upon hearing of John's accident is representative of the mindset that is bound to the temporal order:

> We must carry on as if nothing had happened,
> And have the cake and presents. (325)



This encapsulates the understanding that Harry fights against, that precludes redemption, attempting to maintain control and avoid truth and reality, even the reality of death, whatever the cost. Redemption is bluntly captured by Agatha's description of success: "It is what we can make of the mess we have made of things ..." (341). And the means of appropriating redemption is to choose to act rightly, on the basis of truth: "This is the next moment. This is the beginning", Agatha says after she and Harry have come to terms with the truth. Time has, in a sense, begun again, after imprisonment in unreality.

Still, the evidence that the play offers for the reality of redemption is slim. Harry's calling is obscure at best, grim at worst. His promise to return and the union of Agatha and Mary in a supportive relationship, as well as Amy's desire to have them with her in death and her realization at the end of her life that "I only just begin to apprehend the truth/ About things too late to mend" (345) offer at least some promise of redemption, but all hoped for, not tasted and seen. We are not convinced of its present reality, nor of their participation together in it, even though they come to see the Eumenides, and thus ostensibly share Harry's perception. Again, Agatha's final words sketch, but do not convince us of the quality of their participation in, Harry's "pilgrimage":

> By intercession
> By pilgrimage
> By those who depart
> In several directions
> For their own redemption
> And that of the departed -
> May they rest in peace. (350)

Redemption is thus absorbed into a pre-Christian ritual, rather than reordering reality, and Eliot's confusion emerges. Her final liturgical words sound a hollow note, as we wonder where rest and peace will be found.

The lack of particularity in these crucial areas, of sin and redemption, reflects a focus on the continuity between pre-Christian and post-Christian realities, instead of the unique Christian reality. And because the distinguishing feature of Christianity is, in one sense, its particularity in Jesus Christ - God become one Man - this error is fundamental, as we will pursue later. Eliot's pilgrims and saints who suffer "For their own redemption/ And that of the departed" suggests an unsatisfactory grasp of the once for all redemption accomplished by Christ. "Still befouled" and seeking redemption, Harry is the rather tragic creation of one who knows the reality of sin without the reality of forgiveness, whose faith is of the fearful and negative character comprised of "love and terror/ Of what waits and wants me, and will not let me fall." (339)

Harry's insight, at his moment of revelation, that "Everything is true in a different sense" could express one of the play's themes. St. John describes the Word of God Incarnate in Christ as "the light of the world" which was "In the beginning" (Jn. 8:12, 1:1). "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not ... That was the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world." (1:4,5; 9) John's sense of "That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

... that God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:1,5) is the understanding that Jesus Christ is the Incarnation of a reality that has always been with God and is implicit in creation and life itself. The Family Reunion attempts to dramatize this understanding of the Incarnation as something entirely new and yet continuous with what has preceded it only in terms of temporal and material manifestations - because Christ is "before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). Christ is proclaimed to be the revelation of God, the illumination of what is.

The "light" imagery of the play situates it not only in the ritual scheme but in the Christian scheme. Harry's search for truth and the systematic avoidance of truth that is practised by others is depicted in terms of light in opposition to darkness, as well as life in opposition to death, as we have noted. The Chorus, "like guilty conspirators waiting for some revelation" (301), avoid the illumination of light, lest "the hidden shall be exposed". Jesus is recorded by the Evangelist John as saying: "man loved the darkness rather than the light because his deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." Harry seeks the truth, responding to it, as his closure of the curtains upon his arrival at Wishwood dramatizes, in shame and fear and guilt. Still, "He who practises the truth comes to the light" (Jn. 3:19-21) and Harry does pursue the truth, until he finally responds to it in a new sense of freedom and joy, following "the bright angels" of light and life. Again the dramatic weaknesses of this technique reflect the theological confusion.

The light of truth is not sufficiently defined as the light of Christ, and the order illuminated has more affinity with the ritual tradition or the humanistic understanding than the specifically Christian order. The light is as poorly focussed dramatically as theologically. There is too great a reliance on the verbal concept. For instance, Harry's climactic moment of revelation is the culmination of a series of illuminations which compose the pattern of truth. These are conveyed through images of light. In his conversation with Mary he recollects "Sunlight and singing ... Singing and light" (310); his memory of his father conjures up "A summer day of unusual heat ... hours when there seems to be no past or future,/ Only a present moment of pointed light/ When you want to burn" (332); her relationship with his father allowed her a glimpse of "the sun shining on the rose-garden" (335). Harry's "different vision" is meant to illuminate the pattern that weaves these images into wholeness, as the truth restores the wholeness of his experience. We are meant to understand that the "ecstasy" (332) of the rose-garden experience illuminates and transforms life. As we have said, this is not sufficiently demonstrated in terms of particular actions on the stage. It relies too heavily on the resonant "music of a word",[26] whose expression is poetry and whose context is the poet's whole "lifework". Within the different confines of a stage performance, they are inappropriate vehicles for communication and understanding. The Christian liturgy is reflected in the play's proclamation of truth and light, but the "way" that is also Christ is not specifically designated. The Incarnation allows St. John to speak not only of seeing and looking at light and life, but of handling it with his

hands, in all its flesh and blood reality. Jesus Christ the Man cuts across any purely formal or purely ritualistic understanding of the truth and provides in himself the interpretation by which Word becomes flesh.

Eliot not only fails to dramatize the particularities of the Christian experience of redemption, but also its particularity in Christ. This theological confusion is reflected in dramatic difficulties, as he struggles to flesh out his own words. He does not sufficiently conceive or dramatize the human reality he presents. In one sense Harry's experience is not specified enough, but in another sense it is too specific. The spiritual world reflected is a peculiar blending of many strands of thought, each of which loses its identity in being fitted into what can only be an amorphous and "private puzzle". Satisfactory understanding and participation are denied not only the "unspiritual" but the Christian. Eliot's human and social understanding are equally deficient. The "contemporary" terms in which the story is told were contemporary to a select class of English society at a certain time, perhaps, but do not find enough credibility or sympathy to be generalized to a large, much less universal audience. In contrast, it is the particularity of the original story, sometimes to shocking proportions, that renders it real and universal. The "scandal" of the Monchensey family, sadly, is perhaps too commonplace and "normal" to generate much interest. It cannot bear the weight of tragic seriousness for which the intensity of the mood and the protracted preparation calls. Agatha's description, and particularly her expression of having "only looked" into the rose-garden, suggests an avoidance of the sexual element, and

thus of the actual tangible reality, that keeps the affair at the romantic and poetic level. At the same time the poetic and mysterious air that surrounds the situation, with its strange intertwining of past and present, lends an uncanny dimension to what might be merely tawdry, and thus helps to situate it into its mythological heritage.

In seeking to dramatize the implications of the coming of Christ for the ancient mythological world of Oedipus and for the contemporary world of Harry, Eliot discloses his fear of life and humankind, in all its flesh and blood and dignity. His focus on the continuity between these "old worlds" and the world made new in Christ discloses a tendency to adjust Christ to the world he purports to know, rather than to take Christ as the starting point from which he can look backward and forward, to discern the continuity that follows from His utter newness. That Eliot has yet to experience Christ as the integration point of his life and the agent of reconciliation of the various orders of his life and perception, is reflected, as we have seen, in the unsatisfactory rendition of redemption that is dramatized. What the quality of his spiritual experience at this time was is suggested by the disparity that the play manifests. We have seen that Harry's moment of revelation is meant to be the climax of the play, when the meaning of his experience is given and the reordering of his life according to a "different vision" is made possible and begins to occur. This is meant to be seen as the integrating focus of the action, and fails largely because it is a matter of perception rather than of experience that we witness; it is also meant to suggest meaning as the integration point of

life. Because Eliot's focus is meaning itself, no particular meaning is clear enough, and his purpose is thwarted. In forsaking the medium of particular concrete action in which meaning is fleshed out, he discloses his failure to discern the meaning of ordinary life. And because he is a Christian, for whom ultimate meaning is found in God Incarnate, this failing is particularly disturbing.

As a result, meaning is not experienced as an agent of integration, but of separation. Eliot's attempt to write a contemporary ritual drama lends a ritualistic character to much of the action, as we have noticed. And the characters themselves are often of the same character, as automatons or counters in a cosmic design.[27] Without the intrinsic significance of the rituals that he employs being appreciated, however, they dissolve into empty gestures and words. The original framework of ritual drama is imaginatively employed, as we have seen in our discussion, but insufficiently known to bear the weight of significance with which he invests it.[28] Similarly, the modern "rituals" of the society he presents, such as the pre-dinner sherry party chatter and the character types that he finds at such a gathering, for example, are largely unknown. Their "ritual" character is also largely lost, then, and with that much of their meaning and significance. The meaning that Eliot finds does not find a home in the "ordinary everyday world".[29]

The verse pattern is crucial in registering and generating the "doubleness" of action that is meant to disclose its meaning; indeed, it is the main strength of the play. There is a fundamental dichotomy between poetry and conversational verse,

with the formal poetry being the language of the deeper, more intense, unconscious level of experience, that lies "underneath, inside, the natural surface appearance."[30] Music and liturgy serve as models for poetry, and it is in imitation of their form that a sense of the deeper level that energizes the surface action is conveyed. Many of the speeches are designed according to musical patterns, with liturgical overtones of form and image. Rhythm is basic, with repetition of sounds and themes and images used for its intensification, as well as variation of theme. The aunts and uncles converse together like an orchestra with each instrument playing its own melody and all blending into a harmony, their disagreements and their individuality subsumed under their essential conformity, which culminates in the Chorus, a stylized rendition of their "normal" sound. It brings them together as in a single rhythm they speak their regrets ("I might have been ... I should have been" (291)) and self-vindications, condemning one another with a uniformity that condemns themselves. We experience the inexorable pressure of the weight of their fears and excuses, recited as to the beating of a drum. And we know the resultant apathy and despair: "There is nothing to be done about it,/ There is nothing to do about anything." (329) The repetition of "we", like the pounding of a pulse, speaks of self-centeredness and fear, compelling us at the same time to realize our complicity with them, to join in a confession of what we cannot but be guilty of. The accumulation of questions intensifies the sense of doubt and fear, with every question inviting a deeper question. "The circle of our understanding", in which we go around and around, without

beginning or end, without escape, "Is a very restricted area ...

> We do not know what we are doing
> And even, when you think of it,
> We do not know much about thinking
> What is happening outside of the circle?
> And what is the meaning of happening?
> What ambush lies beyond the heather
> And behind the Standing Stones?
> Beyond the Heaviside Layer
> And behind the smiling moon?
> And what is being done to us?
> And what are we, and what are we doing?
> To each and all of these questions
> There is no conceivable answer.
> We have suffered far more than a personal loss -
> We have lost our way in the dark. (348-9)

The sharp distinction between their two levels of speech reflects the dichotomy between "normality" and the reality of which they are unconscious.

Amy's maintenance of control prevents unconscious excursions and her speech remains on one level, its rhythm relaxing naturally as she loses her power and fades into death. Agatha and Mary, both of a more enlightened character, dwell with more comfort on the level of unconsciousness from which poetry comes. We have noted the rune-like pronouncements which are typical of Agatha: she is an oracle whom even Amy consults ("What does Agatha think?" (297); "Ask Agatha ... Ask Agatha ... Ask Agatha." (344)). Mary's speech also, as we have seen, is of a poetic character. Both take unconscious excursions with Harry into the past and toward the "rose-garden" of illumination, during which conversation becomes poetry. Shared insight is expressed in shared images, with communication and understanding reaching its heights in antiphonal exchanges, as musical as they are liturgical. In his conversation with Agatha, for example, her "unwinking eye" is his "single eye above the desert"; his sense of sickness is

expressed in her "empty hospital"; his sense of being imprisoned in her "barred windows". His image of "senseless direction ... round and round" (297) returns in her description of pointless action, "Over and under ... Up and down." Finally, they both say, "the chain breaks" and, Harry recognizes, "the awful evacuation/ Cleanses." (335)

Harry's speech is fraught with the intensity that communicates his heightened consciousness and misery. He lives very near to the deeper reality that others visit in moments of detachment. Jarring in its intensity, it resists any overtures to be smoothed or placated. The contrast is striking when, as a hunted prey he cries out, and in the next breath resorts to casual formalities:

> Why should they wait until I come back to Wishwood?
> There were a thousand places where I might have met them!
> Why here? Why here?
> Many happy returns of the day, mother.
> (292)

His speech is that of a hunted prey, with a kind of self-propelling rhythm that moves the words along. Harry's sense of frustrated action, of senseless motion, of helpless paralysis, is conveyed by the intensity of the verse. And the softened rhythm that follows his perception of the truth helps to communicate the change in him.

The doubleness in the language serves to reinforce the separation between ordinary and "real" life, by reflecting a sense of form that does not inhere in reality but exists apart from reality. The movement of the play is not towards integration of these levels but towards clarification of their segregation. The conversational level of speech, the level of "normality" that Harry despises, is understood to be the level

of unreality, where nothing of significance happens. Although Harry ostensibly learns the significance of individual action and its place in reality, our appreciation of this is limited by the obscurity of its dramatization. The impressionistic, poetic description contributes to this sense that the significance of his action is not integral to it. His separation from the others is another indication of the unreconciled dichotomy between levels of reality. When he leaves, his arrogance and contempt are chastened somewhat ("I apologize for my bad manners" (345)); his unity with Agatha and Mary is suggested, and he promises to return to them ("until we meet again" (345)). Although there is talk of reconciliation, however, there is little evidence of it. Communication and understanding and significant relationships, throughout the play, are confined to poetic depths of unconsciousness, apart from everyday life. Harry's departure, to seek redemption and reconciliation outside the family, rather undercuts the credibility of his experience. And only the enlightened understand where he is going. "You have not seen/ What I have seen", Harry tells his relatives (344), thus reflecting again the intellectual character of his experience. The dichotomy between poetry and verse, between the enlightened and the unenlightened, reflects the intellectualization and self-consciousness that thwart Eliot's dramatic impulse. It also reflects a theological problem in his inability or unwillingness to perceive order within ordinary reality, to perceive religious meaning and significance in everyday life. The Word does not become flesh to dwell among us, but instead speaks "the voice of this Calling"[31] to some, who are drawn away from the world and their fellow men.

That the Incarnation of Christ is not really understood yet is manifested in Eliot's disdain for the common life of men. Family life and the home provide the background for the play. The house - with its roof, cellar, windows, rooms, stairs, doors and corridors; its walls, furniture, bedrooms, nursery; its taxes, defective plumbing, drains, chimneys and dark closets; its curtains and blinds - with every detail that makes it recognizable to us, is an image of our life. It provides the background for the family portrait. Memories and dreams, fears and desires, are set in the familiar surroundings that make them our own. Familiar images draw us into the feelings and situations they help to describe. But it is the desecration of these images that Eliot portrays, as the innocence of family life is defiled:

> The treble voices on the lawn
> The mowing of hay in summer
> The dogs and the old pony
> The stumble and the wail of little pain
> The chopping of wood in autumn
> And the singing in the kitchen
> And the steps at night in the corridor
> The moment of sudden loathing
> And the season of stifled sorrow
> The whisper, the transparent deception
> The keeping up of appearances
> The making the best of a bad job
> All twined and tangled together, all are recorded. (329)

Although, as we have said, it is the particularity of the Word become flesh that is Eliot's stumbling-block, the particularity of such passages, although of a poetic rather than a dramatic character, is what focusses the distaste for life that is at its heart. Eliot contemplates life, as Harry contemplates his calling, with a sense of "love and terror". The fear of the Lord that is reflected in The Family Reunion is a "primitive terror"[32] rather than a response to the God who is love, in whom is no darkness at all.

FOOTNOTES

1 T. S. Eliot, "Yeats", On Poetry and Poets, London: Faber & Faber, 1957, p.260

2 T. S. Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", Selected Prose, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953 (repr. Peregrine Books, 1963), p.78

3 Donald Hall, "An Interview with T. S. Eliot", The Paris Review, London: Andre Deutsich Ltd., Number 21, Spring-Summer, 1959, p.61

4 Eliot, Four Quartets, The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p.195

5 Eliot, The Family Reunion, The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p.294. All subsequent references to the play will be taken from this text and incorporated into the body of our text.

6 The imagery of the play resonates with much of Eliot's poetry. The desert is an important image throughout his work, for example, particularly in "The Wasteland" whose desert and wilderness images are akin to those of this play ("A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,/ And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,/ And the dry stone no sound of water."). "The Hollow Men" and "Ash Wednesday" also feature this sort of image.
The wheel is another important image. In Murder in the Cathedral "the pattern is the action/ And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still/ Be forever still ... Only the fool, fixed in his folly, may think/ He can turn the wheel on which he turns." (Ibid., p.61; 245, 247).

7 Eliot, "John Marston", Selected Essays, London: Faber & Faber, 1932, p.32. See the discussion in the Introduction, p.51-53

8 Eliot, "The Wasteland", p.75

9 Eliot, "John Marston", p.232

10 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", Adam Vol. 200, November, 1949, p.14; cf. "Poetry and Drama", p.69

11 Eliot, "John Marston", p.232

12 Eliot, "John Marston", p.229

13 Eliot, Introduction to S. L. Bethell, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, London: Staples Press Ltd., p.11

14 Eliot, "John Marston", p.229

15 Cf. Murder in the Cathedral, Chorus: "Clear the air! Clean the sky! wash the wind! take the stone from the stone, take the skin from the arm, take the muscle from the bone, and wash them. Wash the stone, wash the bone, wash the brain, wash the soul, wash them, wash them!" (p.276)

16 The Book of Common Prayer, London: Oxford University Press, 1662, The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony

17 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.186

18 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.190

19 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.77-8

20 Eliot in Donald Hall "An Interview with T. S. Eliot", p.61

21 Eliot, "John Marston", p.232

22 Eliot's recurring fascination with the killing of a woman emerges in Sweeney's fantasy, with himself as the cannibal and Doris as the missionary. Celia's fate is another rendering of this. Eliot's own sense of guilt over the unhappiness and illness of his wife suggests itself as the root of this.

23 See Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp.60-1, for example.

24 Again "The Hollow Men", "Ash Wednesday" and "The Wasteland", in particular foreshadow Harry's experience.
See also an early poem, "The Death of Saint Narcissus":

> So he became a dancer to God.
> Because his flesh was in love with the burning arrows
> He danced on the hot sand
> Until the arrows came.
> As he embraced them his white skin surrendered itself
> to the redness of blood, and satisfied him.
> Now he is green, dry and stained
> With the shadow in his mouth.
>
> (The Complete Poems and Plays, p.606)

The distinct loathing for the flesh is familiar.

25 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.190. See our discussion of this image in the Introduction, note 132, p.77

26 Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", Selected Prose, p.57. See the discussion in the Introduction, p.53-55
Four Quartets resonates with the music of the play: "Footfalls echo in the memory/ Down the passage which we did not take/ Towards the door we never opened/ Into the rose-garden." (p.171); "Sudden in a shaft of sunlight/ Even while the dust moves/ There rises the hidden laughter/ Of children in the foliage ..." (p.176); "What is the late

November doing/ With the disturbance of the spring/ And creatures of the summer heat ..." (p.178); "Home is where one starts from" (p.182); "To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,/ You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy." (p.181); "An approach to the meaning restores the experience/ In a different form, beyond any meaning/ We can assign to happiness. I have said before/ That the past experience revived in the meaning/ Is not the experience of one life only/ But of many generations -" (p.186-7);

> But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint -
> No occupation either, but something given
> And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
> Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
> For most of us, there is only the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses
> Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
> Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
> The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is
> Incarnation. (p.190)

27 E. Martin Browne says that the characters of this play were conceived by Eliot as types, from which individuals were to evolve. Browne, The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p.93

28 We have mentioned the place of the imagery, of the doctor, of Amy, of Agatha, in the ritual scheme. In addition there is Mary, the Virgin helper; the ritual of purification and humbling can be seen in Harry's bathing and resting; Harry can be seen as the archetypal quest hero, whose task is the vindication of the dead king and healing of the wasteland. See the Introduction, note 105, p.74-75

29 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.81

30 Eliot, Introduction to Bethell, p.11

31 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.197

32 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.187

CHAPTER 3

The Cocktail Party follows ten years after The Family Reunion. It reflects a growth in Eliot's understanding of drama and of "human kind"[1] and a corresponding development in his theological understanding. "What poetry should do in the theatre", Eliot writes in this year, "is a humble shadow or analogy of the Incarnation, whereby the human is taken up into the divine."[2] The Cocktail Party dramatizes the redemption of human lives, thereby representing the work of Christ. It also is itself "a humble shadow or analogy" reflecting the way in which redemption is accomplished through the Incarnation. Redemption is the subject of the play and also a kind of motif that runs throughout. The means by which God accomplished and accomplishes redemption, in becoming flesh among men, is adumbrated not only in the action of the play but in its structure, plot, characters, language and imagery, so that the dynamic and ongoing work of redemption finds an analogy in the play itself and suggests an answering activity in the heart of the dramatist.

Eliot's growing understanding, that redemption is not confined to moments when life is "suddenly illuminated and transfigured"[3] but rather occurs in a life as it is, in all its ordinariness, is reflected in the greater integration of the world of the play, such that a single world includes the whole range of "reality" and "unreality". That this world resembles our world in a way that the world of The Family Reunion largely did not reflects its creator's increased understanding and appreciation of human life. What is evident in The Cocktail Party is a new conviction of the

possibility and indeed the present reality of the redemption of the world in which we live. We will discover as we look at the play how Eliot's understanding of the Incarnation and redemptive work of Christ has grown.

That his commitment to Christ is now ordering his commitment to art is suggested in his looking to the Incarnation for a model for drama. Eliot imitates the Incarnation in the creation of a poetry for the theatre, through which "the ordinary everyday world"[4] is not "suddenly illuminated and transfigured" but "taken up into the divine". He imitates the coming of Christ as man into the world in his submission of his art to the medium of ordinary everyday life, for the sake of the redemption of the contemporary secular audience. His submission to Christ brings about a submission to the life that Christ created and redeems and this brings about a determination to submit to the "law ... of dramatic relevance", to write "for other voices" and for "communication"[5] that is demonstrated in The Cocktail Party. This enables and compels him "to turn away from the Theatre of Ideas to the Theatre of Character".[6]

The fact that the play begins with Eliot's interest in a given situation, involving people who captured his imagination, is evident in its relative freedom from the abstraction and intellectualism that detracts from the earlier play. The situation is suggested by a Greek prototype - Aeschylus' Alcestis - but it is his own story that evolves, newly recreated in the modern world, and in a distinctly Christian character.[7] It is the theme, or a theme, that is the seed out of which another play grows. The original ritual structure

illuminates what has been translated into a new Christian structure. The language and the imagery of the play reflect this newness and the determination to communicate and to vindicate their relevance to contemporary Christian drama. The verse which had been crucial to the formalism and "doubleness" of The Family Reunion is crucial to the tendency towards the integration of the deeper level and the surface level of action in this play. Verse is more decisively the "medium to look THROUGH and not a pretty decoration to look AT",[8] as Eliot had proposed. It is designed for dramatic utility and communication, among the characters and between them and the audience. It mediates the dynamic relationship between the two levels of reality and its constancy harmonizes them into one ordinary and dignified world. Thereby the dichotomy between art and life is resolved in poetic conversation and the possibility of human relationship is restored through the word becoming flesh and thus opening the way for understanding and reconciliation.

The imagery of the play draws from the ritual structure with its imagery of light and darkness, but translates these into modern terms of a technological society, with the natural scheme as a backdrop. Julia's spectacles are one of the images of perception that give dramatic expression to the pattern of "seeing" and "illumination" and "revelation" that comprise descriptions of the way of light.[9] Dramatic images are integral to action where poetic images are largely peripheral to it, suspending action and diffusing attention and intensity rather than furthering action and concentrating attention and intensity. Eliot's facility for poetically dramatic imagery reflects the growing sense of drama and of

contemporary life as material for "reality" and for spirituality. Perception of Edward as an actor and as an object create such poetic and dramatic images, lending them an existential flavour.[10]

Images of a technological society replace images of nature. Doorbells, telephones and buzzers compose a staccato accompaniment for the chaos of interruption and unrest that is mobilized by lifts and taxis. Thus is created a dramatic image of the cocktail party world of broken relationships and futile activity and the noise-making that replaces conversation.[11] Eliot at least thought of such appendages as hallmarks of contemporary everyday society and touchstones of his play's contemporaneity that would allow his characters to retain credibility as members of our world, "dressed like ourselves, living in houses and apartments like ours, and using telephones and motor cars and radio sets."[12] The peace and decorum of the final scene testify to the redemption of the chaos in order. But Celia's calling takes her away from this technological context, to some "desert" (438) and thus sainthood in the midst of contemporary society is not envisaged: it is relegated to the natural and primitive world. The redemption of the world is given as limited within "spiritual" confines.

The redemption of solitude in communion is a key theme and it is given expression in a dramatic image which is reinforced by the regular repetition of the word "alone". With Edward, Eliot creates a symbol of this solitude which is finally redeemed in his merging with Lavinia in a symbol of communion. Edward's discomfort without his wife is depicted in his restless activity at his cocktail party, which only

accentuates his inadequacy, such that he does not have to "pretend", as Julia slyly suggests, that he is "another guest/ At Lavinia's party." (356) Julia invites him for dinner: "Yes alone!" she says, lest he should evade the fact, "Without Lavinia" (358). Left "alone", finally, he is subjected to a constant barrage of doorbells and telephones and uninvited guests, that emphasizes his solitude and the futility of relationship. Although he insists to Peter and to Alex that he wants to be "alone" (366, 8), Peter's exposition of the misery of his own solitude undermines Edward's attempt at the image of independent and self-sufficient heroism. The drama of his situation is through all this mocked in such a way that he cannot assume the stature of self-styled tragic hero, or even manage the posture of tragic victim, but finds himself cast in the role of fool, and yet only human.

Nor is he allowed the indulgence of an intimate self-disclosure: his confidante is merciless and, to complicate insensitivity with comedy, bursts into drunken song. When he is, as he has longed to be, left alone, Edward soars no heights of tragic heroism; nor does he plumb any depths of dejected defeat. Restless motion characterizes his solitary moments; he begins a game of Patience. He is waiting, with patience, for the unfolding of events consequent upon his choice, but this activity represents as well the trivial side of his situation. In the midst of a visit from his mistress, in the absence of his wife, his passion induces him to - move a card. Ridiculous, yes, but also symbolic of the patience that is replacing his passion. "Without Lavinia" or with her, "one is always alone", Edward realizes, as his activity in the

solitude of his "prison" has already dramatized. It is this realization of solitude and its "hell" (397) that opens the way for their experience of "communion". And the regeneration of their marriage at the end of the play is stylized such that it emerges as a living symbol of marital communion.

Another key dramatic symbol is used to represent redemption, as well as the "incarnation" of words in dramatic action. Repetition and symmetry characterize the play in which a pattern of "doubleness with a difference" pervades. Situations and characters find parallels in a like but not identical mate. Celia and Peter are set against Lavinia and Edward, for example; Edward's consultation with Riley is succeeded by his, and Lavinia's, consultation with Reilly, and with Celia's. The cocktail party gathering is regathered twice, in a different form each time. Thus Reilly's image of "two worlds of life and death" (437) finds dramatic expression. And the double theme of "keeping on" and "a fresh beginning" (440) that is redemption is dramatized in this movement. "I never tell the same story twice", Alex has said at the beginning. (353) Thus the play itself actualizes the movement towards redemption according to an order that is beyond the seen world. And the final instance of this comes when Lavinia says at the end, "It's begun." (440) The word of poetic image is becoming flesh in dramatic life.

The life of the characters of The Cocktail Party reflects Eliot's deeper submission to the Incarnation and its implications. Their reality comes through the medium of particular concrete personal individuality that suggests a new appreciation of human life in its glory and freedom. The

particularity of their experience is the medium for its reality, whereas the inhabitants of Wishwood were designed to achieve "reality" through their impersonal participation in a level of experience that was extrinsic to them. Thus they tended towards ritualization and did not often achieve viable life. The human characters of The Cocktail Party live as individuals and, as they partake of the ordinary reality that we know, we observe their participation in another reality growing simultaneously, and so we watch as "the human is taken up into the divine". Another order of characters, not as otherworldly as the Eumenides but decidedly of another world, achieves a different sort of life. The Guardians are not "realistic" in the sense that the human characters of the play could be seen to live in our world, but they are in themselves consistent enough to be palpable individuals, with inconsistencies that are consistent with one another and thus suggestive of another world.[13]

The characters reflect a fundamental change in Eliot's dramatic sense. His growing understanding of the value of ordinary human life also indicates the corresponding theological development which includes a new understanding of the basis of the value of life. The spiritual hierarchy that ranged the characters of The Family Reunion on a continuum of salvation and damnation, from Harry's sense of "election" (339) to the Chorus' damnation ("we have lost our way in the dark" (349)), which left the impression that some, unaccountably, are "enlightened" and some are not, is succeeded in The Cocktail Party by an overriding sense of the potential for redemption that is latent in everyone, and is not based on

special perception but on a sense of personal sin and need for redemption that is more explicit than Harry's. And it is answered by a response that is much more personal than what he knew. The belief in the equality of all the characters, although they follow different ways of redemption, is at least posited, though the sense that there are special saints lingers. Importantly, however, even Celia, the saint of the play, is of a profoundly humanized variety, and her choice is a decidedly more pedestrian and more demonstrable one than Harry's. Again, it is significant that the Guardians, though divine agents and endowed with special powers and perception, confess their own ignorance of the way of salvation ("You must accept your limitations", Julia tells Henry (421)). The basis of superiority is clearly something other than divine insight, then, as distinguished the "enlightened" characters of the earlier play, and something to which only humanity has access. What this is demonstrates a fundamental change in Eliot: for it is life, and a life that has taken on new meaning for him.

Eliot's developing sense of the value and dignity of human life is reflected in the structure of The Cocktail Party, which he dubs "a comedy".[14] Within the play, a sense of humour and the ability to laugh at oneself is identified by Sir Henry as "the first more hopeful symptom" (408) of a recovery of health. Eliot's turn to comedy is a symptom of a new sense of the place of human life in God's order that results in a tendency to take himself less seriously. An acceptance of humanity in all its absurdity and dignity is part of the motivation to imbed his serious message in a comic world. Evident also is his

appreciation of dramatic entertainment and the delight of comedy. At the same time, the employment of the comic structure that is the descendant of ritual comedy testifies to the determination to frame his religious message in contemporary terms: conventions of comedy, infused with their mythical heritage, are employed for a language that is much more accessible and intelligible to a modern audience in the secular theatre.

Dramatic relevance and utility is the criterion for the play's action and its conventions, instead of their being valued as an entertaining smoke screen behind which to perform "monkey tricks", as he had once suggested.[15] This is manifest in the integrity within the action of the message and the medium: the chatter of the opening scene and the plethora of exits and entrances, for example, serve theatrical as well as ideological purposes. At moments this integrity wanes, as in Riley's drinking ritual, which Eliot confessed to be entirely for the sake of "mystifying Edward":[16] insufficient justification renders this neither comprehensible nor funny. Eliot's playfulness emerges in the deliberate dramatic ploys to which he calls attention. When Julia remembers her spectacles she admits to having no need to return, and therefore no need to forget them. (391) In contrast Celia returns to see Edward, having really forgotten her umbrella. (376) This is an integral part of a play that seeks to create a new convention, however; it is integral to the mystery and comedy of Julia, as well as her intrusive and observant character, as it is integral to Celia's honesty.

Eliot's ability to identify "the rituals of the cocktail

party world"[17] reflects a new understanding and appreciation of contemporary society and a new perception of reality and order in the midst of life. His willingness to submit to the forms of modern society, rather than impose archaic forms on it, testifies to the growth of his human and dramatic and Christian understanding. The current social conventions and classic comic conventions are employed instead of the obscure myths and rituals of ancient drama. At the same time the identification of the essential structure of these conventions lends the contemporary situation universal proportions. The meaning of these conventions is exposed as quite different from the conventional one. Dramatically, the juxtaposition of reality and unreality that is effected by the unconventional usage of conventions like Julia's spectacles, sets up an interplay that defies conventional distinctions of what is "real life" and what is drama, and thus what is real and unreal. Thematically this finds a parallel in the juxtaposition of life and death that is exposed at the heart of a conventional situation. Action is stylized to the point that it exceeds the conventional structure and makes way for a new interpretation in unconventional Christian terms.

Out of the apparently conventional framework evolves a very different kind of comedy.[18] That humour is basic to humanness is dramatized in the world of the play, in which comedy is intrinsic, and yet no more so than tragedy. There is straightforward comedy, even slapstick fun, in the general flurry of activity involving endless comings and goings and unexpected meetings and returns, with the familiar sense of chaos being held at arm's length that makes for comedy and allows us to see the funny side of life. Alex's fiasco in the

kitchen is typical, however, in its blending of fun with a twist of uncanny or unaccountable mystery and pathos. That he normally uses "a handful of rice and a bit of dried fish ... to make something out of nothing" (368, 372) suggests the spiritual dimension of his activities. His "special gift" learned "in the East" is to "make something" of these "scraps" of human life (368). Similarly the funny stories of the cocktail party exhibit an admixture of the bizarre and pathetic and mystifying overtones that suggest something profound or even tragic at the root of the joke. Julia's story about the man who could hear the cry of bats epitomizes this, as it conjures up such a mixture of emotions that we hover on the brink of laughter and tears - not so very far from each other after all.[19]

Julia and Alex and the "one-Eyed Riley" embody this mixture: in them the humourous and the serious are intermingled in the extreme, and to an unsettling extent, as the human characters find themselves putting their lives into the hands of these people who seem either "devils"[20] or stand-up comedians to whom nothing is sacred or serious. The human characters are merely less extreme mixtures of comedy and tragedy: their growth in understanding is a growth of their sense of humour and their sense of what is serious. Their tragedies are seen in a comic light and their comedies have a tragic bent. At the same time no one of them is insignificant or merely the butt of life's joke, but each is living out his own "tragicomedy", even Peter, the least important character. Edward and Lavinia's marriage is fraught with as much tragedy as comedy, as much comedy as tragedy. Their verbal wrangles

are funny and sad. He complains that her guests take him for the butler, she that he often did not arrive until the guests were leaving: a sad reflection of their relationship. Edward's defuses and accentuates the tragedy: "Well, at least they can't have thought I was the butler." (394)

The black undercurrent[21] in the humour of the play culminates in the focal point of the action, which is Celia's utterly uncomic death. The juxtaposition of comedy and tragedy is exaggerated here to a ferocity that is designed to shock the audience out of its complacent complicity in the horror and violence that has been part of the fabric of the play throughout, and reflects their life experience. Eliot works the description of Celia's death into a story, in a play of stories, that is a burlesque of missionaries and culture and polite society, forcing the audience to laugh before they realize that what they are laughing at is suffering and death. Thus not only our perception of comedy and tragedy but our experience of life and death is absorbed and consummated in a ghastly crucifixion that we are told is "triumphant" (438). And thus the Divine Comedy[22] of Incarnation and Redemption through death and resurrection is adumbrated, and its ultimate shock and significance is represented, to be apprehended afresh. As Eliot wrote in writing of modern Religious Drama, in 1937:

> Nothing in the nature of shock is tolerable: we are apt to forget the original events which in the biblical narrative we treat with such familiarity, are in themselves, if we regard them with fresh eyes, profoundly shocking. 23

And "fresh eyes" is what the characters in The Cocktail Party need.[24]

The play accords with Dante's vision of The Divine Comedy, the classic Christian perception of a divine supernatural

order that comprehends and redeems the human, in all its comedy and tragedy, and the natural order, and reconciles the human and the divine as well as the natural and the supernatural. Thus the reconciliation and integration that Christianity perceives as the outcome of Christ's death and resurrection is represented in the structure of the play. The liturgy of the Mass whose heart and focus is the death and resurrection of Christ is its model. It is this movement from disorder to order that absorbs and resolves all conflict - with the final word, "It's begun", reflecting the triumph of life over death - that The Cocktail Party dramatizes. The shadow of the Cross of Christ and the light of his resurrection cast the variegated and constant pattern of life and death that orders and informs the play.

Throughout the play the spiritual worlds of life and death are hinted at and woven into its dramatic fabric. "Good Samaritans" (376) and "St. Anthony" (366) coexist with "hell" (397) and "devils". The conventionally accepted supernatural symbols that have been drained of ultimate meaning in their trivial and sacreligious usage are in abundant evidence. But the reality of Edward's "hell" and the unsettling juxtaposition of "the angel of destruction" (398) and the "devils" who are the agents of life focus the life and death issues that are at the centre of life and all the more frightening in their entanglement together, and within a context of decided mediocrity. The juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic gives dramatic form to this sense of uncertainty between what is real and unreal, what is life and what is death. In the end, Celia's death that is a way of life points to the ultimate

reversal of life and death that was achieved in Christ's resurrection, affording new life after death.

In bringing his art to life in the theatre and in bringing life to his art, then, Eliot is demonstrating a growing belief in redemption and its accomplishment through the Incarnation. Instead of importing forms and "reality" from the ancient world and from the world of art through formal poetry, he is manifesting a growing belief in the inherent form and reality of ordinary contemporary prosaic life. At the same time he is not simply endorsing that life, but identifying its potential for death and for redemption and thus discovering the divine that is living in the midst of "human kind".

The play centres on the experience of redemption in the lives of three people, whose choice of truth sets them on the way of "salvation" (411, 420). As seekers after truth they have a basic likeness to Harry, and the world of The Cocktail Party is of two levels that are akin to what he experienced as "reality" and "unreality". In this play they are more completely integrated with one another, however, such that they are experienced more convincingly as one comprehensive world. At the same time the sharpness with which they are distinguished is represented as the difference between "two worlds of life and death" (437) as Reilly, in the words of Shelley, describes them. "Death is life and life is death" Sweeney had said[25] and in The Cocktail Party death is found to be at the heart of life, and transformed into the triumph of new life.

Edward and Lavinia and Celia are offered a choice between death and life; they choose life. Celia is offered a choice

between two ways of life; instead of the "Way of Affirmation" chosen by the other two, she chooses the "Way of Negation".[26] In keeping with the juxtaposition of life and death that we have recognized, the way of life is discovered in the midst of the death-in-life situation of a cocktail party, hosted by a man whose wife has just left him. And in keeping with the redemption of human life we watch while "the human is taken up into the divine". The opening scene of the play illustrates Eliot's new understanding and appreciation of human life and his perception of the essential structure of life and death at its core. Consonant with this is a new sense of drama which issues in the compounding of the old and the new in such a way that the familiar is recognized and understood and given a unique twist. The scene achieves a fine balancing of form and content that is typical of the play's best moments, when life is used as the stuff out of which a new form is created. Life is imitated and yet taken beyond realism in the discovery of form at its heart. The play opens thus:

ALEX: You've missed the point completely, Julia:
There were no tigers. That was the point.
JULIA: Then what were you doing, up in a tree:
You and the Maharaja?
ALEX: My dear Julia!
It's perfectly hopeless. You haven't been listening.
PETER: You'll have to tell us all over again, Alex.
ALEX: I never tell the same story twice.
JULIA: But I'm still waiting to know what happened.
I know it started as a story about tigers.
ALEX: I said there were no tigers.
CELIA: Oh do stop wrangling,
Both of you, It's your turn, Julia.
Do tell us the story you told the other day, about Lady Klootz and the wedding cake.
PETER: And how the butler found her in the pantry, rinsing her mouth out with champagne.
I like that story.
CELIA: I love that story.
ALEX: I'm never tired of hearing that story.
JULIA: Well, you all seem to know it.
CELIA: But we're never tired of hearing you tell it. (353)

Dialogue is quick and witty; the characters are full of life and interest; the stage is set for comedy. Yet the conversation is stretched to absurdity and suggests something other than sheer comedy. At the same time the verse brings form and life together in a way that is representative of the Incarnational model that Eliot had in view. It is a finely orchestrated piece whose rhythm and structure are modelled after music and liturgy. Formal features include repetition with variations, shifts in emphasis and voices, subtly accelerated intensity and modulation, responsive interchanges, developing crescendos followed by rests, even a sing-song rhythm and a pattern of refrains. The musical form is interwoven into the very texture of the verse and thus exhibits a natural quality that allows us to recognize it as our own speech; thereby our speech is elevated to "the dignity of dance or liturgy".[27]

Out of the cocktail party itself, Eliot creates a dramatic symbol for the redemption of social life in the achievement of community. Although The Family Reunion situated redemption in the social unit of family its implications were individual and segregating, focussing on Harry and his recourse to a journey away from the family that separated him from them rather than reconciling him to them. The cocktail party, and the interest in four individuals whose fates are separate and integrally related, indicates a change to a belief in the reconciliation and relationship that is of the essence of redemption. Again the drama of the Mass, which ends with the recreation of individuals in their membership one with another, is the liturgical model for this new focus. Indeed communion, with the model of Holy Communion, is a major theme. The cocktail

party represents the false communion that partakes of unreality and death. Its ritual activities, even in this first scene, are eating, drinking[28] and talking, the elements that comprise the feast that is the symbol of human society. But instead of fulfilling the function of the sacred meal in nurturing the physical and spiritual life of its partakers, this feast mocks them, tantalizing and stimulating physical and emotional and spiritual appetites with desires that are never satisfied.

The insubstantiality of the food and drink of this feast is bluntly stated by Julia: "Are there any more cocktails?" she enquires, after Edward has left the room, thus implying his inadequacy to provide for his guests. She becomes more pointed in her criticism:

> Edward without Lavinia! He's quite impossible!
> Leaving it to me to keep things going.
> What a host! And nothing fit to eat!
> The only reason for a cocktail party
> For a gluttonous old woman like me
> Is a really nice tit-bit. I can drink at home.
> (Edward returns with a tray)
> Edward, give me one of those delicious olives.
> What's that? Potato crisps? No, I can't endure them.(355)

The food at a cocktail party, then, is not of the substance required by the hungry, but is rather "tit-bits" that cater to the greed of those who satisfy (or do not) their hunger elsewhere. Guests can be ungrateful and unappreciative. They find the presence of the "scraps" tantalizing rather than satisfying to their appetites, and therefore worse than the absence of food. Edward's movement to the kitchen and his return with a tray full (or, better still, partly full) of unwanted tit-bits is a false, empty ritual that typifies the falseness of the whole affair: the host cannot provide, and

indeed, is not himself provided for; desires remain unfulfilled.

Julia's parting words, "Edward, it's been a delightful evening:/ The potato crisps were really excellent" (358) underlines this, and the falseness of the "communion" of their minds and hearts is as obvious as the insubstantiality of "potato crisps". A precise formulation of this is offered in Julia's refrain:

> It's such a nice party, I hate to leave it.
> It's such a nice party, I'd like to repeat it. (358)

Unlike similar passages in The Family Reunion, this rune-like pronouncement, with the simplicity and sing-song quality of a children's nursery rhyme, is imbedded in the midst of the chatter. As such it is all the more effective in crystallizing the ritual nature of the party, and suggesting its sinister overtones. At the same time it captures the doubleness pattern that points us forward to a happier reformulation of things.

The ritual of cocktail party conversation is similarly exposed as false in Julia's abrupt dispossession of a story that she has been on the verge of telling from the beginning. "What Lady Klootz? ... Wedding cake?" (358) she asks, bewildered, thus dismissing all that has comprised the "nice party" . It has been as false as the "wedding" which ought to be the heart of social communion. Story-telling symbolizes the false communication of the cocktail party. It is a matter of style rather than substance, as is evident in Julia's prowess with form and disregard of content. "It's your turn, Julia", Celia has said: it is a game and the object is control without personal involvement. It is a matter of second and third-hand information about parties only known by name, and of such names

that suggest the fictional and fanciful quality. "Lady Klootz" and a "castle in the North" (355) inhabit the "once upon a time" world of "so many years ago" (354, 5). Rather than communicate, the participants of a cocktail party can only comfort or provoke one another with stories. The strangeness of it all is intensified to the brink of the bizarre when we realize that it is occurring in the home of a deserted husband. He, too, can only tell stories. The incongruity of Heracles' joviality in the house of mourning is the illuminating model for this. The story-telling ritual houses these bizarre and tragic overtones within the comic tradition of music-hall, and within the ritual tradition of the story-teller. He is in control of the oral tradition of the community and orchestrates the development of its mythology, by which its members attempt through narratives to put the meaning of their lives into words. The potential for redemption emerges to find fulfilment in the last scene when stories have been redeemed as truth.

The falseness of this social communion is writ large, then, such that intimacy or even honesty is incongruous. Not surprisingly, Edward is left to a stranger for his "confession". Contrasting with the cocktail party comes his simple statement and the confession that is intrinsic to self-disclosure: "The fact is, that Lavinia has left me." (360) The Unidentified Guest refuses to take the situation in the tragic and serious light that Edward projects. Instead he unmasks the self-interest that lies behind Edward's apparent honesty. It is "embarrassing, and inconvenient" (361) for him to lie, and to lose his wife. And, as Edward says, "I only wanted to relieve my mind" (361). Using what Celia later calls "the Devil's

method" (378), the "Stranger" (361) paints an attractive picture of Edward's "independence" from "the consistent critic, the patient misunderstander" (361) who, after all, just complicates life. He thus anticipates a response that would ensure Edward's estrangement from his wife, such that Edward resists it. Uncovering the root of the question, he leads Edward to admit his lack of love for his wife:

> Why, I thought we took each other for granted.
> I never thought I should be any happier
> With another person. Why speak of love?
> We were used to each other. (362)

He then identifies Edward's feelings of loss as rooted in "a loss of personality", such that he is "a living object, no longer a person", an actor "dressed for a party ... in the role (he has) chosen", a patient who becomes "a piece of furniture in a repair shop" (362). To Edward these images ring true and his pursuit of the question - "To what does this lead?" (363) - signifies the recognition of his need, the will to change and the desire for truth that, regardless of their passive character, open him up for the work of redemption. The truth - "finding out/ What you really are. What you really feel./ What you really are among other people" (363) - is his goal and requires not action but waiting and suffering the "humiliation" (363) that signifies his submission to the truth.

Edward realizes "I no longer remember what my wife is like" and "I must find out who she is, to find out who I am" (364), and thus that truth for him includes Lavinia. So, out of a false communion has arisen an unlikely candidate for redemption. The Chorus of <u>The Family Reunion</u> were consigned to eternal damnation - "we have lost our way in the dark" (349).

Edward, on the other hand, has been "in the dark ... long enough to clear from the mind/ The illusion of having ever been in the light" and is not doomed "to remain always lost in the dark" (364). Thus the availability of redemption, the initiative and power of revelation to penetrate the darkness, testify to new hope and new faith in the power and love of God.

Edward's desire for truth is tested and refined by the return of Celia, his mistress, who sees Lavinia's desertion as their chance for a fuller relationship. Edward confirms his decision to pursue truth with Lavinia in deciding to end his affair. Celia recognizes in the Unidentified Guest "some sort of power" (377) suggesting her spiritual sensitivity and her very human tendency to blame any available power in order to avoid shame and self-reproach. She accuses Edward of passivity, vanity, madness and, as Mary tempted Harry to forsake the truth for natural love - "If you depend on me, it will be all right" (377) - Celia tempts him with "freedom". With their relationship "right" not only will everything else be "all right" but all will be right. (379) In a dim way, Edward recognizes that it cannot be "right", that his freedom cannot be outside his marriage, and even that what is the real problem is "<u>this</u> illness", in himself. Thus the significance and will power and the potential for "right action"[29] in freedom is dramatized in the character of even the most ordinary individual, in contrast to the sense of an impersonal force controlling action in the earlier play.

Edward's response shatters the "dream" that had for Celia "seemed the real reality" (379) and thus in exposing her false

standard for truth and her false sense of reality exposes the false communion which has been the centre of her life. At the same time Lavinia's departure has made her aware of new desires: "I now wanted something more" (379). Despite his tentative belief that he had been "in love with" (380) Celia, Edward's confession that he had not known the quality of "happiness" belonging to the experience of "a private world of ours" (379) further defines the lack of love that the stranger had identified. Celia is "humiliated" (379, 80) not by a lack of love and not by her lover but by love itself. She is not humiliated at having loved him more than he loved her, but at having loved someone more than he could be loved, at having loved falsely and an insufficient object. This love itself, this desire for "something more" that Edward calls "ecstasy" (381) is affirmed and Edward recognizes in himself the deceit of having fostered false desires and the absence of true ones. He cannot conceive "ecstasy" or "happiness" with Lavinia but still desires truth with her more than "a make-believe, a pretence" that is his affair with Celia. A deeper honesty and humility reflects this desire and finds necessary expression in the particularities of the truth about himself, in all his weakness and need:

> The one thing of which I am relatively certain
> Is, that only since this morning
> I have met myself as a middle-aged man
> Beginning to know what it is to feel old.
> That is the worst moment, when you feel that you have lost
> The desire for all that was most desirable,
> Before you are contented with what you can desire;
> Before you know what is left to be desired;
> And you go on wishing you could desire
> What desire has left behind. (381)

His confession helps Celia to a response that answers his truth and humility with her own. She realizes her wrong, in having

perceived him not as a person but as her own "projection" (382), and thus reinforces the stranger's images of him as an object. Like Edward she experiences the dawning of truth as a change in perception, akin to Harry's "different vision" (333). Significantly, Celia immediately acts on the truth revealed: she asks Edward to forgive her, thus acknowledging her wrong, responding in humility and freedom to the truth and giving expression to the desire for change and redemption.

"Twice you have changed since I have been looking at you", Celia tells Edward, and "I understand as I never did before" (382). Thus she allows him the freedom to be himself, and to change, that are fundamental to redemption. This also signifies a growth towards real love, away from their selfish dream. The end of the unreality of their affair and the beginning of new lives of truth is signified in a ritual action in which they drink to the "Guardians", thus inadvertently acknowledging the supernatural help they have experienced. In this Riley's mystifying drinking ritual is in a sense redeemed by a meaningful one that adumbrates a sacred one that is yet to come.

Lavinia's return is heralded by the Unidentified Guest who comes to shed more light on the situation. Edward's freedom is such that with his "decision" he "set in motion/ Forces in (his) life and in the lives of others/ Which cannot be reversed" (384) and yet, until he acts, "We do not know yet" what he wants, what he will do (364). Again this is a significant development on the curse that must come "to ... fruition" (349) for Harry. The other side of personal freedom, as Celia had seen, is the freedom we allow to others. The Unidentified Guest extends this: the only truth that we can

know about another is the recognition that our knowledge of them is at best "our memory of the moments/ During which we knew them" (385). That "they have changed since then" is the truth that is their freedom, not fixed and immovable like the objects we would make of them, but open and thus involving risks and faith. Truth about the past must be accepted as truth for the past, and not determinative of present truth. When you meet anyone, including your wife, he tells Edward, "You must face them all, but meet them as strangers" (385). It is this combination of truth and freedom that allows for redemption. "Don't strangle each other with knotted memories", he warns, thus rendering the practical outworking of redemption in forgiveness.

The Stranger puts everything in a new perspective on this "different occasion" (384): his sobreity suggests the untold repercussions of Edward's decision, whose consequences he must now live out. The perspective is spiritual and cosmic: "it is a serious matter/ To bring someone back from the dead" (384). That "we die to each other daily" is not a "figure of speech" but more "dramatic" than any physical death. Edward's choice of forgiveness and redemption is a matter of life and death, and not only for himself. In practising forgiveness he will foster and experience freedom and redemption and participate in life; the alternative is the way of death. Thus the "conventional" domestic situation is seen to contain unsuspected depths and dimensions.

To dramatize these truths Lavinia arrives only after Celia and Peter and before Julia and Alex. The group is reassembled, however, as "strangers"; all the "human"

characters have made significant decisions for change since the cocktail party of the previous day. Their significance and implication together in a common pattern, as well as their individual significance, is suggested by their contrived regrouping: the group is established as a symbol of the community that is seeking fulfilment in redemption of their false communion. This takes Peter and Celia away from false relationships, and takes Edward and Lavinia towards each other for a true one. Celia's compassion for the others[30] and her horror at Lavinia's assurance that they will "manage somehow ... As we have in the past" (389) suggest her growth and her hope for the redemption of which the Stranger spoke.

Lavinia's incomprehension warns us that her reunion with Edward will not so much dramatize the work of redemption that is underway as the work that needs to be done, and the sorry and totally human material that they are for its work. Lavinia is conscious of some "machine" that she started and in which she is now not "free" (391) and she recognizes the reassembling of the group as "odd" (392) but a little truth, it would seem,is more dangerous than none at all. Both seem to have attached themselves to pieces of the truth which they proceed to flaunt and distort, and seem merely hardened in their alienation. Lavinia is determined to change: "I shall always tell the truth now" (392) and proceeds to "strangle" Edward with "knotted memories". Edward, too, continues to see the "truth" in terms of his own self-interest, with everything she does seen as a blow to his sense of significance and pride (394). Lavinia puts a menacing twist on the Stranger's directive to treat one another as new people:

"I shall treat you very differently/ In future", she says meaningfully (394). "I'm a rather different person/ Whom you must get to know", she says smugly; Edward says he has experienced "The change that comes/ From seeing oneself through the eyes of other people" (395). Both have taken to heart the Stranger's words in so far as they can be taken to their own advantage. Where each in himself is concerned, he is willing to begin anew; with regard to the other, the past determines the truth, as they rehearse old wounds and withhold forgiveness and freedom and thus obstruct redemption for themselves as well as for one another.

Even the Stranger's suggestion that "we die to each other daily" is twisted, as Lavinia uses it as a sign of her righteousness and self-sacrifice, and her husband's condemnation:

> I thought that if I died
> To you, I who had been a ghost to you,
> You might be able to find the road back
> To a time when you were real - for you must have been real
> At some time or other, before you knew me:
> Perhaps when you were a child. (396)

And the transparent covering of this concern is her sense of her own "reality". The intensity and complexity of this encounter, in its inextricable mixture of truth and falsehood, is aptly described as a tangle of "knotted memories". Struggling to escape only "strangles" them more tightly in an ever-shrinking "trap" (395). The intensity of the verse of this dialogue brings to life their bitterness and the life and death dimension of the struggle, all the while typifying a domestic wrangle. Thus the need for help from outside the "cage" is glaring. Still, the very bitterness of their "fight" signifies a change, in that they are at least not now avoiding the truth and pretending to love one another.

Lavinia clings to one course: "We are not to relapse into the kind of life we led/ Until yesterday morning." (396)

For Edward, yesterday marks the day of "damnation" (397). Before then he had at least the illusion of communion to solace him in his unhappiness with Lavinia. Now he is left with only the truth of solitude, his self-willed "prison":

> What is hell? Hell is oneself,
> Hell is alone, the other figures in it
> Merely projections. There is nothing to escape from
> And nothing to escape to. One is always alone. (397) 31

"One is practical, even in hell" replies his wife, whose "death" seems not to have softened or renewed the "angel of destruction" (398) so much as schooled her in its ways. For all this, there is a bond between Edward and Lavinia such that the Unidentified Guest, now identified as Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly and playing host as doctor, says, "He doesn't want to escape from her." (400)

Although Edward's recourse to a doctor is indicative of the sense of need and helplessness that is a prerequisite for redemption, underlying it and demeaning it is his penchant to take himself too seriously, as Celia and Lavinia have recognized. His readiness to be pitied, also identified by his wife, makes him eager for attention and he slips with alacrity into the role of patient. The stylization of this consultation exposes another false ritual of contemporary society. "I remember my childhood ...", the patient begins, employing the conventional phrase with a pathetic and tedious self-consciousness. His self-importance is abruptly dismissed, and his words are not so much listened to with professional detachment and compassion as monitored for what he is not saying and turned back upon himself. His self-indulgence is cut short with the "psychiatrist's" insistence

upon action in the present, beginning with choices dictated not by self-interest or emotion but by what is right. Edward's readiness to see the tragic and spiritual dimension of his plight - "The death of the spirit -/ Can you understand what I suffer?" (404) - is deflated by his practical and mundane need - "I need more shirts". In contrast is Lavinia's readiness to see the mundane and practical side of a tragic and spiritual situation, as she thinks of even hell as a place to be practical.

In bringing Lavinia into the office, as the other piece of their "total situation" which requires a joint solution, Reilly reminds Edward of the "motto" of their contract: "Honesty before honour" (405). And so he begins the exposure of these "self-deceivers" (407) who lack a fundamental requirement for the "sanitorium" to which they want to escape, "an honest mind" (407). While talking so much about truth, both have been fundamentally dishonest in concealing their love affairs. Deeper than their deceit of others and their self-deceit, is their lack of love. He discloses Edward's inability to love and Lavinia's inability to be loved. Bound together by "The same isolation" (410) the truth is there for their response. It is a moment of choice and, in recognizing that "we can go neither back nor forward" and "we must make the best of a bad job" (410), they choose the truth. They agree to struggle together for that balance between truth and freedom which is the way of redemption that the Stranger had prescribed.

The past will be with them - you must "learn how to bear the burdens on your conscience", Reilly says - but the future is ever new. "Go in peace. And work out your salvation with

diligence."(411) In this liturgical blessing, the "psychiatrist" exercises his function of confessor/priest and describes the balance between God's forgiveness and man's obedience that comprises Eliot's sense of redemption. The priest's recourse to the couch, as well as comic, suggests the needs of the counsellor himself and the significance of the rite just performed. "I have taken a risk" (420) he later tells his colleagues, thus disclosing the enormous significance and weight of the choices of these frail patients. So again in the midst of an unlikely world the domains of life and death have been recognized, and choices have brought unlikely subjects into the way of life.

The theme of sickness and health that is integral to the action throughout is given dramatic focus in the "psychiatrist's" office. Thus the action incorporates the ritual scheme in which the quest for truth is a quest for health. At the same time the Christian understanding of sin as sickness, and the recognition of sickness as the first symptom of recovery of health, underlies the action. Those that qualify for the sanitorium are the saints, whose "destiny" (437) is death. Jesus, at another "cocktail party" of eating and drinking, had answered those who would condemn his revelry thus: "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mk. 2:17) It is this sort of juxtaposition that underlies The Cocktail Party.

Celia, then, comes to see the "doctor" out of "desperation" (413). She takes full responsibility, even when invited to talk about her parents; she is not even able to see

her "trouble" as "interesting" (413) and is conscious of wasting the doctor's time. All this sets Edward and Lavinia's self-centeredness in high relief. "I feel perfectly well" (413), she says, but she is conscious of being "out of joint" with "normality", (413) but, unlike Harry, prefers to think of herself as the party with "something wrong ... that could be put right". Her first symptom is what the other two were only finally forced to admit: "An awareness of solitude", the fact that "everyone's alone", that relationship and communication and understanding constitute a "delusion" (414) to her.

With characteristic and disarming candour, she speaks out of the "honest mind" that qualifies her for sainthood and conquers the quiet embarrassment that accompanies her disclosure of feelings that are so intimate and yet so unashamed. The detached tone and descriptive quality that she employs, almost as if she were talking about someone else, together with the absence of wounded vanity or defensiveness, convince us that hers is an impersonal search for truth. With childlike simplicity she interposes the most loaded words in the dictionary of religious terminology, making them her own as if she had just coined them, as perfectly suited to her feelings. Thus, her "second symptom" is introduced: "It sounds ridiculous - but the only word for it/ That I can find, is a sense of sin." (414) Her explanation, careful and personal and evocative, suggests the dramatic experience that she has undergone since the cocktail party:

> It's not the feeling of anything I've ever <u>done</u>,
> Which I might get away from, or of anything in me
> I could get rid of - but of emptiness, of failure
> Towards someone, or something, outside of myself;
> And I feel I must ... <u>atone</u> - is that the word? (416)

Throughout this dialogue the smooth conversational rhythm of the verse helps to convince us of Celia's sincerity and her inhabitance of our world. She has no need for Edward's self-important phrases. Instead simple words help ground intensity in ordinary life. Rather than suggesting a mystical other-worldly transfiguration, we watch as "the human is taken up into the divine", while never forsaking her humanness.[32]

Celia's "sense of sin" is not guilt at immorality or shame at humiliation, or "bad form, or mental kinks". It is of a much more personal quality - a failure of relationship, of communion. She speaks of her "inconsolable memory/ Of the treasure ... never found" (416). It is the "ecstasy ... remembered like a dream" (417) and the desire for the lost treasure that distinguishes Celia from Edward and Lavinia and identifies her sainthood. She prefers it to the reality of only loving "Something created by our own imagination ... unloving and unlovable" (416). Her love is "like a dream

> In which one is exalted by intensity of loving
> In the spirit, a vibration of delight
> Without desire, for desire is fulfilled
> In the delight of loving. (417)

This love "without desire" is the "vision" in comparison with which the "first way" offers only "shadow of desires of desires" (410). "I don't want to forget it./I want to live with it", she says (418). This is the basis of her choice of the "terrifying journey" of the second way that "requires faith -/ The kind of faith that issues from despair", because it is "unknown". The two ways are equal in value, according to Sir Henry, and alike in their "loneliness - and communion" (419) and both are ways of life. Those on the first way "Can forget their loneliness" as Celia will not. Again, Reilly's liturgical

formula - "Go in peace, my daughter./ Work out your salvation with diligence" (420) - conveys the sacred and grand significance of Celia's choice, and the interaction of the divine and the human, the passive and the active, which is redemption.

That both ways of life involve "risks" and horrors, though of a different character, is made clear as the Guardians discuss the candidates and then speak a blessing and enact a libation for them. The "terrors of the journey" Celia takes on her "way of illumination" that comprises "the process by which the human is /Transhumanized" (421) are unknown to them. Julia believes her suffering to be moderated by her being "too humble" to be afraid and full of "eagerness and patience" (421). Thus Celia's saintly journey, though resembling Harry's and, especially in its jarring "transhumanization", still obscure, sounds more the description of a faith that we recognize. Edward and Lavinia face different, more mundane terrors than the "projected spirits" that await Celia, described as "Stale thoughts mouldering in their minds ... meanness ... mutual treachery" (418). And the violence of their experience they will afflict on each other and themselves. "Stripped naked to their souls ... they might just murder each other!" says Julia lightly, and in complete seriousness.

Their blessing and libation scene is the most formal of the pattern of drinking rituals. It resembles Agatha's curse but is closer to being Christian in some of its language, as well as by virtue of its being placed in a more obviously Christian context, and a context of communion rituals. Like its Christian character, the dramatic viability of the scene is somewhat tenuous.

How Edward and Lavinia and Celia work out their salvation emerges when the group is regathered, after two years. The redemption of Edward and Lavinia's marriage is seen in the context of the redemption of the cocktail party, and both are seen in the light of Celia's death which has been her redemption: true communion is achieved. The marriage relationship is stylized to create a symbol of communion that redeems the symbol of solitude that Edward had represented. While yet remaining the same people they have been regenerated: truth and freedom are achieving the proper balance in redemption. Edward's humour and compassion demonstrate his recovery of health; Lavinia has softened: "You sit beside me,/ Then I can relax" (426). He loves and she is lovable. And their "solitude" has become "communion", such that they look forward to getting away from parties: "And we can be alone./ I love that house being so remote", says Lavinia (426).

The group that regathers is likewise regenerated. They come together out of a genuine desire to see one another, and clearly drawn by the power that had first brought them together. And as Celia's absence is explained so is the purpose of their meeting. The false rituals of the cocktail party are redeemed, in the substantial communion that they now facilitate. The host and hostess form a substantial unit who offer their guests a professionally catered and well-prepared feast. The sense of rest and security is epitomized in Lavinia's reclining beside Edward, to contrast with the constant and futile activity of his lonely party. The conversation is also redeemed, as the fiasco of ambiguous, second-hand tit-bits that was their story-telling is replaced by gifts of self in

truth and love. Peter's story typifies the California movie legend, complete with names like Bela Szogody and the ever-present ancient ruins for American capitalist philistinism to reconstruct. At the same time it is his personal story and true, thus making its bizarre overtones all the more bizarre. The crass falseness of pretence is exaggerated to create a parody of the kind of "regeneration" that contemporary society plays at. This story is juxtaposed with Alex's story, which is a kind of parable in which the underlying life and death themes of the play are writ large. Juxtaposition is the technique that sharpens the lines of life and death reality: the preposterous saga of cannibalism and Christianity in Kinkanja is the setting for Celia's ghastly martyrdom and both these, set against Peter's modern parable and in the context of the cocktail party world, dramatize the composition of "a world of lunacy,/ Violence, stupidity, greed ..." (418) as the world in which we live and in whose composition we participate.

The presence of death that has skirted at the edges of the play and regularly emerged in its midst culminates here in Celia's crucifixion "Very near an ant-hill" (434). Sir Henry expresses "no surprise or horror" (436) at Celia's grim and horrific fate, because of the "picture" he had had of Celia as "a woman under sentence of death" (437), part of the spiritual perception that also allows him to see the context of life and death in which horror is normal. His understanding of Celia's death as "triumphant" (438) and part of "the way of life" (437) depicts the reality of redemption and regeneration, where other worlds offer only fictions. The particularities of her sainthood are expounded more fully than were Harry's, reflecting Eliot's deepened sense of drama and humanity and

spirituality. Although she is called to a special task there is something ordinary and mundane about her having "joined some nursing order", regardless of how "very austere" (433) and this suggests Eliot's growing sense of the presence and activity of spiritual life in the midst of daily life. With this we have the memory of a very live and worldly Celia, whose potential for the divine was also evident. And to further emphasize the humanity of saints, Reilly relieves the party of conventional illusions:

> Do you imagine that the Saint in the desert
> With spiritual evil always at his shoulder
> Suffered any less from hunger, damp, exposure,
> Bowel trouble, and the fear of lions,
> Cold of the night and heat of the day, than we should? (438)

At the same time Celia's triumphant death allows the redemption proceeding from the "first way" to be recognized as such. The potential for horror and glory is of a different character for Edward and Lavinia but their drama is just as real and ultimate. In their response to Peter's despair over Celia's death, they demonstrate what they have learned of new life out of death. They encourage him to face the truth of his self-deceit and self-centredness, that had made an "image" of Celia (435). From this stance of truth he can, as Edward knows from experience, "make a new beginning" (436). Redemption is clearly available to Peter, as he is prepared to be honest and to change. The Chorus of <u>The Family Reunion</u> were distinguished for their unwillingness to change - "Hold tight, hold tight, we must insist that the world is what we have always taken it to be" (302) - whereas openness is ascribed to everyone in this play.

Redemption is seen to have at its centre mercy and forgiveness:

> If we all were judged according to the consequences
> Of all our words and deeds, beyond the intention
> And beyond our limited understanding
> Of ourselves and others, we should all be condemned. (438)

Reilly's words here reinforce the equality of all. Yet the persistence of guilt plagues Eliot still, as is reflected in Reilly's restatement of his guidance with regard to bearing the burdens of conscience:

> You will have to live with these memories and make them
> Into something new. Only by acceptance
> Of the past will you alter its meaning. (439)

As Julia explains, "Everyone makes a choice .../ And then must take the consequences." (439) This implies a greater significance and freedom to the individual than was true in The Family Reunion and thus reflects a growth in Eliot's understanding of redemption and consonant sacramental understanding. At the same time his understanding of redemption is still severely lacking the forgiveness of God that ministers freedom from guilt. Redemption is not seen here as a gift of grace given by God to be practised by men but as something that is earned as it is practised. Thus Edward and Lavinia's hope, to be found in the double-edged reality "that every moment is a fresh beginning; ... life is only keeping on" (440), although expressive of the freedom and truth in the midst of life that is redemption, limits its activity and its joy. "Remember not the former things ... Behold I will do a new thing ...", says the Lord, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions" (Is. 43: 18-19, 25). Eliot seems determined to remember the sins that God has forgotten, and thus the difficulty that Harry had in realizing the forgiveness of God in which redemption is founded is seen again.

Eliot's elevated expression, the "appointed burden" (440) does not moderate the guilt that is its fundamental reality still. Yet, at the same time, the disillusion with life that we saw in The Family Reunion has been modified, if not fully redeemed. Edward and Lavinia's "first way", the way of ordinary everyday Christian life, is mediocre by comparison to the grandeur of Celia's sainthood, but the "loathing" (329) at the heart of Eliot's response to life is balanced by a kind of bemused and humanized sense of its absurdity. And the ideal of saintliness has been deromanticized considerably and brought down to earth. In this play, the possibility of damnation is not considered: Eliot's emphasis is not on the difference between the two extremes of sainthood and damnation, but rather on the basic identity of two ways of sainthood, as ways of life that can be found in the midst of death. Both are ways "whereby the human is taken up into the divine", and "life is elevated to the dignity of dance or liturgy."[33]

The other crucial development in Eliot's spiritual understanding that this play dramatizes is a new belief in the possibility of communion, of relationship. Celia's crucifixion is the "humble shadow" of the means by which communion between God and man, and between man and man is achieved. The "second way" leads more directly to communion with God but it is understood to lead to a sacrificial love for others as well, as Celia's calling demonstrates. At the same time her way is meant to be a merely more explicit demonstration and expression of the way of life that is love and is also the "first way" of Edward and Lavinia. Sir Henry had identified "sacrifice" (409) as the element lacking in Edward's love for Celia. And he has explained that "we die to each other daily". Celia's sacrifice

is a physical and dramatic expression of the spiritual and equally dramatic experience of the married couple who are learning love and achieving communion through mutual sacrifice.

All the false communions and shadowy rituals of the play are redeemed by the end of the play. Communion is achieved not only between Celia and God and not only between Edward and Lavinia but in the integration of the whole group, including Celia, in a redeemed society, made possible through sacrifice and experienced in ongoing redemption. Thus the ultimate communion of God and man in Christ's Incarnation is adumbrated, and the ritual of Holy Communion, in which our communion with God is recreated, is adumbrated in the redeemed community. This is the drama's "end", but, as Lavinia suggests, in its end is its beginning: "It's begun", she says, even as new life is begun again in death.

Still, Celia's divine communion is earned, rather than given by God. And it occurs outside the community that we (and Eliot) know. Thus the separation between God and man is given personal expression in an incomplete understanding of the forgiveness of God which was made possible by the meeting of God and man in Christ's Incarnation and death. In The Cocktail Party redemption is proclaimed and Incarnation is adumbrated, but the missing link in Eliot's experience is still the acceptance of the work of forgiveness that was "finished" on the Cross, that we might say that redemption has "begun".

The unfinished nature of Eliot's experience of Christ among us is reflected in the dramatically unfinished quality of the play. It is as a rich and colourful tapestry whose outline is suggested without being completely filled in. The

largely narrative form of the final act, in which Celia's martyrdom is recounted, heightens the obscurity that surrounds Eliot's understanding of sainthood and the audience's understanding of redemption as it is dramatized. Celia's death is reported with a shocking apruptness:

> ALEX: I was about to speak of her
> When you came in, Peter. I'm afraid you can't have Celia.
> PETER: Oh ... Is she married?
> ALEX: Not married, but dead.
> LAVINIA: Celia?
> ALEX: Dead.
> PETER: Dead. That knocks the bottom out of it.
> EDWARD: Celia dead. (433)

Yet this occurs in the midst of parable-like stories that are anything but straightforward. Whatever its artistic or theological justification, this is a weak dramatic device and suggests a spiritual hesitancy. The suggestion is that Eliot's belief in the radical impact of the Incarnation of Christ is still an intellectual, rather than an experienced one. He merely narrates the experience of the saint, as he had sketched it in the previous play. The experience that is known and can be staged is the rather undramatic, though certainly transformed, experience of the Chamberlaynes, with the joyless significance of their "appointed burden" (440). Whatever might be said - "Neither way is better", Reilly tells Celia (418) - what is dramatized is Eliot's experience of selective redemption and incomplete forgiveness. The experience of the saint is reserved for the few: it is the truly dramatic experience - too dramatic and too unknown to be staged.[34] The play lacks dramatic power because Eliot does not believe in the drama of ordinary life. Again, "reality" is something other than we know from day to day, and "the ordinary everyday

world" is a mundane one indeed, where redemption is of a decidedly earthbound character and the "real" saints cannot dwell.

FOOTNOTES

1 "Human kind cannot bear very much reality" is a line from Four Quartets and in Murder in the Cathedral and is an important idea behind The Family Reunion. T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, London: Faber & Faber, 1969, pp. 172, 271

2 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", Adam, Vol. 200, November, 1949, p.12

3 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", Selected Prose, London: Peregrine Books, 1963 (first published Penguin Books, 1953), p.75; Cf. "The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.12

4 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.81

5 Ibid., p.72

6 Eliot, in an interview with Iain Hamilton in World Review (9) November, 1949. London: Edward Hulton, 1949, p.21

7 David Jones points out that the original story of Euripedes depicted Alcestis as a self-sacrificing wife and emphasized the fortitude of women and the weakness of men. Lavinia "dies" for Edward, of course ("I thought that if I died/ To you, ... You might be able to find the road back to a time when you were real - ...") but Eliot considerably balances the virtue and vice of the modern pair; all of us "die to each other daily". See David Jones, The Plays of T. S. Eliot, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960.
Robert Heilman considers that Eliot was "taking the literal story and uncovering its symbolic possibilities, or, in other terms, both naturalizing and universalizing the folk mystery." "Alcestis and The Cocktail Party", Comparative Literature, Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1953, Vol. 5, p.108
In discussing the play in an interview in 1959, Eliot explains his interest in Alcestis thus:

> The Cocktail Party had to do with Alcestis simply because the question arose in my mind, what would the life of Admetus and Alcestis be, after she'd come back from the dead; I mean if there'd been a break like that, it couldn't go on just as before. Those two people were the centre of the thing when I started and the other characters only developed out of it. The character of Celia, who came to be really the most important character in the play, was originally an appendage to a domestic situation.

Donald Hall, "The Art of Poetry I: An Interview with T. S. Eliot", The Paris Review, London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., Number 21, Spring-Summer, 1959, p.61

8 Eliot, "Five Points on Dramatic Writing" (A letter to Ezra Pound), Townsman, I (July, 1938), 10; quoted in Carol H. Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practise, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p.53

9 Eliot, The Cocktail Party, The Complete Poems and Plays Of T. S. Eliot, London: Faber & Faber, 1969; perception is a theme emphasized throughout the play: in the first scene the question of whether people are "hearing" and "listening to" stories is important (p.353-6); seeing is emphasized, in terms of light and dark (p. 364), illusion (364, 414); Julia is "observant" (367) and loses her spectacles from which one lens is missing; Riley sings "The One-eyed Riley"; "revelation" is a term used by Reilly (408) and Celia (414); Celia takes "the way of illumination" (421); Edward and Lavinia are in a state of "unenlightenment" (410); Reilly must "lead them to see" (413).
All subsequent references to the plays are from this text and will be incorporated into the body of our discussion.

10 This technique is further extended in The Confidential Clerk. See Katherine J. Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama, London: G. Bell & Sons, 1972

11 Celia says, "They make noises, and think they are talking to each other". (p.414)

12 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.75

13 See our discussion of "doubleness" in the Introduction, p.51-3.Eliot writes of Dostoevsky's characters that they seem to act "in conformity with the laws of some world that we cannot perceive ..." "John Marston", Selected Essays, London: Faber & Faber, 1932, p.229

14 Superscription of the play in T. S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1971, p.295

15 In "Five Points on Dramatic Writing", he writes, "If you can keep the bloody audience's attention engaged, then you can perform any monkey tricks you like when they ain't looking, and it's what you do behind the audience's back so to speak that makes your play IMMORTAL for a while." Quoted in Smith, p.53

16 E. Martin Browne, The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p.246

17 Worth, op. cit., p.63

18 Katherine Worth says: "The rituals of the cocktail party world are given a push in a sinister direction. Reilly sipping gin and water is a Coward character poised for a leap into a Pinter scene." (op. cit., p.63)

19 Eliot's admiration for Shakespeare included his appreciation "that beneath great comedy there is horror and beneath great tragedy there is laughter". Eliot, "Shakespearean Criticism: I: From Dryden to Coleridge", in A Companion to Shakespearean Studies, ed. H. Granville-Barker & G. B. Harrison, pp.(287)-99. Quoted in Smith, p.149. Eliot wrote the Introduction to S. L. Bethell's Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, London: King and Staples, 1944. Bethell recognizes the "audience's ability to respond simultaneously and unconsciously on more than one plane of attention at once." Quoted in Smith, p.150.

We are also reminded of Eliot's admiration for music-hall comedians: their comedy is invested with a peculiar poignance that induces a response that is more than humourous, while at the same time more humourous for its tinge of sadness.

20 The Guardians are taken for "devils": Celia suspects that the Unidentified Guest is the Devil (377); Lavinia calls Julia "the devil" (392); "What devil left the door on the latch/ For these doubts to enter?" Edward says after Lavinia has come back (398).

21 Katherine Worth suggests the term "black comedy" in "Eliot and the Living Theatre" in Eliot in Perspective, G. Martin, ed. London: Macmillan Press, 1970, p.163

22 David Jones suggests Dante's Divine Comedy as the model for the structure of the play in The Plays of T. S. Eliot, p.154

23 Eliot, Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern, New York: House of Books, 1954 (first published 1937), unpaginated

24 Learning to see in a new way is a key theme.

25 Eliot, Sweeney Agonistes, "Fragment of an Agon", The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p.125

26 "The via negativa, the greatest exponent of which is St. John of the Cross, defines God negatively and, correspondingly, achieves union with ultimate reality through the rejection of created things, the images of this world. It is, generally, the Way of Eliot. The via positiva on the other hand, defines God positively and achieves union through the affirmation of the created world. It is the Way of Williams." William V. Spanos, The Christian Tradition in Modern British Verse Drama: The Poetics of Sacramental Time, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1967, p.46

27 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.16

28 Food and drink are important symbols throughout the play, with its theme of communion. Besides the party food and drink and the drinking rituals, there are many other references to suggest the lack of substantial

communion. Alex makes a colourful attempt to feed Edward; Julia offers to take him to a restaurant (377); Julia jokes that Lavinia is eavesdropping from the pantry, the room from which she ought to be supplying Edward's needs; Julia takes Celia home for a "light supper" because she is "looking absolutely famished" (378); Edward and Lavinia reunite, Henry fears, for the "meanness" of "the stale food mouldering in the larder,/ The stale thoughts mouldering in their minds." (420)

29 Eliot, Four Quartets, p.190

30 Celia tells Peter, "I'm awfully glad, for your sake, ... now you'll have a chance,/ I hope, to realise your ambitions", when she hears of his new job (388). She wants to be "friends" with Lavinia and says "I should like you to remember me/ As someone who wants you and Edward to be happy." (389)

31 According to Martin Browne, this was Eliot's answer to Sartre's 'Hell is other people". The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays, p.233

32 See Andrew Kennedy, Six Dramatists in Search of a Language, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, for an illuminating analysis of Celia's session with Reilly.

33 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.12, 16

34 Gerald Weales cites Martin Browne, in pointing to the mistake of assuming that Eliot thought of himself as pursuing the way of the saint. The vagueness of Harry's pilgrimage and the difficulty with which Celia's and Colby's callings are described and dramatized testify to his unfamiliarity with them, except as an idea. Gerald Weales, Religion in Modern English Drama, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961, pp.204, 5

CHAPTER 4

After the distaste for life that lay behind the formalism of The Family Reunion, the sheer glory of human, spiritual and dramatic life that infuses and integrates The Cocktail Party is like a fresh breeze. The theological basis for this life is Eliot's deeper understanding of the Incarnation of Christ and the redemption that his death accomplished and accomplishes. Yet hidden amidst the glory of the rose of life we discovered a thorn. The separation between the saint and ordinary life and the understanding that even saints must work out their salvation and continue to bear the burden of guilt[1] are symptomatic of a lingering sense of the separation between God and man. The death of Christ is the focal point of the play and its life arises out of that, but the implications of Christ's death are not fully understood: the "sense of sin"[2] lingers and forgiveness is not complete. Instead forgiveness is offered as a promise: redemption will be experienced in life but salvation is yet to be won. Attending the play are joy and thanksgiving at the fresh promise of life. Eventually, in the "keeping on" of life the promise becomes a reward that is conditional upon man's "diligence".[3] So, instead of a gift of freedom and life earned for man by Christ that it might be given by God, forgiveness begins as a hope and a promise and becomes a reward that can be earned by obedience to certain expectations. Thus we arrive at The Confidential Clerk in which spirituality is defined by a formal religion from which the spirit of life has been drained.

Celia's "sense of sin" had emerged as a failure in love, involving a failure in self-knowledge and a failure in

relationship, in communion. Edward and Lavinia were guilty of similar failings: distorted perception of oneself and others were symptomatic of a lack of love. Although much more personal than Harry's understanding of sin, the particularities of their sin and guilt are not fully defined. Celia rejects any conventional definitions in terms of moral or psychological causes. In The Confidential Clerk the experience of communion and its failure that was so vivid in the earlier play has faded to a memory and all that remains is a sense of failure on a human level. The "sense of sin", without the reality of communion with the one sinned against, and without an adequate understanding of his forgiveness, becomes a "failure"[4] that one learns to cope with through moral and humanistic panaceas couched in spiritual phrases.

With this focus on the Incarnation and its redemptive effects, Eliot produced in The Cocktail Party, a play in which word becomes flesh in contemporary life. In The Family Reunion his focus on the word precluded communication in flesh and revealed a focus on something other than the Word Incarnate. In The Confidential Clerk his determination to communicate overtakes the identity of the Word and produces dramatic actions and words which do not represent the Word of Christ. In that play, the Word is not so much incarnated as it is integrated into the action. It does not inform and enliven the action but is instead an indistinguishable part of it. The Word is not only dwelling among men but has become humanized to the extent that there is one humanistic moralistic plane of reality rather than a dynamic interplay between the human and divine.

In The Cocktail Party, the audience catches a glimpse of Eliot's tremendous sense of joy at God's response to man's wretchedness, in Christ. The implications of redemption are explored in The Confidential Clerk. These include the integration of the believer, his vocation, a new value system. All these, in the play, find a focus in the Church. Without the freshness of communion with God, and with an incomplete understanding of sin and forgiveness, all these implications of redemption can be interpreted in humanistic or vaguely spiritual terms. The Christian focus unclear, the play does not offer "a humble shadow or analogy of the Incarnation" but a shadow without substance, an analogy of some unknown event. The human is not "taken up into the divine"[5] and redeemed; instead the divine is absorbed by the human and both are sapped of life. The Church without the "felt" life of Christ is merely a structure without content, a form without meaning. The basis for spiritual life and religion in the play is assumed to be Christ, but the outworking of its implications discloses the inadequate understanding of that basis and its unique character. What results is a secularized spirituality within the Church and a secular society which is excluded from it.

Dramatically, false assumptions are also made: the play is lacking a dramatic as well as a theological "community of expression".[6] Eliot's miscalculation of the receptivity of his audience reflects not only a failure to understand his fellow men but a sense of misgiving and fear of humanity and life that sends him to seek refuge in impersonal and conventional forms. His model is not the word becoming flesh in life; instead form is the model for a "design of human action and words"[7] that is without the animation or the interpretation of life.

The sense of the absolute newness of the Incarnation of Christ was reflected in the structure of The Cocktail Party, with the purpose of redemption clearly kept in view, so that the newness was communicated in intelligible contemporary terms. In The Confidential Clerk we have a blending of old and new that reflects Eliot's attempt to create a new convention, with a blending of Christian and non-Christian that reflects a state of spiritual confusion. He employs a traditional language, thematically centring in the Church and dramatically in comedy, to which he adds a unique and obscure twist. Instead of the word being incarnated in contemporary and dramatic life, the word and the action are integrated into an ambiguous pattern. Without a particularized meaning, there remain only ritualized forms, in its drama and in its theology.

The action of the play centres again on the search for truth, with the basic social unit being the family, although crucial to the action is the revelation of the true identity of the "hero's" family being translated from human and false terms into spiritual terms. He is led to seek the fulfilment of his true identity in the context of the Church and its community. The achievement of divine communion is seen this time in terms of achievement of one's identity as son of God and, therefore, member of the Church. The separation unto God is represented as the special calling of some, involving separation from ordinary human society. The incorporation of the special individual into a Christian community of emphatically ordinary and pointedly "spiritual" folk, and the presentation of the special spiritual calling in the decidedly conventional and prosaic terms of the priesthood, reflect the earthbound character of the spirituality dramatized in this play.

The quest for truth is presented as the essence of the spiritual quest. Humanistic terms are thus adequate for its understanding, and the spiritual phrases merely serve to equate Christianity with the other forms of spirituality that are useful as interpretations or expressions of a basically secular understanding. Dramatically speaking the model of ritual drama and the classic comedy that is its descendant suit the play so well that the search for truth that organizes their action seems its basis. Any Christian reading can be assimilated within this model and thus the sense of Christian truth as an afterthought to be superimposed on the basic structure arises. Not only is the play not focussed on the Word Incarnate in Christ but it is not focussed on any particular word at all. Thus it is a vague sense of the value of truth and personal integrity that emerges as its theme.

The Confidential Clerk is an intractable combination of conventionality and innovation, each of which is insufficiently translated. Thematically this finds a parallel in the division between the religious, Christian society of Mr. and Mrs. Eggerson and Mrs. Guzzard, into which Colby moves, and the secular society of Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth, Lucasta and B. Kaghan. These four inhabit a secular and contemporary society and are easily seen as archetypal comic characters who are delivered by the hero from deception into truth, from alienation into community. Over against this comic reading of them is a more serious and potentially tragic level which lends their situation farcical and existential overtones. Added to this there is a "Christian" interpretation: their rejection is clearly implied in the departure of Colby and represents their exclusion from the Church to which he goes and thus the apparent

haze of warmth and restoration that covers them as the curtain falls is also a consignment of them to spiritual oblivion. One's final impression of them has a rather tragicomic flavour.

Colby and Eggerson and Mrs. Guzzard are each an amalgam of ritual and comic elements whose identity as members of the Church structure puts on them a stamp of superiority and is meant to be understood as the hallmark of their spirituality. They are not dramatized as sinners who become saints as they have experienced forgiveness but rather as flat characters who are incapable of sin because they are incapable of significant action. Their ritual-like characters suggest membership in a ritualistic structure that is identified as the Christian Church. The other four are excluded not because of sin, it would seem, but because of life. The life that defined the spirit of Christ in The Cocktail Party is decidedly lacking in this Church and indeed its lack of life seems its defining character, and the prerequisite for membership.

As in previous plays, Eliot is dramatizing a situation derived from an ancient Greek play in contemporary and Christian terms, for a secular audience. That the play begins with the Ion of Euripedes, a tragicomedy whose ambiguous tone colours its spiritual import provides one possible explanation for the ambiguity of The Confidential Clerk. That Eliot's interest in Ion is a fascination with "the poetry of a natural celibate, the temple servant"[8] signals inevitable difficulties to be met in an attempt at a Christian and contemporary rendering of such an essentially secular and essentially archaic idea. The concept of natural celibacy is beyond the ken of the average modern person: celibacy is hardly considered natural, particularly to a non-religious audience. Although more

palatable to a Christian mentality, there is nothing patently Christian or essentially Christian about celibacy per se. As a virtue it is much more of stoic or gnostic character.

At the same time the ascription of virtue to "natural" goodness is inadequate in Christian terms. Edward has praised Peter for being "naturally good" (436) with the implication being that Christianity would come more easily to him. There is, however, a strong element in Christian theology of the fallenness and sinfulness of unredeemed man: "there is no health in us", the confessional prayer has it.[9] The incomplete understanding of the Christian sense of sin and the concomitant need for God's forgiveness that is latent in The Cocktail Party emerges here in Eliot's focus on a concept that is inadequate within the Christian understanding of man ("natural" goodness) and a concept that is peripheral to it (celibacy). The out-working of this interest is a play in which natural goodness and celibacy are esteemed as chief Christian virtues and con-temporaneity and life is the second-rate lot of those outside the Church.

The comedy framework heightens the essentially un-Christian theme. "Natural goodness" is the highest good. Truth and integrity, defined by one's own desires rather than by any Christian standard, are proposed as each person's goal. Violation of these is violation of nature, one's own nature and the natural order. The image pattern reinforces the alignment of the natural with goodness; opposing them are refinements of art and society and technology. The quest for truth is not translated into a Christian quest for God or redemption. Rather its perception in the rich Christian terms of The Cocktail Party has here become translated into ritual and conventional terms

both dramatically and theologically, such that the Church is proposed as the goal of the naturally good, whose "truth" it is. Others find their level of truth and integrity in other forms. We are back at the hierarchical mentality of The Family Reunion: some are "naturally good" and some are not. A subtle inversion of values has occurred in that at the top of the scale are the least refined characters. Again, Eliot is finding his definitions of spiritual values in a secular, pre-Christian understanding, such as the Ion or the comic tradition exemplifies. The Christian distinction of spiritual reality on the basis of recognition of sin and acceptance of God's forgiveness is quite different, beginning with acknowledgement of one's essentially unacceptable sinfulness and thus cutting across any delusions of status. The play ascribes superiority to "Christians" on the basis of natural goodness and within that hierarchy implies another ecclesiastical one, the heights of which Colby is destined for, in the celibacy of priesthood. Again the focus on a concept which is only one element of Christian truth and which, when overemphasized, imbalances it, is symptomatic of Eliot's failure to recognize what are essential issues, not only for contemporary man but for any man, ancient or modern, Christian or not.

At every level - in terms of structure, plot, character and imagery - the play offers a combination of formalism and novelty that makes it not only difficult to categorize but difficult to understand and appreciate.[10] What the play means is not sufficiently defined: it is, in a sense too well integrated, without a clear centre and a key to understanding.

Eliot began with the structure of comedy for The Cocktail Party, as we saw, partly because of accessibility and entertainment value, and also because of its adaptability to the serious

and ambiguous tone of the 'Divine Comedy'. This time the structure of comedy embraces an ambiguity that ranges from the irony and satire of farce to the fantasy and magic of romance, but is never sufficiently defined. The momentum is provided by the plot, which is the main focus of action and interest. From the ideas of The Family Reunion and the characters of The Cocktail Party, Eliot turns his attention to the construction of plot.[11] The plot is a model of complication of action and this affirms its membership in the comic tradition, but every action is given a farcical or fanciful twist, such that the final meaning is left in doubt.

From the opening scene in which the nobleman is confiding in his trusty servant, thus making preparation for the entrance of the hero and establishing the situation for the audience, to the recognition scene at the end, when the entanglements of plot and relationship are unravelled, the classic lines of comedy are drawn in high relief. Standard comic devices are exploited to the full and parodied throughout, sometimes in the direction of farce, sometimes towards a serious tone that verges on melodrama. The plan of entrances and exits is neat and deliberate, for example, to facilitate conventional tête-à-têtes and conventional embarassment. B. Kaghan's self-conscious entrance line - "Enter B. Kaghan" (452, 478) - is a merely exaggerated version of the self-conscious stylization of convention that is practised throughout.

The standard preparation convention is another that B. Kaghan brandishes self-consciously, as he precedes Lucasta's entrance "to ease the shock for Colby" (452). Preparation for Lady Elizabeth is even more elaborate, as from the outset Colby's meeting with her is the focus of interest and anxiety.

"Thank you for the warning! ... I'll be on my guard", he says after hearing something about the formidable female from Eggerson. "I still don't feel very well prepared for meeting her", (451) he goes on, but more preparation is to come, in the form of Lucasta, whose bent for "catastrophe" (452) and "crisis" (453), as B. Kaghan colourfully expresses them, only increases the audience's expectations and Colby's apprehension about Lady Elizabeth. "At least", says Colby hopefully, "I don't suppose Lady Elizabeth/ Can be quite so unusual as Miss Angel." To which Eggerson replies, predictably, "O yes, Mr. Simpkins, much more unusual." Colby gulps: "Oh!" (455).

Preparation for the lady is stretched to absurdity with her own offstage words heralding her approach, and Sir Claude and Eggerson providing running commentary on her arrival, as though a royal personage or a madwoman were descending, in the most unusual or bizarre way.

SIR CLAUDE: Hello! What's that?
(Opens door onto landing and listens)
She's here, Eggerson! That's her voice. Where is she? Oh, she's gone out again.
(Goes to the window and looks down into the street)
She's having a conversation with the cabman. What can they be talking about? She's coming in!

LADY ELIZABETH MULHAMMER'S voice off ...

SIR CLAUDE: Good heavens, Eggerson, what <u>can</u> have happened?
EGGERSON: It's perfectly amazing. Let <u>me</u> go down to meet her.
SIR CLAUDE: Where ought we to be? What ought we to be doing?
EGGERSON: (at the open door) She's speaking to the parlourmaid. She's coming up.
(457-8)

This scene is the culmination of a build-up that exaggerates Lady Elizabeth's peculiar and formidable aspect such that she becomes a symbol of all the "Lady Elizabeths" of comedy,

gathering into herself all the classic features and undoing them: the conventional character is created and parodied at the same time.

Though at such moments sheer farce seems the play's model, and sheer fun its aim, these are merely the excursions into farce of a play that is full of pathos as well as humour. For all their absurdity, the characters are taken too seriously to be only objects of humour. And the play at moments takes such unlikely situations seriously that it verges on melodrama. Sir Claude is doomed by his penchant for rhetoric and self-dramatization to have his drama taken for melodrama. He takes himself too seriously, with the result that we cannot take him very seriously at all. He arouses a mixture of scorn and pity and amusement, rather like our response to Sir Andrew Aguecheek, but our ambiguous response is a reflection of the uncertain tone of the play. Sir Claude is an unsympathetic character from the outset, having based his life on a deceit and manipulated others for the preservation of his own dignity. He opens the play planning other people's lives with cold efficiency, while mouthing platitudes about understanding them:

> My rule is to remember that I understand nobody,
> But on the other hand never to be sure
> That they don't understand me - a good deal better
> Than I should care to think perhaps. (450)

His relationship with his wife, as his need for such preparation for her suggests, is built upon pretence and misunderstanding. His conversation with Colby dissolves into a self-indulgent, self-romanticizing disclosure of his unhappy childhood and thwarted ambitions. Rather than confessing wrongs, he defends his patronizing treatment of his "son": "that was perhaps a mistake", he says at one point (463). His art represents his

determination to cultivate unreality and dwell in "a world of make-believe" (462). And his platitudes - "If you haven't the strength to impose your own terms/ Upon life, you must accept the terms it offers you" (462) - represent the dignifying of his weaknesses and failings to the level of truths. His confession of his secret ambition - "I wanted to be a potter" (463) - heightens the absurdity that is latent in it all, and yet Colby's determination to take him seriously, while resisting the temptation to deception, prevents the scene or the character from dissolving into farce or melodrama.

This scene and the character of Sir Claude illustrate the dilemma that we meet with throughout the play, in its failure to unfold the convention which would provide the key to our understanding. Other scenes and characters are more successfully developed, such that they provoke a response that is unified and certain enough to contain an ambiguity that only intensifies the effect. This adds to our difficulties, however, as we find ourselves pulled from sympathy to ridicule without knowing why. The scene between Colby and Lucasta, though not the conventional love scene, and not intended to be,[12] comes complete with intense emotion and candour, as well as the apparent thwarting of their potential relationship, and thus meets with the structural requirements of such a scene. At the same time, it ranges beyond the conventional level of romantic dialogue, while in another sense coming short of the demands of that tradition: it is too deep and too platonic for the typical love scene.

The intensity of the scene is subtle and controlled, as the verse registers and generates a growing sense of union, of

which antiphon is the climax:

COLBY: ... there's no end to understanding a person.
All one can do is to understand them better,
To keep up with them; so that as the other changes
You can understand the change as soon as it happens,
Though you couldn't have predicted it.
LUCASTA: I think I'm changing.
I've changed quite a lot in the last two hours.
COLBY: And I think I'm changing too. But perhaps what we call change ...
LUCASTA: Is understanding better what one really is.
And the reason why that comes about, perhaps ....
COLBY: Is, beginning to understand another person.
(475)

Our expectation for the conventional love scene is thwarted by the conventional farcical twist, as Colby thinks himself Lucasta's brother and Lucasta thinks he rejects her as unrespectable. But Eliot does not stop there, and our hopes for the two are dashed, with B. Kaghan the young man who wins the young lady's heart (without much evidence of romance), while the "natural celibate" is destined for higher things.

Another potentially typical scene is deployed for unconventional purposes when Colby and Lady Elizabeth play one of the crucial scenes of farce, which "revolves around the search for identity of paternity."[13] The disclosure of Colby's parentage is a comic parody, but also achieves poignancy. Again, as in the other two scenes, it is her past history that is unfolded rather than Colby's. As their utter dissimilarity of background becomes clearer with every word, her immovability is strengthened: "Yet we must have some similarity of background", she knows (484). She is desperate and absurd and pathetic and her longing for Colby is so transparent in its disclosure of her longing for love and acceptance that the scene is inverted into a parody in which her identity is sought and her parentage is discovered; both she and her "son" end up stranded and alone.

With Sir Claude's timely entrance to pursue with his wife, and in complete disregard of Colby, the issue of his parentage, an intense and emotional situation arises out of the potentially absurd one. Colby's sense of hurt is plain: "It seems to me ... there is nothing for me -/ Absolutely nothing - for me to say about it." (488)

In both these scenes the comic figures of the two women are placed in a tragical setting, as their "man-eating" characters are explained in terms of a search for love and identity. Lady Elizabeth enacts it in terms of a spiritual quest for health and peace, interspersing frenetic travelling and visits to doctors with "quiet hours". Lucasta experiences a like rootlessness and hunger; she is always losing jobs, running out of money and needing to eat. "The problem with Lucasta," B. Kaghan says, "Is how to keep her fed between meals" (453). Lady Elizabeth's sense of being made to "feel like an outcast" lead her to romantic dreams and a search for God. Lucasta describes her own feelings in an image that suits the older woman's plight:

> I hardly feel that I'm even a person:
> Nothing but a bit of living matter
> Floating on the surface of Regent's Canal
> Floating, that's it. (473)

Thus the classic conventional figures of these women are given a tragic twist.

In each of these scenes Colby is tempted to adopt a form of "make-believe". Each offers him a pretence upon which to build his life. Sir Claude wants him to imitate his own falsehood by dividing his life into two separate compartments, one for his public business self and the other for his private, artistic self, which Sir Claude sees as inhabiting "the real

world". Colby resists the temptation, which would make him "A different person", thus setting himself on the road towards the truth. Lucasta offers him a romantic attachment that would be false, and proposes another kind of make-believe in the "secret garden" (473) of a private world. The word "real" reverberates through his replies, as he expresses his quest for truth, "one single world" (474). Finally he is tempted by his would-be parents to embrace a false identity as their "son". The third stage of his triumph over falsehood is spoken in simple, particular terms: "But now I want to know whose son I am" (492). He has emerged from the struggle with a deeper and refined sense of truth, no longer content to compromise.

For the two couples of this play, who pursue the Way of Affirmation (in the steps of Edward and Lavinia), there is no clear spiritual dimension to their experience, which is seen in terms of truth and the kind of "understanding" for which Colby and Lucasta reached. Their love and acceptance of one another is given in purely ethical terms, unlike the "sacrifice" and "dying to each other" that put Edward and Lavinia's experience in terms of redemption and communion. Thus the "spiritual" in this play is withheld from the secular world. This sense of secular and non-Christian values is reinforced by the comic and ritual structure that inhere in the play. As ritual hero, Colby's victory is for the sake of the liberation of others as well as himself. He brings healing and restoration to the wasteland through the pursuit of truth, accomplishing a "secular renewal" and facilitating "the rejection of false substitutes tried by the older generation ... and the replacement of these false aspirations by the understanding of one's own nature and of one's own family." In spiritual terms, that are

not clearly articulated in the action, Colby may be seen as "the neophyte on his way towards God" who overcomes the wills of others and is thus "reborn through the agency of Eggerson and Mrs. Guzzard, his spiritual doctor and his guardian angel", and gained by the spiritual world.[14]

The theme of comedy is the integration of society and its movement from one kind of society to another. A play will often begin with what Northrup Frye calls "an anti-comic society" governed under "a harsh or irrational law".[15] Central to the action is usually a love interest and its struggle with the powers behind this law, usually parental. Germane to this is the ritual conflict between old and young, with the obstructive parents finally achieving self-knowledge and experiencing "a change of heart".[16] The basic structure of ritual drama is divided into a period of preparation "where there is an attempt to recognize and get rid of the principle of sterility, later identified with sin and evil", a "period of license and confusion of values" and a "period of festivity".[17] The society ruled by Sir Claude is indeed governed by an irrational law, and bound by the blindness and falsehood in which it is rooted. He is self-deceived, and this has produced a period in which "license and confusion" as well as the "temporarily lost identity" and illusion which are its concomitants hold sway. Despite the abundance of offspring, between Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth there does exist a problem of impotence and sterility, manifest in their lack of shared children and their lack of any real life together. Their failure to recognize and acknowledge their natural offspring - the sins of their youth - is at the root of their lack of a family, as well as the unreality that dominates their society.

Self-knowledge "releases" Sir Claude "from the bondage of his humor"[18] and his freedom allows the freeing of others from their illusions. "A new society"[19] results, crystallizing around a young couple - Lucasta and B. Kaghan - but also around the old rejuvenated couple - their (respective) father and mother. Colby too is released - "This gives me my freedom", he says (515) - but to pursue the spiritual calling of the "natural celibate". The aim of social integration means that the morality of comedy is social. This helps to explain Eliot's apparent disregard of the moral issues behind illegitimate children and deceit. It also places the wholesale acceptance that absorbs everyone into the reconciliation at the end of the play in the tradition of conventional comedy. Eliot varies the "normal comic pattern" in that his "main emphasis falls on reconciliation, and this in turn involves bringing the happy young couple into continuity with the society of their elders."[20] The regeneration of the old and the reconciliation of old and young suggests a Christian emphasis. This is reinforced when Colby aligns himself with the Christian society of the elders, the Eggersons and Mrs. Guzzard. This tends, however, to undermine the suggested redemption of the others, rather than to suggest new life for all.

The comic structure provides a reading to accommodate what is a basically secular movement. The imagery contributes to this, in its conventional alignment of the "natural" and the "true". It is largely in the natural and seasonal mode of ritual drama. The conflict between old and young is given expression in seasonal references: it takes place in late winter when the earth has been in long bondage to darkness and

waits expectantly for its spring saviour. This reflects the bondage of the society, caused by the blindness and deceit and fear of the older generation. The advent of the young Colby thus is accompanied by the mixed response of dread of death and hope for new life. Classic comedy proposes the natural primitive society, symbolized in the Garden of Eden, as the ideal to which humanity aspires to return, and to this is opposed a more refined and cultivated present world, the temporal realm of illusion and bondage. So the play proposes the garden and Art and the City as key images, with Eggerson's integrity represented in his "vegetable garden" and Sir Claude a man of art and the City.

Resolving the conflict are images of integration. Colby longs for the integrity of "one single world" where he can be himself. He rejects the "secret garden" of a private separate world in favour of Eggerson's "vegetable garden" (473), which signifies his integration into nature and into society through communion and sharing. Eggerson's involvement in Church and choir signifies the integration of religious and artistic interests, as well as his personal and public life. Colby's desire for truth and integrity is writ large throughout in various images that are no more subtle than Eggerson. They are blatant, in fact, to the point of pretention. His typewriter and piano sit side by side, to signify the integration of business and art, public and private selves; a bird bath in the mews signifies the integration of civil and natural life; his pointed reminders of public responsibilities in the midst of an intimate conversation suggest the importance of truth over personal interests; his instruction of Lucasta in music signifies his integration of art into life and his concern for

personal integration, through art and learning, and thus the integration of art and nature. Finally integration is signified in his choosing music for his profession, in the service of the Church. The Church is superimposed on a basically ritual and comic structure whose keystone is integrity.

The imagery is another aspect of an intricate pattern whose meaning is largely unavailable, and, in so far as the comic and ritual reading is correct, a Christian understanding is peripheral or impossible. The design of the play seems its dominant feature, into which other aspects are incorporated. The characters very often seem part of the design, rather than living beings of substantial character and significant action. Lucasta and Lady Elizabeth are the most alive of them, combining convention and unpredictability in such a way that they come alive and stir emotion and sympathy. Their function is integral to their character and action, as they live out their experience of the anti-comic bondage in deception. Sir Claude represents the anti-comic principle of sterility and deceit more effectively than he actually lives as a person. Colby, Eggerson and Mrs. Guzzard are likewise embodiments of certain traits and as such "impersonal, inhuman, abstract"[21] counters in a pattern, rather than living beings. The highly stylized conventions that we have noted encourage the "high style of playing"[22] that Martin Browne recommends for the play, but instead of a consistent style of character and action ambiguity reigns.

The combination of old and new into a new convention is apparent in Eliot's characterization. On the one hand some characters tend towards emblematic representation in the style of Medieval theatre. A distinctly modern farcical flavour is as evident, such that "the precariousness of identity becomes

an experience rather than a theme", as Katherine Worth says. "The farcical structure sets the characters free to express their sense of being 'characters'",[23] as we have noted B. Kaghan doing. Acting and deception are key to the theme, as we have seen. Lucasta is outspoken about this, as she says to Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth, of herself and B. Kaghan: "You gave us our parts. And we've shown that we can play them" (501). And that Sir Claude's make-believe has transformed him into a sham may explain his lack of substance. As in The Cocktail Party, changing and being changed is a key image.[24] The power over others that forces them to change must be replaced by the freedom that allows them to change. Acting implements the changes that the young people have been forced to make, as Lucasta says: "B. knows you think him common. And so he pretends/ To be very common." (501) Sir Claude's exercise of control is given a dramatic image in the final scene when he arranges places for the recognition scene. That he himself has been a victim is clear as he tells Colby:

> The life changed me, as it is changing you:
> It begins as a kind of make-believe
> And the make-believing makes it real. (464)

Colby resists the power of unreality and thus allows the kind of changing that freedom and truth bring. He has been the object of everyone's efforts at manipulation and projection. As B. Kaghan says, "We wanted Colby to be something he wasn't." (519) But he merely represents the focus of the general practise of manipulation and creation of others according to an image. Lucasta and Lady Elizabeth, as we have seen, are representative of the tragic results.

Positive changing is seen to result from accepting the truth about oneself and others: understanding facilitates

change for the better, as Lucasta's dialogue with Colby exemplifies. Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth must accept the truth about one another and confess the truth, risking humiliation and rejection. He confesses his self-deception and deception of her, and that is the beginning of understanding:

> SIR CLAUDE: ... I've tried to believe in facts;
> And I've always acted as if I believed
> in them ...
> I might have been truer to my father's
> inspiration
> If I had done what I wanted to do.
> LADY ELIZABETH: You've never talked like this to me before!
> Why haven't you? I don't suppose I understand
> And I know you don't think I understand anything,
> And perhaps I don't. But I wish you would talk
> Sometimes to me as if I did understand,
> And perhaps I might come to understand better.
> What did you want to do?
> SIR CLAUDE: To be a potter.
> Don't laugh.

This frees her to make a like confession:

> SIR CLAUDE: Perhaps I have taken too much for granted
> About you, Elizabeth. What did <u>you</u> want?
> LADY ELIZABETH: To inspire an artist. Don't laugh.
> (495)

Understanding and freedom replace fear and control as they experience a change in their relationship. Lucasta and B. Kaghan learn to accept themselves and one another, realizing, as their elders do, that "It's a great mistake ... to take anything for granted." (495)

The focus on names underlines the theme of personal identity and also the power to change and to be changed by one another. It also reinforces the trend towards symbolic and emblematic representation, as names are used as pointed signifiers of character and personality. Lucasta Angel, for example, identifies an unusual person of unusual origins. Her preference for "Lucasta" and Eggerson's insistence on "Miss Angel" (452) represents the struggle between the two selves

that results from her bondage in deception, and signifies her search for identity. Eggerson perceives what she can be, while she is dominated by a lack of self-esteem. Colby encourages her in her desire to be "the real kind of person" (477). Identity is achieved when she accepts herself, abandons her pose, and is accepted by her father.

Lady Elizabeth's blatant misuse of names is representative of her insecure identity and her disregard of reality. Her genius at wreaking havoc with reality is simply a dramatic image for the deception and irrationality that governs the world of the play. Her decision to change Colby's name and to assume that he is her son regardless of who he is - to the absurd extent of wondering how Barnabas came to be called Colby - is a farcical version of the blind self-will that has been the impetus of her husband's manipulation of the lives of the young people. B. Kaghan's insistence on retaining the abbreviated name signifies a bid for independence from the role he is cast to play. He refuses to be Barnabas - the child of consolation - and refuses to be the "flashy" Barney until his success warrants it. His desire for truth and integrity is thus signified. In accepting his chosen name Lady Elizabeth accepts him as her son, and accepts reality in a new way. The constant toying with Eggerson's name is another pointer to his integration. He is himself, regardless of company or circumstances. Thus his private and public selves are one and he is personal and professional in all his dealings. There is a tendency, then, for everyone to feel on intimate terms with him and address him so.

Eggerson represents the model of truth and integrity that is achieved by the others in their abandonment of dualities

that have made of their lives separate worlds of "make-believe", for the sake of one real world. Private and public, artistic and commercial, old and young are all reconciled in the final scene in their acceptance of the truth about themselves and one another that is signified in their turning from false relationship with Colby to a true relationship with one another. Lady Elizabeth says, "Claude, we've got to try to understand our children." And B. Kaghan speaks for the young ones:

> And we should like to understand <u>you</u> ...
> ...
> 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 meaning it. (519)

Thus the play closes with a picture of a society made up of these four who are learning something of mutual acceptance and affirmation and the balance of interdependence and freedom. It ends with the scene of hope and promise that is the culmination of classic comedy and is geared to satisfy an inherent human pattern of order and harmony. Helen Gardner is right, I think, when she says, "The queer family party we are left with at the end ... both convince (sic) the imagination ... and touch (sic) the heart."[25] The picture of reconciliation also adumbrates the redeemed society that experiences the drama of redemption.

The "communion" that is represented here falls short of the Christian pattern that was adumbrated in <u>The Cocktail Party</u>, in which Celia's departure from the community did not imply a spiritual separation. Rather they achieved spiritual communion and one in which she was an active participant, though physically absent. Here Colby's departure implies a divestment of "the love of created beings"[26] that is at least as thorough as Harry's. The implication throughout has been that Colby is reaching towards some "higher truth", of which

the others are incapable, they being consigned to a purely human and secular variety. "Spiritual" truth is reserved for the otherworldly and takes them out of the world, represented as a vocation to the Church. Instead of the redeemed Christian society of which the Guardians were the more serious or spiritual, though not superior, members, the ending of The Confidential Clerk brings the clearer segregation of the Christian and the secular society, and a clear hierarchy within the Church.

Colby leaves what is a false community for him, in that he is not the son of either of the Mulhammers and is not a suitable husband for Lucasta; nor is he the right "confidential clerk" for Sir Claude. Rather he follows the other "confidential clerk" into the service of God and his Church. He has recognized the Guzzards as his parents and Mrs. Guzzard, agent in freeing him for a new life of truth as she discloses his identity, is also intended to be the mother who confirms her sacrifice of her son to divine service. Colby's function in the ritual and comic scheme is meant to be transcended by his position in a Christian scheme, that is to provide the key to his peculiar character. He becomes the object that everyone makes of him, as Lucasta finds him "terribly cold ... insensible ... detached ... so different from the rest of us" (502). True to the tradition of farce heroes, he has "a trace of the cool opportunism the type requires", Katherine Worth says[27] and the quality often found in "the technical hero and heroine" of the comedy of manners tradition, of being, Frye says, "not often very interesting people ... rather neutral and unformed in character."[28] With what Eliot described as "A certain deliberate ambivalence. Egoist and ascetic"[29],

he is the modern Ion, "the natural celibate". With such roots, the dramatic and theological problems are inevitable. Although he walks onstage a potential hero, commending himself to everyone, he remains self-contained and untouched. His personal encounters with people lead to little response from him, though he provokes them to intimacy. Even with his unfortunate background and the cruelty of his position as bastard son of unknown identity, the sense that he is choosing detachment, rather than being forced into it, is overriding. He becomes increasingly "numb" (490) and impersonal, more a ritual figure than a person. The theological implication is that his increasing detachment is an increasing determination to pursue a "higher calling" than human society allows. The identifiable motivation for his spiritual vocation is, as we have seen, his desire for truth. When he mentions God it is as a key to truth and integrity, and thus Christian ideas are subordinated to a general spiritual principle of which truth is the cornerstone. Colby's "impersonal, abstract, inhuman" character reinforces this impression of an essentially secular, ritual framework. The absence of any sense of sin and his character of "natural celibate" underlines this further: in himself, truth and goodness are to be found, without need of forgiveness.

Colby is but one exponent of the peculiar sort of Christian society to which Eggerson and Mrs. Guzzard belong. Eggerson is partly to be explained in terms of his ritual and comic heritage as "the wise and witty servant"[30] of farce, the divine agent or spiritual doctor of ritual drama, a Prospero-like figure who "begins the action of the play by withdrawing from it, and ends the play by returning".[31] He is obviously crucial to the action, as Sir Claude's confidante and agent and everyone's support. As

B. Kaghan says, and Lucasta later echoes: "as you're here, Eggers, I can just relax" (452). He facilitates all the action, like a judge or holy man who ascribes significance and ritual sanction. And the action only ends with his nod, in answer to Sir Claude's question: "Do you really believe her?" (519)

His control and authority is a product of his ritual function rather than integral to his dramatic function, however. One reason for this is a dramatic failure: he is locked into rituals and conventions for which we are not given a key. Related to this is the theological problem. Not only does Eggerson not seem "wise and witty", he is, as Helen Gardner says, "a crashing bore"[32] who "never opens his mouth without a cliche".[33] And not only does he not inspire confidence; rather the reverse, since he does nothing at all. Thus his role as representing the Church (as "the only real Christian in the play"[34]) renders Christianity as the religion of conventional bourgeois morality, whose keynote is not Christ or communion with God but integrity and truth of an essentially secular and superficial and reported, rather than observed, nature. Morality, modesty and simplicity are the concomitants of this brand of Christianity, with the mediocrity of suburban domesticity and a vegetable garden in the background. Seeing the good in everyone - Lucasta is "Miss Angel"; B. Kaghan has "a heart of gold" (451); Sir Claude "a generous heart" (456) - is the evident outworking of Christianity. As representative Christian, Eggerson embodies integration as the chief Christian virtue. Life is extracted from him, so that a diluted spirituality can be blended with a diluted humanity; he is so well integrated, theoretically, as to be indistinguishable as a

person at all. Thus Eggerson represents the Church as a formal institutionalization of moral values and a secularization of truth, rather than a community of redeemed sinners, forgiven by God and founded in Christ.

Mrs. Guzzard is another mixture of ritual and comic origins with a Christian overlay. The combination of "dea ex machina and suburban respectable woman",[35] given a 'Dickensian surname"[36] and the role of spiritual fairy god mother, is full of ambiguity. Her dramatic function is, again, too ambiguous, as she is the meeting-point of a complex of ritual and comic roles to which we have no key. Her Christian identity merely complicates things, as she shares in Eggersons' tedious bourgeois morality - fastidious in punctuality, discretion and trustworthiness. The fact that her morality and self-sacrifice are built on a deception does not impinge on her character, and thus reinforces its ritualistic element. Again the mediocrity of Christianity seems the final point to be made, as we learn of Mr. Guzzard's serious Christianity and his lack of success as a musician. As Colby's father, he is meant to provide a spiritual and human model. Thus the Church is seen to be composed of those of second-rate artistic gifts and unrefined tastes. Respectability and mediocrity are the touchstone of this Christianity. Urban life, business acumen, success, excellence in art, all products of civilized, refined life are seen as signs of exclusion from the Church.

In dramatic terms, Eliot focuses on the creation of a form, "a design of human action and words"[37] rather than a dramatic expression of life. Participation is denied the audience as he creates an intricate pattern of images and actions and words without providing a key to its unlocking.

Forms are not informed with life but stand alongside it: life is attained in some characters only as they break out of the form. The thematic and theological problem is commensurate with the dramatic one in that the so-called Christian import is represented in formal conventions and rituals and embodied in ritual-like persons and institutions. This discloses Eliot's reversion to formal and conventional vehicles for Christianity and his aversion to the vehicle chosen by God in Christ, the vehicle of life.

The "Christians" of the play are most notable for their lifelessness. Eliot considers their mediocrity as indicative that they are participating in life and this merely discloses his distaste for life and humanity, in its flesh and blood, incarnate reality. This is further heightened by the superiority of Colby's calling being the calling of the "natural celibate": Eliot eschews the flesh, which Christ chose as his medium for life on earth. The play is difficult to read as a Christian play because of its essentially non-Christian, non-incarnational character, which emerges in its lack of dramatic life, its lack of spiritual life, and its lack of integration between the two. Rather than a result of incarnational activity, integration is an aim of the play, as we have seen. It is a secular aim that cuts across the Christian spirit, such that it is neutralized and lifeless. What is at work is instead a largely spiritual or humanistic principle. It is a pre-Christian principle, a natural truth that orders the value system of the play. Whereas Edward and Lavinia's sacrifice had been clearly drawn in spiritual terms, the "sacrifice"[38] of Colby by the other characters is drawn in pointedly secular terms, as they make a choice of truth over falsehood and are divested of spiritual

sensibility. Even Colby's vocation is not a sacrifice at all, as he is merely fulfilling his natural inclinations.

Thus Eliot translates the sacrifice that is the crux of Christian faith into secular terms, in order to make it palatable to the modern taste. The play speaks in terms of truth, reality, integrity, freedom, understanding - terms that strike a chord in the heart of twentieth century man in his quest for authenticity. Christ is exchanged for a social or self-centred ideal, an inoffensive god of personal integrity and fulfilment. The "new society" that results from the humanist-style "sacrifice" is not a redeemed society, although relationships within it are regenerated. Rather than a spiritual regeneration, and an integration of the spiritual and the secular aspects of society and individuals having occurred, the separation of the "Christian" and non-Christian" characters serves to sanctify the irreconcilability of the two worlds. The Church is proposed as the better way, apart from ordinary life and the community. Colby is rather like Harry, driven from the community to seek redemption leaving the others to wait in hope, rather than experience the fruit of redemption and the reality of relationship together. It is in limiting spirituality to the separated few that this play dilutes the richness of the Christian understanding of the relationship between God and Man.

Where sin had been enlivened in contemporary terms in The Cocktail Party, in The Confidential Clerk it is diluted to become a failure in integrity and understanding, in the secular world, and eliminated completely from the Church. Eggerson and Colby and Mrs. Guzzard are eminently virtuous and moral. Every person in the play and every aspect of its world is

affirmed as basically good and in need of integration and truth for its completion. Sin and evil are replaced by a belief in a natural goodness that is warped by blindness and misfortune. Colby says "I only wish/ That I had something to atone for." (467) Sir Claude's need for "atonement" and hope for "reconcilement" arise out of a "failure to understand" his father. (466, 467). A failure to understand is very different from the "sense of sin" of which Celia became aware. In fact it is rather in keeping with the upbringing that had taught her to "disbelieve in sin", a regression to the understanding that "anything wrong ... Was either bad form, or was psychological." (415) The wonder of Celia's experience consisted in its dramatizing the sense of sin that is a part of the experience of God's gift of himself, in Christ, and is so alien to the modern humanistic perception.

In contradistinction to Celia's compulsion to face her own sinfulness, all the characters in The Confidential Clerk are encouraged to be themselves and do what they really want to do, thus integrating themselves by being true to themselves, and achieving a wholeness that resolves the split between the private and public self. Mrs. Guzzard grants everyone their wishes in an unexpected fashion, with the idea that what one really wants will determine and identify what one is. Her promise echoes the scriptural one that the Lord will give a person the desires of his heart. The other side of the promise, however, is the command, the condition, that defines it: Delight yourself in the Lord. And it is this definition that is lacking in Eliot's message, which seems to commend rather a delight in the special community to which one is called. We have discussed the sacramental understanding that is based

on a belief in God as Creator and Redeemer of the world, and seen that the richness of this is in the redemption of creation through Christ. It is this foundation, this sense of sin forgiven and fallen nature redeemed, that is missing from the play. Instead a humanistic and insipid motto like "God is love" or "To thine own self by true" is the inoffensive basis of its non-Christian morality.

The role that religion and God take in the play reflect its fundamental flaw. Lady Elizabeth identifies the good in men's hearts as their relation to God. Both she and Sir Claude pursue their own "substitute for religion", as he puts it, and he suspects that "religious people ... can find some unity" (466). Colby senses that integration of his world would come with God's presence in it. Mrs. Guzzard and her deceased husband, Colby's parents, are associated with the established Church, as is Eggerson, his spiritual father. Instead of the shocking realities of sin and death, the characters are made to confront mistakes and lies and encouraged to follow a new way of truth and integrity. This takes Colby into the Church and takes the others towards one another and their true selves. Colby is in a sense Celia's descendant on the Way of Negation while the other four follow the Way of Affirmation pioneered for us by Edward and Lavinia. The resolution of the two ways into a single way of faith and communion is torn asunder here: there is no unity of the two, no ultimate reconciliation in Christ. And in fact, each is only a shadow of the way of faith, for neither way involves self-denial. Instead both ways are ways of self-affirmation. Thus no real relationship with one another or with God through Christ is dramatized, and the happy ending is not the organic result of the triumph of life

but rather of a fairy-tale variety, with a macabre twist, and without spiritual depth.

The life of Christ with which The Cocktail Party was infused although his name was not mentioned, gives place, in The Confidential Clerk, to a lifeless Church. The very alive and human Celia - sinner and saint - is superceded by the very "cold" and sterile "refined automatons"[39] who give substance to neither sin nor saintliness. Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth, Lucasta and B. Kaghan, in whom is life, are excluded from this Church. It is presented as the place where integration occurs, the place where God dwells. And thus it defeats Eliot's purpose of portraying the active presence of God among men, by removing him from them and identifying him with a formal institution. In his aim to dramatize the presence of the divine with the simple-hearted, the humble and uncultivated, rather than with the worldly wise and successful, he has merely inverted the criteria of the world, without proclaiming the basis of God's presence and God's evaluation of men, the Incarnation of Christ.

The formal Church is made to do the work of Christ in the play, rather than being in-formed with him. And thus the Church itself stands as a hollow structure, a form without substance. It is rather like a tired convention which has lost credence and comprehensibility: there is no community of understanding between the contemporary world and the Church that is here portrayed. The substance of Christ's life, which is the basis of the communion between God and man, has been lost, such that the play and its Church are indeed like "A world where the form is the reality,/ Of which the substance is only a shadow." (464)

In 'The Aims of Poetic Drama" the Incarnation is proposed as a dramatic model. It is essentially lost sight of in this play, and this reflects a spirituality that has also lost sight of the Incarnation of Christ. Another statement from that essay focusses the loss when Eliot says, "Only God understands the creature; in human creation humanity is only an instrument."[39] "God understands" because, Incarnate, he became as a creature among creatures. And it is this participation in humanity that The Confidential Clerk and its Church are lacking. Thus not only are humanity and life denied but also Christ himself who became flesh and dwelt among men, "that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." (Jn. 10: 10b).

FOOTNOTES

1 Reilly tells Edward and Lavinia: "Your business is not to clear your conscience/ But to learn how to bear the burdens on your conscience ... Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence." He sends Celia on her journey saying, "Go in peace, my daughter./ Work out your salvation with diligence." Julia says, "Everyone makes a choice, of one kind or another,/ And then must take the consequences." T. S. Eliot, The Cocktail Party in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Faber & Faber, 1969, pp. 411, 420, 439

2 Ibid., p.414. So Celia identifies her second "symptom".

3 Edward states his understanding of redemption: "every moment is a fresh beginning; ... life is only keeping on. "Ibid., p.440. All other quotations from Eliot's plays will be taken from this text and references will be incorporated into the body of the chapter.

4 Colby describes Sir Claude's "failure to understand" (466) his father "... all my life/ I have been atoning." says Sir Claude, "To a dead father" (465). Colby says that he can look forward to "the reconcilement, after his death,/ That perfects the relation." (467) Eliot's own father died believing that his son had failed him. See Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p.83

5 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", Adam, Vol. 200, November, 1949, p.12

6 This is a term used by Raymond Williams to describe the shared understanding that Elizabethan dramatists could assume to have with their audiences, and that modern ones must work to achieve. It need not be based on a common faith, he thinks, but what he calls a "community of sensibility". Drama from Isben to Eliot. London: Chatto & Windus, 1954, p.26-27

7 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", Selected Prose. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953 (repr. Peregrine Books, 1963), p.81

8 Eliot in an interview with Helen Gardner, "The 'Aged Eagle' Spreads His Wings" in The Sunday Times, September 21, 1958, p.8

9 Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, "A general Confession".

10 Denis Donoghue writes, sardonically, "... there is some justification for suggesting affinities between The Confidential Clerk and works as various as the Ion of Euripedes, Menander's Epitrepontes, The Importance of Being Earnest, H.M.S. Pinafore, The Comedy of Errors, The Government Inspector, The Wild Duck and Great Expectations." The Third Voice. Princeton; New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959

11 See "Poetry and Drama", p.79. Eliot also identifies his focus on the plot in "The Art of Poetry I: An Interview with T. S. Eliot", Donald Hall, in The Paris Review. London: Andre Deutsich Ltd., Number 21, Spring-Summer, 1959, p.60. He disclaims the idea that this play is a farce.

12 In an interview with Helen Gardner, Eliot says of this scene: "The love-scene between Colby and Lucasta was not meant to be a real love-scene, but a scene of illusion on both sides. The other man was the right man for her and Colby was a natural solitary." Miss Gardner goes on, "I said that I thought the notion of celibacy being 'natural' to some was not a very congenial idea today, and he laughed and said. 'Oh dear, no. It is taken for granted that a celibate is either a pervert or thwarted.'" "The 'Aged Eagle' Spreads His Wings", p.8

13 Carol H. Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practise. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p.197

14 Ibid., p.208. Smith says that Eggerson's nod draws the action into the ritual cycle of renewal (p.210)

15 Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965, p.73

16 Ibid., p.72

17 Ibid., p.73

18 Frye, op. cit., p.78-9

19 Ibid., p.72

20 Ibid., p.87

21 Eliot, 'Dramatis Personae" in The Criterion, Vol. I, No. 1, October 1922, London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1923, p.305. Eliot uses these words to describe the abstract form of acting that he envisaged for the future stage.

22 E. Martin Browne, The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p.304

23 Katherine J. Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1972, p.65

24 See previous discussion, pp. 120, 136

25 Helen Gardner, New Statesman and Nation, 20 March, 1954. Quoted in David Jones, The Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, p.175

26 The superscription of Sweeney Agonistes includes a quotation from St. John of the Cross: "Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings." (The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p.115)

27 Worth, p.65

28 Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, p.167, 173

29 Quoted in Browne, p.285

30 Smith, p.210

31 Frye, Anatomy, p.174

32 Helen Gardner, "The Comedies of T. S. Eliot", in T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, Allen Tate, ed. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967, p.176. Miss Gardner goes on: "In The Cocktail Party, the divine broke into the pattern of ordinary relationships in the form of the heroic. Here we are asked to feel its presence in a life of the utmost banality, and in a personality unenriched by our highest secular values."

33 Helen Gardner, New Statesman and Nation (20 March, 1954), quoted in Jones, op. cit., p.175. Miss Gardner also says: "The obscurely faithful Eggerson is a better touchstone in the world of comedy than the romantically conceived Celia, presenting, quite unconsciously, a stronger challenge to our conception of the good life...".

34 Browne, op. cit., p.285

35 Browne, op. cit., p.285

36 Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1974, p.289

37 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.81

38 C. L. Barber says that Eliot creates in the play a pervasive religious sense that "gives those who care for Colby the opportunity for what is in effect a religious act without being called so - namely, the act of sacrificing Colby." "The Power of Development", in The Achievement of T. S. Eliot, F. O. Matthiessen

39 Eliot, "The Possibility of Poetic Drama", The Sacred Wood, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1920, p.69

CHAPTER 5

In each of the plays that we have studied, Eliot's endeavour to dramatize the presence of Christ in the contemporary world has been undermined by his distrust for life. In 1949, as we have seen, he chooses the Incarnation as his model for dramatic technique, with its aim, the redemption of life, as his model for dramatic action. What results is The Cocktail Party. By 1950, his sights have shifted to envisaging "a kind of mirage of the perfection of verse drama, which would be a design of human action and words ...".[1] Life is no longer medium or object; it has been succeeded by an intellectual idea, "an unattainable ideal",[2] and form is now his model and goal. "It is the function of all art", he continues in "Poetry and Drama", "to give us some perception of an order in life, by imposing an order upon it."[3] His next play, The Confidential Clerk reflects the imposed order, without life.

There is a sense in which Eliot's dramatic career is epitomized in this struggle between life and form, between life as it is and the ideal that he wishes that it were. His theological development is interrelated with his dramatic development, and basic to them both is the struggle to accept the Incarnation as the principle of life. Christianity focusses the dilemma in its convergence of form and life, of liturgy and Incarnation. And it is Eliot's struggle to relate the two that we trace in his plays. The Incarnation is the Christian model, whereby the divine takes on human life, and thus draws life into participation in the divine; that is, life is redeemed on the basis of Christ's participation in it. Thus, in a sense, liturgy is attained in life and through life.

Eliot's perception of this is dim and vacillating, handicapped as he is by intellectualism and a fear and distaste for life and flesh that prevent his believing in their inherent potential for redemption.

This is not an intellectual or dramatic or theological problem solely, but all of these are symptomatic of a deeper problem that emerges in Eliot's aversion to life. We discovered guilt as an underlying motivation in The Cocktail Party and merely institutionalized in the formalism of The Confidential Clerk. Because Incarnation is the basic principle of life, through which God chose to affirm and redeem life, not only will efforts to dramatize life "incarnate" their creator's sense of life, but his personal life will be the medium and object of God's redemptive work. Thus it is that we find Eliot's next dramatic effort, produced in 1958, reflecting a basic resolution of his struggle, as he discovers the identity of the Word Incarnate to be love. The Elder Statesman dramatizes a fundamental change which is the product of Eliot's personal experience of the word of love becoming flesh in his marriage, in 1957. The Word that becomes flesh is not an ideal, not a divine form, but love in the flesh and blood of one Man. Thus if drama or life is a "humble shadow or analogy of the Incarnation"[4] it is through love, and through participation in life.

The implications of a belief in the Incarnation of Christ include the redemption of life in time and space, here and now, and, sometimes more difficult to comprehend, the redemption of oneself. It is the redemption of time and space and the redemption of individuals, through the medium of the Incarnation which is love, that is the theme of The Elder Statesman. And,

in imitation of the Incarnation, it is life which is the material out of which arises a secular liturgy.

A new understanding and appreciation of life and of love as its basis are manifest in The Elder Statesman. In an essay entitled Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern (1937) which was reprinted in 1954, Eliot identified two tasks for religious dramatists: the recognition of "essential" and "permanent" and "religious" aspects of life,[5] and the related task of satisfying "one form of the desire of human beings to achieve greater dignity and significance than they seem to do in their public or indeed private lives."[6] Much of Eliot's difficulty in play writing lies just here, as we have seen, in his inability to grasp the "religious" essence in the midst of life, and the "dignity and significance" of "humankind". The Elder Statesman exemplifies a fundamental change in his sense of life, manifest in the usage he makes of the original situation of Oedipus at Colonus: he attempts to "rethink it in modern terms"[7] and in Christian terms. In his identification of the essential and permanent and religious aspects of the original situation and in his translation of them into modern terms, he affirms the inherent religious significance of life, ancient and modern. And in retelling the story in terms of the life of one particular man and his family he affirms the inherent "dignity and significance" of individual life, here and now. Thus redemption is seen to be at work and the ritual drama is transformed into a Christian drama. In its recognition and affirmation of the essence of ritual tragedy from which The Elder Statesman begins and in its translation into contemporary and Christian dramatic life, life itself is affirmed and redeemed in terms of individual significance. Thus the

particular and the universal, the temporal and the eternal, intersect for the creation of a Christian myth.

The story of Lord Claverton is presented against the backdrop of the story of Oedipus at Colonus.[8] This illuminates the essential and permanent and religious situation that is common to them and at the same time illuminates the fundamental difference that is wrought by a Christian perspective. The situation in which Oedipus and Lord Claverton find themselves is the situation in which every man finds himself, face to face with death. In it we are identified with the animals as merely mortal creatures implicated in the process of birth and death, of which the withering grass and the fading flower remind us year by year. At the same time it is the situation which illuminates the qualities that distinguish men from animals and define our humanness and differentiate us from one another. Thus mortality is the ground out of which our self-consciousness and moral sense and personality arise. It is the universal experience that is unique to every man, pronouncing at once our sameness and our absolute individuality.

It is the approach of death that poses the ultimate challenge to a man's philosophy of life. Sophocles' pre-Christian tragic hero exemplifies the spirit of pride and dignity that is strengthened by adversity. He earns the approval of his gods, and reflects them, in his transcendence over circumstances, his immovability and self-containment. Eliot's Christian hero in facing death experiences shame and humiliation and achieves humility, recognizing his weakness and dependency and need for redemption. In his recognition of immanence and contingency he reflects the character of the Christian God Incarnate. Like Oedipus, Lord Claverton is

compelled to come to terms with his past and his family. But instead of being confirmed in his innocence and victimization, and affirmed in himself, he "is transformed in his whole being, moving from knowledge to sin and from sin to judgement and from judgement to forgiveness."[9] Love is the context and the power behind the transformation that results not in self-affirmation but in relationship.

Underlying the structure of The Elder Statesman is the ritual movement towards death, but the myth of the dying god finds fulfilment in Christian terms as Lord Claverton's response to death brings new life. The approach of death does not confirm his greatness but illuminates and consummates the process of dissolution of self that he has begun to detect upon his retirement from public life. The action of the play centres around the gradual layer by layer exposure of Lord Claverton that death provokes. First it exposes the flimsy public self as a sham providing an ever more tatty covering for the inner self which itself emerges as in danger of lack of substance. He recognizes himself as one of "the failed successes, the successful failures"[10] for whom public life is all. Images pertaining to personal reality and unreality help to depict his loss of a sense of self. The rapidly diminishing newspaper coverage is a gauge of the insubstantiality of public life. The press photographs by which he is known emphasize his identity as a projected image and a pose. The silver salver he receives upon retiring is an ironic comment on the visitors he will not receive. It is a kind of ransom for having sold himself. Without his "public label", no longer "the public personage" dressed "with authority's costume" (528) the doubts that Charles expresses as to "whether there was any .../ Private

self to preserve" are his own. Without his public self, the "empty engagement book" (529) and "the empty waiting room" (530) depict his experience, as he sees "the mental emptiness deepen", as Eliot says elsewhere, "Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about."[11] He turns Monica's phrase, "Thinking of nothing", a negative occupation indeed, into "Contemplating nothingness", (529) a positive and empty and haunting experience. And the object of his waiting, "no one ... nothing" (530) becomes the something that haunts him in the ghosts from his past.

Fear is Lord Claverton's deepest reality. Monica recognizes its dual aspect: "His terror of being alone" and "his fear of being exposed to strangers" (527,8). So the image that best captures his sense of unreality and the reality of fear is the "ghost" (531). Bereft of his public self, he sees himself as a ghost, dead, unreal, haunting the scenes of his former life. He is a ghost more frightened than frightening, however, haunted and terrorized by fears and secrets of his past, who descend in bodily, ghostly form in Gomez and Maisie, a friend and a lover of his youth. Giving shape to Lord Claverton's fear and personal unreality is his sense of two selves:

> What is this self inside us, the silent observer,
> Severe and speechless critic, who can terrorize us
> And urge us on to futile activity,
> And in the end, judge us still more severely
> For the errors into which his own reproaches drove us? (545)

His public action has been a compensation for a lack of personal peace and thus doomed to issue only in "dissatisfaction" (545).

A kind of public conscience that Gomez identifies as the "prudent devil" (537) inside Lord Claverton, dictates the role-playing that has been his public personage. Still, the pretence to others is not the worst kind. Gomez identifies "the worst

kind of failure" as the pretence to himself, accomplished by

> the man who has to keep on pretending to himself
> That he is a success - the man who in the morning
> Has to make up his face before he looks in the mirror. (540)

Claverton recognizes himself in this description. Maisie reinforces this perception, inditing him for the public display of integrity that has covered his falseness:

> At bottom I believe you're still the same silly Richard
> You always were. You wanted to pose
> As a man of the world. And now you're posing
> As what? I presume, as an elder statesman;
> And the difference between being an elder statesman
> And posing successfully as an elder statesman
> Is practically negligible. And you look the part.
> Whatever part you've played, I must say you've
> always looked it. (552)

He recognizes the accuracy of her assessment, confessing, "I've no longer any part to play, Maisie". (552)

From the outset, Monica has been certain of her father's reality and aware of the fear that defines it. Because of her belief in him that is founded in love, he is able to recognize and confess and repent of his unreality:

> I've spent my life in trying to forget myself
> In trying to identify myself with the part
> I had chosen to play. And the longer we pretend
> The harder it becomes to drop the pretence,
> Walk off the stage, change into our own clothes
> And speak as ourselves. So I'd become an idol
> To Monica. She worshipped the part I played:
> How could I be sure that she would love the actor
> If she saw him, off the stage, without his costume and makeup
> And without his stage words. Monica!
> I've had your love under false pretences.
> But I hope that you'll find a little love in your heart
> Still, for your father, when you know him
> For what he is, the broken-down actor. (569)

Another image that furthers the theme of personal identity is the name. Lord Claverton is stripped not only of his public role, not only of "authority's costume" but of his very identity, as his evolution from 'Dick Ferry" to "Lord Claverton-Ferry" is exposed and the process reversed. As Gomez says, the change was

effected "so slowly and sweetly" that Lord Claverton had "never woken up/ To the fact that Dick Ferry died long ago" (536). Michael recognizes his father's acquisition of a title as an attempt to acquire a semblance of dignity upon retiring, 'Being no longer wanted", (559) to flaunt before his wife's family - 'To Lord it over them, in fact", as Michael puts it. Gomez has undergone a like transformation, but consciously and deliberately: "I parted from myself by a sudden effort", (536) he says and left England for San Marco, 'To fabricate for myself another personality/ And to take another name." (535) Maisie too has acquired new names with new selves. Like Fred Culverwell is to Gomez, Maisie Batterson is dead to her, as her faulty and romantic memories suggest, and she relishes the false images - of past fame, for Maisie Montjoy, and bourgeois respectability, for Mrs. John Carghill - that her names represent. Again, the trade in false names is redeemed by love. Lord Claverton does not fight to retain false glory but accepts humiliation. And though Michael rejects his name and all that it represents, he is in that rejecting only his father's superficial identity: "For the <u>me</u> he rejected, I reject also" (582). Monica affirms her belief in his real self and her identity with him in wanting to be known as "Ferry" only (546). Neither will she accept Michael's rejection of the family: "I shall always pretend it is the same Michael", she tells her brother. (579) Monica affirms her father's essential and true self; having been stripped of false identities he is, she says, "only my father now, and Michael's" (583).

Thus the action of exposing Lord Claverton's soul is redeemed by love, such that rather than being undone, he is left bare but whole and complete and essentially himself -

forgiven and redeemed. Having begun in terror at "Contemplating nothingness", Lord Claverton arrives at a place of peace where "in becoming no one", he says, "I begin to live." (582) This is the culmination of "the pattern of the ritual cure" on which the play is based, and which is also "translated into the surface action",[12] to be redeemed in Christian terms. It dramatizes the ritual cure but also the personal, spiritual cure that testifies to the power of redemption. The real struggle dramatized in this play is an internal one, between Lord Claverton's old self, represented in his ageing, frail body, and his new emerging self, the young and frail spirit which is born and just begins to live in the play.[13]

Although on the one hand it is the ritual death of the old and the ascendance of the young that is dramatized, the play focusses on the old person who, in the imminence of death and the melancholy aspect of the life that is left behind like a ruined and ruinous carcass, presents the ultimate challenge to the affirmation and redemption of life. In a sense this play is Amy's tragedy rewritten in new terms of redemption and triumph. Images of sickness and health feature in the pattern of the ritual cure but are redeemed, to portray the recovery of spiritual health, the redemption of life, the "liberation" (573) that comes with the death of the body. Lord Claverton perceives the significance of the stroke that provoked retirement not in its physical repercussions but in its exposure of his spiritual bankruptcy. It fills him with "fear of the emptiness ... A fear of the vacuum, and no desire to fill it" (530). His fear of life is greater than his fear of death. "Nobody looks ill" (546) at Badgley Court, "A convalescent home/ With the atmosphere of an hotel" (528) and, more important, no one there

"looks incurable" (546). The implication that everyone is ill follows readily and Lord Claverton experiences a fleeting "sense of wellbeing" (544) in arriving there, that suggests that, in admitting vulnerability and sickness, he is coming closer to reality and health. Badgley Court epitomizes the reversal of values of the Christian Church, full of people whose sin qualifies them for redemption and new life, who are saved in dying in imitation of their "wounded surgeon".[14] For Christians,

> Our only health is the disease
> If we obey the dying nurse
> Whose constant care is not to please
> But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
> And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.
>
> The whole earth is our hospital
> Endowed by the ruined millionaire,
> Wherein, if we do well, we shall
> Die of the absolute paternal care
> That will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere.[15]

That new life will come in death is the implication of the "very ominous" overtones that Lord Claverton hears in Mrs. Piggott's raptures over the "perfect peace" of Badgley Court. (545) A "rest cure" (563) is not what he needs; rather "rescue" (554,5). Real peace comes to Lord Claverton with confession: "It is the peace that ensues upon contrition/ When contrition ensues upon knowledge of the truth" (581). So death can be "liberation" (573) for his body in the discovery of spiritual health, as he contemplates being "delivered from the burden of the flesh",[16] as the burial prayer has it. "You think I am sickening", he tells Monica, "when I am just recovering" (573). He who has been "buried in the library" (525) at the beginning of the play, begins a new life at the end, in the freedom and new life of his spirit.

It is Monica's love that has redeemed the process of ritual death to recreate it in new life. This involves the redemption

of time, which is reflected in the redemption of the natural and seasonal imagery of ritual drama in terms of a new Christian order of time. The action moves from "The drawing-room of Lord Claverton's London home" (524) to "The terrace of Badgley Court" (544). This reflects the movement towards essentials that is both a preparation for death and a move towards reality. "We brought nothing into this world," the liturgy reminds us, "and it is certain we can carry nothing out."[17] Divested of his City life, Lord Claverton contemplates life itself and death. His mortality and implication in the ritual cycle of life and death is writ large and ironically in the curious treachery of the sunshine, as he senses:

> I hope this benignant sunshine
> And warmth will last for a few days more.
> But this early summer, that's hardly seasonable,
> Is so often a harbringer of frost on the fruit trees. (544)

This is reminiscent of Amy's response to the imminence of death - "Will the spring never come?" (285) - rife with the ambivalence of the old whose longing for life is a longing for their own death. The old must die to make way for the young, bound up as they are in the process of nature. And though Lord Claverton finds peace and liberation and new life in death, he is overtaken by the chilly spring dusk. The ritual structure is seen to be intrinsic to reality and the realities of life and death assume ritual proportions.

At the same time another temporal order works within and across this ritual seasonal one. The play is full of references to time, reverberating the significance of every moment and the redemption of time accomplished through love. Young love, with which the play opens, sparkles with the excitement and import of every moment. For those who love, "minutes alone" (523)

and whether the lover stops to tea and spends the "whole afternoon" (526) are intensely important issues. Just as love fills their time with significance, the absence of love leaves Lord Claverton feeling that his time is drained, full now of empty hours and days. In contrast to the lovers he waits without hope, without a sense of the future. He waits only for the end of time, having already come to the end of his life. Ghosts from his past remind him of his choice to deny the significance of time. Gomez highlights the significance of "One time in particular" (540) and Maisie recalls "the turning point of all my life (549) when Lord Claverton made a wrong choice. Thus they maximize the significance of his responsibility and minimize their own - such that their past assumes the unreality of "ancient history" (575) or a music-hall revue - showing that they, with him, are bound up in unreality and unredeemable time. The power of love makes its duration seem "a long time, a long, long time" (526) for Monica and Charles; the power of hate is as strong. Both Gomez and Maisie taunt their victim with the longevity of their attachment: "we're still together ... we may always be together" (553), says Maisie, echoing Gomez's taunting "bond" (537). Her song, "It's Not Too Late For You To Love Me" (552), is a haunting melody throughout and Gomez confirms that "It will never be too late" (564) for their hatred to find satisfaction.

Maisie and Gomez preclude redemption, bound in their false pride and hatred. Maisie tells Lord Claverton, "You'll still be playing a part/ In your obituary, whoever writes it" (552). "She hasn't forgotten or forgiven me" (572), he knows. The "bond" between him and his ghosts is hatred, inverted love. Maisie's quotation (the origin of which is given in Gomez's

San Marco[18]) 'Where there fires are never quenched" (553) suggests the passion that makes its home in hell. The humiliation for which they blame Lord Claverton has turned their original love for him into a hate that is fixed and eternal. By the same token, the power of love works the redemption of time. Lord Claverton's humiliation upon being confronted with his wrongs is transformed through love into humility. "Come, I'll start to learn again./ Michael and I shall go to school together ... And suffer the same humiliations", (565-6) he tells Monica. And this "starting to learn again", whatever the past, whatever the time, signifies the Christian understanding of the redemption of time. Lord Claverton turns to Monica - 'But have I still time?/ ... Is it too late for me, Monica" (566) - and in this makes a choice in humility for love, thus assuring that there will be time for him. 'There is time for Michael", he knows (566) and ministers the redemption of Michael's time in his promise to love him unconditionally: "I shall never repudiate you/ Though you may repudiate me" (578). This triumph of love over time is ultimately the triumph over death by eternal life, timeless love. And though the dusk overtakes Lord Claverton he rises triumphant to meet it knowing "I shall leave you for a while", as he tells Monica and Charles, "I shall not go far" (582). Monica too knows his life beyond death and his union with them: "He is close at hand" (583).

She and Charles know the same eternal love as they discover the significance of their moments of love to be rooted in the place of these moments in eternity, in a love "that was always there" (583) which now includes her father. Thus the pre-Christian ritual order, and time itself, is ultimately redeemed when death is defeated and transformed into new life,

as Lord Claverton's passage from the temporal order is seen to be his entrance into eternity, and love is seen to hold the promise of the redemption of time in eternity. Lord Claverton recognizes the significance of his past misdeeds and thus his subordination to time but also learns that "Only through time time is conquered".[19] Love undoes the power of hate and allows him the freedom to use a significant "five minutes" (573) for "right action"[20] in the present. Confession to Monica opens the way for a future that is more than just the end of the present, and thus just as a few "particular" moments have determined the unreality and sadness of his life until now, a few particular moments redeem a lifetime.

The ritual structure underlying the action lends a mythological and cosmic dimension to the action, which is heightened by the simplicity of the play's design. And simultaneous with this investment of the action and characters with a significance beyond themselves there is a movement in the opposite direction, consisting in the divestment of Lord Claverton of anything that is extrinsic to his being. The result is the gradual emergence of Everyman - the ordinary everyday and utterly significant individual. Bereft of everything but his person, endowed with "luminous miracle-play simplicity",[21] he has assumed mythological and cosmic significance. Spanos compares Eliot with the Medieval realists in their attempt "to discover a universal structure of meaning in the immediate concrete present ...".[22] As we mentioned, Eliot looks to the Medieval dramatists in their recognition of what is essential and in their understanding of one of these essential and permanent and religious truths as the dignity and significance of the individual. The Elder Statesman represents

the culmination of Eliot's struggle to believe in the significance of the "here and now". The play bears few marks of enforced order or "doubleness". Instead its simplicity represents the meaning inherent in the action and thus in ordinary life. Every life is a "life of significant soil"[23] and "The Elder Statesman can be about Everyman precisely because it is about Lord Claverton".[24] From Harry's cry that "the particular has no language" (294) Eliot has arrived at the very particular story of Lord Claverton, which is at the same time the particular and universal story of Everyman. The quality of individual significance is what distinguishes the Christian character of the play; life is significant and redeemable because of the one life of Christ.

Lord Claverton's sins are particular and shame and guilt over them has made fear of humiliation the dominant motivation of his life, which he has tried to control by "Managing, manoeuvring, cajoling or bullying" (528) everyone, in public and private life. He has kept his wife at a distance: "I never knew your mother," he confesses to Monica, "as she never knew me ... And so we lived, with a deep silence between us,/ And she died silently." (570) Michael thinks himself doomed to be "getting into trouble" (556), controlled as he is by his father's guilt and fear over his own past. Monica too, though she loves her father, is in his control - "I'm sure I want to marry you", she tells Charles, "when I'm free to do so" (527) - a control that becomes obsessive with the ascendance of his fears. She too is kept at a distance: "Father," she says, "can't you bear to be alone with me?" (543)

Lord Claverton's sins and fears are particular, and embodied in Gomez and Maisie,[25] his ghosts, as well as Michael

who is a kind of ghost of his youth. They must be confessed in all their gross and petty, grim and humiliating particularity. Having begun by denying any responsibility - "I certainly admit no responsibility/ None whatever" (537), he tells his first ghost - he confesses his blame in detail. "Was I responsible ...?"; he comes to realize, "Yes, I was" (571). Yet the significance of his sins is dependent upon their significance as indices of his character. "Each of them remembers an occasion/ On which I ran away", (572) he says, realizing that the spiritual malaise to which these sins point is the real problem:

> You think that I suffer from a morbid conscience,
> From brooding over faults I might well have forgotten.
> You think that I'm sickening, when I'm just recovering!
> It's hard to make other people realise
> The magnitude of things that appear to them petty;
> It's harder to confess the sin that no one believes in
> Than the crime that everyone can appreciate.
> For the crime is in relation to the law
> And the sin is in relation to the sinner. (573)

At the same time his guilt and responsibility is only part of the sin. When the fear that has made "spectres" of Maisie and Gomez is gone, he sees them as "living persons ... only human being,/ Malicious, petty ..." (569) and responsible for themselves. The significance of persons and actions is such that they never cease to be "occasions" for good, even when they have been occasions for evil: such is the glory of redemption. One of "the gifts reserved for old age" that Eliot identifies elsewhere is

> ... the rending pain of re-enactment
> Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
> Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
> Of things ill done and done to others' harm
> Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
> Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains,
> From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
> Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
> Where we must move in measure, like a dancer. 26

When Lord Claverton meets Gomez and Maisie again, each of the three is given an opportunity to make another choice, either to perpetuate the wrong done in the past or to redeem it by making a choice for good. Lord Claverton accepts the gift of age and turns it to account as an occasion for restoration.

With his family as well, the past is no more significant than the present, his own responsibility is no greater than each of theirs. His self-reproach is thorough and particular, as he confesses his sin against his wife, as we have seen, and against his children:

> Why did I always want to dominate my children?
> Why did I mark out a narrow path for Michael?
> Because I wanted to perpetuate myself in him.
> Why did I want to keep you to myself, Monica?
> Because I wanted you to give your life to adoring
> The man that I pretended to myself that I was,
> So that I could believe in my own pretences. (581)

Yet Michael, too, is a "free agent" (577) and must be freed to take responsibility for himself and to find his redemption: "You are right to hope for something better", his father tells Monica (580). She too is now freed, as her father commits her to Charles' care: "I leave Monica to you", he tells Charles (582).

Confession to Monica is "the first step taken toward freedom" (572) for himself and for others. He recognizes its significance:

> What has made the difference in the last five minutes
> Is not the heinousness of my misdeeds
> But the fact of my confession. And to you, Monica,
> To you, of all people. (573)

Forgiveness is retroactive "And right action is freedom/ From past and future also."[27] The significance of confession to Monica lies in its representing the redemption of a life-time of isolation. In revealing his true self to her he redeems

the cowardice and lovelessness that has haunted him. In such confession, he has said, "your soul is safe" (568). Through confession comes "the illumination/ Of knowing what love is." (581) Confession through which your soul is safe is the most direct liturgical reference in the play. The unobtrusive rite does not merely declare the significance of persons and of life, but their sacred character and a responsibility towards one another which is holy. Love itself is thus presented as the holy calling, in the midst of life. It is love that is the power behind the right actions that secure Lord Claverton's life.

As particular incidents have been symptoms of a disease of spirit, so these particular right actions are symptoms of recovery, the vital signs of a restored spirit. Love is the healer that is at work, ministering "the absolute paternal care". Lord Claverton's sins in his relationships have consisted in a perversion of a potential love, caused by his fear of humiliation. When his ghosts confront him, love empowers him to accept humiliation, thus allowing its transformation into humility, and the triumph of love. An early draft of the material articulates this, reiterating the humiliation at the root of his feelings, with Lord Claverton describing his persecutors as "driving me over the humiliation line/ Beyond which lies humility ..."[28] This humility allows his new experience and understanding of unconditional love: Of Michael, he says, "I love him, even for rejecting me,/ For the <u>me</u> he rejected, I reject also" (582). He goes on describing his progress as "a beginner in the practise of loving":

> It is worth while dying, to find out what love 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. (582)

Humiliation is not complete until he has lost the self that engenders pride. The early draft continues:

> But I have at last found my love for you, my daughter,
> The love that lay buried, in my life-time, in self-love.
> I am alone at last, yet always with you. 29

The play traces the instruction of this "beginner in the practise of loving" (582) but also the growth and refinement of the love that is with Monica from the outset. The play opens with an exchange between two young people experiencing the excitement and danger of awakening love. Underneath their playfulness is the intense struggle between the desire for love and the safety of self-containment, the pride of independence. In confessing his love for Monica, and his belief in her love for him, Charles risks the humiliation of rejection and the pain of losing her. So he is "badly frightened" (526) as he declares himself (in the truest sense) and even after her confession of love he needs a repetition. "For I need so much assurance!", he says, doubting her immediately (526). Courage, then, in abandoning pride, is necessary in the pursuit of love. Monica takes no such risks, shows no sign of need, but only responds in kind. Although she is conscious of their growth towards one another, as she wonders, "Already/ How much of me is you?" (526), the limits of her involvement are clear. With her reminder, "we're not engaged yet" (527) she reminds him of the partial and conditional nature of her commitment and trust.

Monica's love for Charles is conditional upon his waiting for her until, it is understood, her father dies. The need and commitment that are lacking in her love for Charles constitute

the substance of her love for her father, whose dependency upon her defines their relationship and requires her full commitment. Her devotion to him amounts to a kind of possession, as Charles says: "You belong to him" (526), or what her father comes to call idolatry. "You're not to assume that anything I've said to you/ Has given you the right to criticize my father", she tells Charles, relegating her lover to a clear second place. Monica's experience of love is exclusive, then, not only in the sense that her love for Charles is confined to a "private world" (526), but also in the sense that her love for her lover and her love for her father are separate and mutually excluding. Her feeling for her brother takes up another compartment, labelled pity or sympathy. "Poor Michael", she calls him (527). In all three relationships there is love, but of an unequal rather than reciprocal quality. She is the person who understands her father and brother, needing them no more than she needs Charles.

Monica sees herself as protecting her father from the solitude and exposure to strangers that he fears. But the process of laying Lord Claverton bare includes, as we have seen, his isolation even from her. Act One ends with Monica's dawning awareness of the inadequacy of a love that is hindered by ignorance and fear from allowing even the limited understanding that her private world with Charles represents. Her realization that her father "can't bear to be alone with" her is an intimation that he is alone, confined with his ghosts and quite apart from her. Act Two finds them at Badgley Court, where Lord Claverton's separation from his daughter is pronounced yet more clearly, as the old and sick are separated from the young and healthy. Her solicitude in protecting his health and

his privacy casts her very much in the role of nurse and minister that she has chosen. Her protection extends to protection from his son, as she mediates between them to encourage reconciliation. "I would give my life for you" (561) she pleads with her father, offering herself as a kind of sacrifice for their wrongs or a token of the kind of love that they must practise. Monica's sense of 'How silly that phrase sounds" (561) expresses her frustration at not finding an appropriate form for her sacrifice. It is also a realization that her father and brother must make their own sacrifices. She describes the unconditional love whose essence is self-sacrifice, the free giving of self, without thought of return:

> However Michael has behaved, Father,
> Whatever Father has said, Michael,
> You must forgive each other, you must love each other. (562)

Confounded by their resistance, and even more so by the appearance of her father's persecutors, Monica tries to convince him to "escape" from Badgley Court (565).

In this state, "worried, and rather frightened" (567), she sends for Charles. Having undergone a process of self-exposure parallel to her father's, her understanding of love has been changed. Her father's isolation from her has made her realize that her relationship with him operates on a level that leaves her essential self free to be "engaged" in the fullest sense. For the first time she confesses her need and her commitment and takes the risk of sacrificing herself to Charles, as he himself has already done to her. Thus she experiences a humiliation that is as essential and dramatic as her father's as she gives her self in humility and love to another person.

It is against the background of the new quality of the love that is betokened in the engagement of Monica and Charles

that the rest of the play unfolds. In its context Monica finds that it is as her father's confessor that she can give substance to her sacrifice. And with her father's confession of dishonest love, as he tells her, "I've had your love under false pretences" (569), Monica is able, from within the precincts of her love with Charles, to make the sacrifice demanded by unconditional love:

> I think I should only love you the better, Father,
> The more I know about you. I should understand you better.
> There's nothing I'm afraid of learning about Charles,
> There's nothing I'm afraid of learning about you. (569)

Love - the perfect and complete love she knows with Charles - has cast out her fears and created a world that draws her father into itself. When she pleads with her father to "tell us ... those who love you" (571) she is testifying to the dissolution of individuality that has made her one with Charles, and their willingness together to be committed to her father. Although it is confession to his daughter "of all people" that is so significant to Lord Claverton, it is her identity in love with Charles that allows her to bear the weight of the confessor role. The strength and significance of her love are not intrinsic to her, but arise out of her relationship with Charles. Thus the reality and power of love itself is suggested. The romantic Mrs. Carghill detects "the change in (her) expression" (573) that is indicative of a fundamental change wrought upon Monica by this love. Again, in her commitment to Michael, it is the context of her relationship with Charles that allows her to freely give herself to her brother. "Take the card Charles" she says, thus including him in her commitment to Michael in having him receive her brother's address. Her promise of loyalty to him is unconditional and at the same time is not

binding upon him. She allows him freedom and fosters hope that what is good in him will triumph. "I'm sure he loves us" (580) she tells her father. His father is not able to put aside his fears but recognizes that believing the best of a person is of the essence of love: "... you are right to hope for something better", he tells Monica.

Monica's demonstration of love - for Charles, for Michael, for himself - affords Lord Claverton "the illumination/ Of knowing what love is" (581). His confession to Monica cleanses his soul, that the illumination might penetrate. He realizes that love entails knowing another person and being known to them despite the risks involved in the exposure of self. It must involve an offering of self that is not contingent upon acceptance or return in kind. And it must involve a denial of one's right to oneself and a loss of self, in exchange for which, regardless of response, comes a sharing in a larger reality of love. Both Monica and her father learn that the possessiveness and dependency that had dominated their relationship must be replaced by the freedom that love allows, and without which the greatest self-sacrifice is meaningless. Love requires the freeing of the beloved, despite the danger of rejection and evil. Thus they commit themselves to Michael, as we have seen. As Charles puts it, the love of his father and sister "Make the force to attract him: you and Monica combined" (581).

That love is indeed a "force" and not merely a passive sentiment gives substance to Monica's hopes for Michael, as well as their commitment to him. It is a power to change him, even as she and Charles have experienced the changes wrought by their love. "You are changing me", Charles has said, "And

I am changing you" (526). And it has been a quiet and constant power at work to change Lord Claverton. Monica declares her love for her father:

> Oh Father, I've always loved you,
> But I love you more since I have come to know you
> Here, at Badgley Court. And I love you the more
> Because I love Charles. (581)

Her love for her father has become a love founded upon knowledge of him and thus shows itself to be unconditional. And, in place of the exclusiveness that had compelled her to divide her love for Charles and her love for her father into separate compartments Monica experiences the expansiveness and inclusiveness of love, and the endlessness of its self-generation. The more she loves and is loved, the more love she is able to give.

With Monica's expression of love for her father as he is, after his confession -

> It's the real you I love - the man you are,
> Not the man I thought you were (581)

- Lord Claverton knows the forgiveness that is essential to his experience of love. In an early poem Eliot had expressed the question that is answered here in Lord Claverton's experience: "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?"[30] This captures something of the unthinkable quality of selfless love whose very non-rationality is only explicable in terms of grace. His humility and honesty have in fact been honoured and he has begun to learn of love. At the same time he recognizes the essential "otherness" that defines love as something that cannot be learned or earned but must, in the first instance and the last, be given, through "illumination" (581). And it is this acceptance of essential unlovableness and utter dependence upon being given what he does not deserve and cannot win that

identifies his own final humiliation as the selflessness that is love. Grace and mercy, and joy, are expressed thus:

> In spite of everything, in defiance of reason,
> I have been brushed by the wing of happiness. (581)

This experience of the free gift of love is such that he can then freely love, loving Monica all the more for her love of Charles and loving Michael without thought of himself. He is thus stripped finally of his need to be loved and in that of all thought of himself; and in this giving up of himself he dies to himself and lives to others. His old self dies and his spirit rises to new life.

The simplicity of the action enhances and illuminates its essential and religious dimension. As the liturgical confession is intrinsic to the action, thus sanctifying the human action and simplifying and humanizing the liturgy, so, imbedded in the final scene are unobtrusive sacred rites. Lord Claverton "gives his daughter away" to Charles - "I leave Monica to you. Look after her, Charles,/ Now and always" (582) - thus enacting the ritual passing of life from one generation to the next and blessing their union, but incorporating this into an adumbration of the ceremony of Matrimony, and thus pointing to the redemption of the old ritual in the love that brings new life.

Similarly Lord Claverton's ritual death is redeemed through love. Having achieved "the only wisdom we can hope to acquire",[31] the "endless" wisdom of humility, and reconciliation through the ministry of forgiveness in love, he knows real "peace". This allows him to suffer death, rising to meet it in dignity and joy. He offers himself for his children, undergoing the ritual sacrifice of the old for the young, but redeeming it in his spirit of love, that allows him to transcend the ritual and

achieve a newness of self and life through death. "It is worth while dying," he says, "to find out what life is" (582). Charles understands that Monica's happiness in her father's death is a joy in this new life that they share through the reconciliation that death has achieved: "The dead has poured out a blessing on the living" (583). Thus again a liturgical rite arises out of the simple human drama, and "For a moment life is elevated to the dignity of dance of liturgy, with a gaiety which is in all great poetry, and the greater seriousness behind the gaiety."[32]

It truly is a ritual in that it is a seal and a sign of what has taken place already, as we have traced the process of change. Significantly, however, it is only with this ritual that Charles and Monica recognize and begin to understand the transformation that they have undergone. They are aware of having been "alone together" (582) in a new way throughout their time at Badgley Court that day. Lord Claverton had told them that in a completely open kind of love "your soul is safe" (568) and reminiscent of this is the safety that their unity affords them, as they speak of the "awareness (that) somehow we'd begun to belong together "as a shield protecting both of us ..." (582) amidst all the events of the day. During their initial encounter at the beginning of the play, the existence of their love and its jurisdiction within certain prescribed limits was given expression in a short duologue whose poetry and antiphon evinces the separation of their love in a "private world" (526) where, for the words "I and you" , "the meanings are different" (526) - different but as yet unknown. Here again a poetic and antiphonal exchange gives expression to their shared and intense understanding. Charles speaks for

them both: "... now we are conscious of a new person/ Who is you and me together" (583). And this time his thoughts really are Monica's thoughts as well, as she does not balk at his declaration but confirms it. "I feel utterly secure/ In you; I am a part of you", she says, signifying that her gift of herself to him is now complete.

The creation of this "new person" (583) which they are together has taken place during their time at Badgley Court, having begun with Monica's surrender of herself to Charles upon his arrival there, in answer to her call for help. In its occurrence through the ensuing action its essential selflessness and other-centredness are manifest. It is not generated and fostered as they focus on themselves or one another or their love, but as they act in love to others. Thereby, unconsciously and without any control of theirs other than their willingness to love, they are gripped by the power of love itself and re-created in it. This sense of a reality of love that exists apart from them and in which they participate is expressed by Monica:

> I've loved you from the beginning of the world.
> Before you and I were born, the love was always there
> That brought us together. (583)

"We love" St. John writes, "because he first loved us". (1 John, 4:19)

This love has not only brought them together but has also reconciled them to the world in which they live as well as to Lord Claverton, even in his death. The "private world" that they had discovered at the beginning of the play terminated with the "public world" (526). The separation and irreconcilability of the two was signalled by the "different meanings" belonging to each world. Their abrupt landing in the everyday

world was represented in the disjunction between the poetic language of their excursion and the prosaic entrance of Lambeth with the quite mundane tea. Mention of Monica's father closed the door on their private world and brought the reality of the public world that he dominated into the foreground. The two worlds, for Monica, cannot coexist, as her sense of love is at that point undeveloped, and hampered by the "false pretences" (569) under which she labours.

This second exchange with which the play closes reveals what they, and especially Monica, have learned of love through the action of the play. This time their private world has really existed unconsciously, and in the midst of life. Thus the reality of love is seen not to stand apart from life but to arise out of life and be completely integrated into it, with those who love being not only in a private world of love but participants in life and ministers of love in it. Thus the reconciliation of the two into one is also the reconciliation of their private and public selves, as they are simply themselves in wholeness and honesty, "alone together" (582) regardless of their circumstances. It is also the reconciliation of their world of love with the everyday world. As the two worlds become integrated the glory of their love infiltrates the world around them, and the mundane events of life assume a grandeur and significance that is merited by their participation in love. Thus the humiliation that Charles and Monica have undergone for the sake of love is seen to be parallel to Lord Claverton's experience, from which they emerge, like him, complete and recreated.

Their reconciliation with him is another part of this process, as they accept his gift of life and thus allow him

to share in their love. This time mention of him is not mention of an intruder in their private world but the identification of him as part of them. "Oh Father, Father!/ I could speak to you now" (583), Monica says, conscious that the meanings are now shared, being interpreted even beyond death, by love. Thus communion has been achieved, not only between Charles and Monica but between them, the young and the living, and Lord Claverton, the old and the dead.

Love is dramatized as the agent of redemption, whereby "the human is taken up into the divine".[33] The words of the play are meant to reflect the Word becoming flesh, in partaking of the fabric of life, such that they risk being unheard as poetry at all, and yet retain the essence of their communication, which is love. "The poetry does not matter"[34] because it has become the matter for a word of love; "The word within a word/ Unable to speak a word"[35] simply loves and is love. For much of The Elder Statesman this incarnational principle holds sway, as the verse is submitted to the purposes of communication, between characters and with the audience. We have noticed some of the poetic imagery, such as in Lord Claverton's disclosure of his "emptiness", which is employed for dramatic utility and power. The rhythm of the verse serves dramatic purposes as well, for intensifying and elaborating the feelings behind the words. Gomez's long and insinuating speeches and Maisie's gushing and suggestive tone, for example, help to convey their devious and deceived natures.

It is in the final scene, when the power of love is meant to be most clearly at work, that the poetry tends to detract from its drama. Although it is the most intense scene, of death and love, the self-consciousness of the poetry undermines

its power. "Contrition", for example, is perhaps too formal a liturgical expression to seem natural to Lord Claverton's feelings. And being "brushed by the wing of happiness" (581) is too poetic and too obscure liturgically to seem a happy choice. Ironically, it is the final exchange between Monica and Charles that most violates the natural and human quality of love. The self-consciousness of the first scene of the play reflects the self-consciousness of the lovers, intent upon themselves and their love. Meeting then at Badgley Court their new sense of trust and their concern for others relieves them of the need for self-consciousness, and for poetry, such that they are only aware of their participation in two worlds - the public world and their private world - after the fact.

The difficulty in this is that Charles and Monica, having become aware of the "mysterious" (582) sense in which they have been "alone together" and of which they have been unconscious, in becoming conscious return to a measure of the self-consciousness that is excusable in love but rarely achieved with success on the stage. Eliot's model for this scene would seem to be the balcony scene of Romeo and Juliet, which he considers to mark the apex of Shakespeare's achievement, as well as that of poetic drama itself.[36] Perhaps, then, as in the last play, he slips out of the modern world, for a moment, and into the Elizabethan. He admires the way Shakespeare "shows his lovers melting into unconsciousness of their isolated selves, shows the human soul in the process of forgetting itself".[37] Curiously enough, it is his compulsion to comment on this process, as Charles and Monica emerge into self-consciousness and remember themselves, that undermines the drama of the scene, and the consistency of his poetic

ideal. Though, as Charles says, "the lover must struggle for words" (583), the dramatist must sometimes struggle for silence and allow the action and the world he has created to express what can only have words and meanings in private worlds. Charles's "asthmatic struggling for breath" and Monica's "Age and decreptitude ... loss and vicissitude", as well as her somewhat forced repetition of her father's words in "In becoming no one, he has become himself" transport the audience into the "unaccustomed, artificial world"[38] that the dramatist has so far succeeded in avoiding.

Again, then, the self-conscious character of Eliot's emotion inhibits its natural expression. This time, however, it seems that the impetus comes not from his fear of life and human love, but from the fullness of the "happiness" that tempts him to say too much. The word has become flesh for him, and is love, manifest in its participation in life. In this play the divine participates in human life through the medium of love and thus Christ is discovered not in some special spiritual calling that draws men away from humanity and life, but in ministering forgiveness and love towards one another. At the same time the "ordinary life" is thus sanctified and achieves a new "dignity and significance" through love. From the special sacrifice of the extraordinary individual like Celia and Harry and Colby, Eliot comes to the ordinary everyday, significant and dramatic sacrifice of any individual. Although this is still hindered by its self-consciousness and perhaps reflects the fact that Eliot is "only a beginner in the practise of loving" (582), each experience of love in the play is seen to involve sacrifice of self, and the saints "dwell among us". The word of love that Lord Claverton experiences

is, as we have seen, "full of grace and truth", as he discovers the peace and joy of the forgiveness that follows upon "the knowledge of the truth", and knows the grace that gives joy "In spite of everything, in defiance of reason" (581). This suggests new depths in Eliot's understanding of forgiveness and redemption, that afford him now real peace.

The Elder Statesman reflects a growth in Eliot's understanding of love and faith. The keystone of the Christian faith is the Incarnation and its word is love, defining not only the terms in which God meets man, but also the terms in which men meet one another. In the three previous plays divine communion precluded human communion, and human communion was distinguished for its mediocrity. Thus ordinary human life was denigrated and unredeemed. Love was not seen as the foundation of relationship but instead the basis of separation: human love separated men from God; divine love separated men (and men and women) from one another. In this last play the change in Eliot's experience of love, human and divine, is reflected. In a kind of perfect answer to his dilemma the word becomes flesh indeed when he marries Valerie Fletcher. This play, produced in the following year, dramatizes the integration of his human and divine loves. As he participates in the mystery of human love, he feels that he participates in the mystery of divine love as well. Thus the Incarnation, with its coinherence of the human and divine in the humility of sacrificial love, is imitated. Eliot's dedication to his wife expresses the new meaning that love has assumed for him, represented in the play:

TO MY WIFE

To whom I owe the leaping delight
That quickens my senses in our waking time
And the rhythm that governs the repose of our sleepingtime,
The breathing in unison

Of lovers ...
Who think the same thoughts without need of speech
And babble the same speech without need of meaning:

To you I dedicate this book, to return as best I can
With words a little part of what you have given me.
The words mean what they say, but some have a further meaning
For you and me only. (522)

The intimacy and sensuous quality of this, and some very personal moments in the play, reflect a change from the "loathing" for life that we have sensed in the other plays. Life and humankind, because of love, shines with a new glory for him. But still the dramatic quality of the play is lacking in substantial life. Since Lord Claverton's triumph is a triumph of brokenness, of suffering rather than action, the climax of the play is a kind of rest rather than a peak of action or emotion. This occurs when, at the end of the second act, he decides to "go to school" and "suffer humiliations". The drama of the play is contained in Lord Claverton's dialogues with his "tempters", the focus of the struggle that is internal, rather than an overt one. Thus the play depends heavily on the verse which, as we have seen, is largely successful, although the overall tone is measured and mellow, thus understating intensity. The significance of the "five minutes" in which he makes his confession to Monica, "of all people", as well as the significance of the confessed sins and of the sinner himself, is undercut seriously by her very flat and perfunctory response. Her "Poor Father!" (572) seems not so much compassionate as indiscriminate. She is not given dramatic space to take her father's confession seriously enough, and thus it is robbed of dramatic impact and

he is robbed of significance. Part of the problem is Monica herself, who is not sufficiently developed as a person in the play, never emerging from the "devoted daughter" stereotype. The personal development that we have traced in her is not clear enough dramatically. Eliot's dedication captures the basic problem with the dramatic quality of Charles and Monica's relationship. "The words mean what they say, but some have a further meaning/ For you and me only", the dedication ends, and this privacy limits the dramatic credibility and development of the young love. The audience does not observe the substantiation of their words in enough dramatic action to appreciate the depth and intimacy of the love that their words bespeak. Thus, in a sense, the word remains unincarnate.

There is a sense in which Eliot performs his own act of sacrifice in dramatizing the experiences of humiliation, self-disclosure, confession, fear, and even love at such an intimate level that something of his own experience of them is exposed to the audience. Thus we are not only spectators of a play but spectators as well of its creator, as he invites us to become participants with him. Similarly, he is no longer the dramatist who is the spectator of life or the artist who is imposing an order on life, but becomes himself participant with us in our lives, that our lives might be recreated in "dignity and significance", as he submits to the new order of love. And in this is imitated the ultimate sacrifice of the Creator who gives himself for the redemption of his creation.

Thus the final scene of the play represents the final humility of one who is learning to love, and we greet it with embarassment because it is we to whom it is addressed, as the

playwright says to his audience: "I love you". He is no longer preaching the Word but is himself bringing it to life, though still "a beginner in the practise of loving", which is endless. The condition of complete simplicity has cost not less than everything.

FOOTNOTES

1 T. S. Eliot, "Poetry and Drama" in Selected Prose, John Hayward, ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953 (repr. 1963), p.81

2 Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", p.80

3 Ibid.

4 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", Adam, Vol. 200, November, 1949, p.12

5 Eliot, Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern. New York: House of Books, 1954, unpaginated

6 Ibid.

7 Eliot in Donald Hall, "An Interview with T. S. Eliot" in The Paris Review, London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., Number 21, Spring-Summer, 1959, p.61.
Since The Family Reunion, Eliot says, "in the subsequent three I have tried to take the Greek myth as a sort of springboard, you see. After all, what one gets essential and permanent, I think, in the old plays, is a situation. You can take the situation, rethink it in modern terms, develop your own characters from it, and let another plot develop out of that. Actually, you get further and further from the originals".

8 The mythological background heightens the grim significance of Lord Claverton's sins. In a curious way, for example, Michael's uncanny likeness to his father and his inversion of this likeness in following the man who followed his father, reflects the complexity and tragedy of the relationship between Oedipus and his son Polynices, sons of the same mother. Although Oedipus' sins are reduced to almost ludicrous proportions, as his unwitting murder of his father on the road becomes Lord Claverton's running over the corpse of an old man in his motor car, the background of Oedipus' sins lend a bizarre and gruesome aspect to what might be seen as inconsequential. Jocasta's suicide lends horror to a marriage that might otherwise be counted merely dull or normal.

9 Preston Roberts, "A Christian Theory of Dramatic Tragedy" in The Journal of Religion, Volume XXXI, Number 1, January, 1951, p.15

10 Eliot, The Elder Statesman in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Faber & Faber, 1969 (repr. 1978), p.531. All subsequent quotations from the plays will be taken from this text and will be incorporated into the body of the paper.

11 Eliot, Four Quartets, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p.180

12 Carol H. Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p.233

13 As Martin Browne says, "the small things are great in terms of Eliot's play, where the true sphere of action is the battle for a soul ...". The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p.311

14 Four Quartets, p.181

15 Ibid.

16 Book of Common Prayer, "The Order for the Burial of the Dead".

17 Book of Common Prayer, "The Order for the Burial of the Dead".

18 Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950, p.248

19 Four Quartets, p.173

20 Four Quartets, p.190

21 Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot. London: Methuen & Co., 1974, p.290

22 William V. Spanos, The Christian Tradition in the Modern British Verse Drama: The Poetics of Sacramental Time. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1967, p.249

23 Four Quartets, p.190

24 Spanos, p.250

25 Gomez and Maisie might be seen as "hounds of heaven", or personifications of Lord Claverton's sins, in the style of Medieval morality plays. Their highly stylized characters encourage such a view of them. At the same time, although the focus of the play is Lord Claverton, their responsibility for themselves is emphasized, suggesting that they are meant to be seen as persons in their own right. Something of the ambiguity of the Guardians falls to them.

26 Four Quartets, pp.194-5

27 Four Quartets, p.190

28 Quoted in Browne, p.334

29 Quoted in Browne, p.336

30 Eliot, "Gerontion" in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p.38

31 Four Quartets, p.179

32 Eliot, 'The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.16

33 Eliot, 'The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.12

34 Four Quartets, p.179

35 "Gerontion", p.37

36 "Poetry and Drama", p.81

37 Eliot, "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" in Selected Essays London: Faber & Faber, 1932, p.41

38 Eliot, 'The Aims of Poetic Drama", p.12

CHAPTER 6

"One of the awful things about writing when you are a Christian", says a modern Catholic writer, "is that for you the ultimate reality is the Incarnation, the present reality is the Incarnation, and nobody believes in the Incarnation; that is, nobody in your audience."[1] The imperative of the Incarnation is double-edged: the Christian must believe that it is God who is with us in Christ - "the 'beyond' in the midst of our life",[2] as Bonhoeffer calls him - and that it is with us, here and now, that God is. As Flannery O'Connor puts it: "... if you believe in the divinity of Christ, you have to cherish the world at the same time that you struggle to endure it."[3]

Belief in the "beyond" of the supernatural and spiritual came quite naturally to Eliot, in part as a response to his mother's mystical cast of mind and his family's generally "religious" persuasion, and in part as a reaction to the ethical and philosophical humanism whose aesthetic and spiritual void gaped at him as an unreasonable and unsatisfactory alternative to deism. The poetic sensibility that recoiled from empiricism found kinship in a spirituality of the "beyond". The fascination that asceticism and mysticism held for him was in part an eagerness to forsake the encumbrances of the flesh and this world. So the concept of divinity itself found no resistance in him, but the Christian understanding of the holy God with us, the beyond in the midst of our life, presented him with a fundamental problem that we have seen reflected in the plays.

The development of Eliot's understanding of the character of the Christian God Incarnate involves the development of his

understanding of the nature of God and the nature of man and the life in which they meet. In The Family Reunion we see the definitive particularity of Christ avoided in the prevalence of a vague sense of "otherness" that is understood to be God, and an equally vague sense of sin that is understood to be man. The particular holiness of God and the particular sinfulness of men are understated, such that the play reflects Harry's sense that "the particular has no language".[4] Salvation is presented as a matter of perception, involving the revelation of the truth and reserved only for the few, in so far as they deny ordinary life in the world. Thus the world is not cherished but despised. The Incarnation of Christ is violated in the denial of life that precludes its redemption, and in the lack of a sense of God's holiness and man's sinfulness, and the efficacy of forgiveness in Christ.

The incarnate reality of Christ presides over The Cocktail Party, with the focus on him bringing a greater particularity to the play's representation of who God is and what sin is, as well as the medium of life in which this is given shape. Yet full weight is not given to the theological concept of divine forgiveness. Specific sins are too mean for God's attention and greater sins are too great for his forgiveness to cover. Guilt lingers for men to bear as they work out their salvation. Ordinary life is a field of redemption but the real glory lies with the extraordinary saints who divest themselves of "the love of created beings",[5] devoting themselves to the divine. So redemption is partial and the beyond is not in our midst, but we are left with a distinct sense that he is Christ, that he is holy and that he fosters relationship with God and among men and women.

The Confidential Clerk denies the value of ordinary life, in taking its "saints" out of the world into a Church which is "separate", full of dull lifeless folk; and in leaving the world in unredeemed oblivion. God is not only not in our midst, as he is seen to dwell in the Church and not in the world or even in life; he is also not seen to be holy and forgiving, as the characters are not dramatized as having a "sense of sin" (414) or any sense of a need for forgiveness. Man's working has created a Church and a society in which there are no place and no need for Christ.

These three plays reflect, in their dramatic and in their theological character, something of Eliot's struggle "to apprehend/ The point of intersection of the timeless/ With time"[6] that is the Incarnation of Christ - God with us, the beyond in the midst of our life - and to dramatize it. In this, as in other things, Eliot's intellectual apprehension predated his emotional congruence, such that the Four Quartets, one of which was written before these plays and the others between the first two of them, reflects a poetic "apprehension" that anticipates the dramatic one. For all Christians this apprehension is the occupation of a lifetime and the artist, gifted and plagued with a peculiar sensibility of the horror and the glory of life, or at least a peculiar responsibility to recreate them, finds the apprehension of their resolution in Christ of perhaps more perplexing urgency than it is for the rest of us.

The value and meaning of life for Eliot the poet had derived from the moments of "sudden illumination",[7] when "drowsing in sunlight",[8] or "in the stillness/ Between two waves of the sea",[9] one perceived the pattern underlying ordinary everyday life. In its participation in this pattern,

life found "redemption" of sorts, and the poetry served as the "necessary angel"[10] whereby those moments were apprehended and reordered, to enhance the significance of life. The poet had cultivated a certain impersonality, placing himself at a distance from the world in order to perceive the pattern into which experience fits and from which it derived its meaning. To this spectator of life, Christianity seemed initially to offer itself as the most reasonable and safe pattern. On the one hand its history is full of examples of those who would deny the flesh and flee the world, and so offered Eliot the spiritual sanction that his aesthetic and ascetic aversion to life required. Harry and Colby are the most extreme exponents of this, with Celia saved from such fanaticism by the life with which she is wrought.

At the same time, the orderliness that Eliot longed for in society could find expression in the submission of his poetic gifts to the good of his fellow men that Christianity expected. And the order of Christian truth and liturgy was not only comprehensive but also amenable to the uses of poetry. Eliot's focus on the "social uses" of poetry testifies to the narrowing of the distance between himself and ordinary life, the Christian finds himself no longer safely detached but charged to discover not only order and significance but holiness in the very midst of life. Soon, then, the most satisfying and sustaining order of all is discovered to demand not detachment from life but abandonment to life. "A higher paradox confounds emotion as well as reason", O'Connor says, "and there are long periods in the lives of all of us, and of the saints, when the truth as revealed by faith is hideous, emotionally disturbing, downright repulsive."[11] Such a paradox, to most of us, and

certainly to Eliot, is the Incarnation. It bespeaks the divine order that undergirds the world but at the same time it conveys the ultimate reality of order in the impropriety and rudeness and particularity of the flesh of one Man who is God.

As Eliot says elsewhere, this "shocking"[12] quality of the Incarnation is all too easily absorbed into our daily lives. He read Lancelot Andrewes, who reminded his seventeenth century congregation, on consecutive feasts of the Nativity, of the scandal of the Word becoming flesh:

> ... is it meet for God to be manifested therein? "Without controversy", it is not. Why, what is flesh? It is no mystery to tell what it is; it is "dust", saith the Patriarch Abraham. It is "grass" saith the prophet Esay; ... "grass cut down, and withering." It is "corruption", not corruptible, but even corruption itself, saith the Apostle Paul. There being then (as Abraham said to him,) "so great a gulph, so huge a space, so infinite a distance" between those two, between God and dust; God, and hay; God, and corruption; as no coming of one at the other, "talk not of flesh." 13

Yet God would talk of flesh and assume flesh, in order that flesh might be redeemed. The next year Andrewes pursues the theme in this way:

> ... what flesh? The flesh of an infant. What, the Word an infant? The Word, and not able to speak a word? ... a stable for his palace; a manger for his beginning ... what flesh afterward? ... in cold and heat; hungry and thirsty; faint and weary. Is his end any better? ... black and blue; bloody and swollen; rent and torn; the thorns and nails sticking in His flesh; and such flesh He was made ... there is not the meanest flesh but is better. So to be made, and so unmade; to take it on, and lay it off, with so great indignity: weigh it, and wonder at it, that ever He would endure to be made flesh, and to be made it on this manner. What was it made the Word thus to be made flesh? 14

The answer to this question, of course, is the answer to the paradox, and to the question Eliot poses in Four Quartets,

"Who then devised the torment?"[15] It is love, as Andrewes says, who endures "any emptying, humbling, loss of reputation; love respects it not, cares not what flesh He be made, so the flesh be made by it."[16]

As we saw The Elder Statesman imitates the Incarnation in finding expression in the particularity of one man and his experience of humility and love. Lord Claverton's sins and his forgiveness are particularly expressed so that not only the corruption of the flesh but the redemption of the flesh are dramatized, and the ministry of love and forgiveness is seen to be the representation of the beyond in the midst of our life. Thus the distance between the poet and life is exposed as pride and fear and closed in humility and love, as he participates in life. And thus the reconciliation between God and man in the flesh of Christ projects "a humble shadow".[17] So, for the sake of redemption of the flesh and the world, Eliot allows the Word to take precedence over the word, and thus life to take precedence over language. He gives up, Denis Donoghue says the "Saint language" of the poet: "The effort of the plays is to allow people, now, to live and act by a holy language."[18] But although this is the effort, "the practise", another critic says, "is disincarnated speech".[19] This is still true in the last play, as we have noted, although Eliot's apprehension of the Incarnation as a spiritual and dramatic reality is richer there than before and suggests his personal "apprehension" by love. It represents the culmination of Eliot's endeavour to dramatize the most deeply shocking offence of all, the presence of God with every man. This endeavour is reflected in the movement in the language of the plays towards incorporating divine truths into the speech and

into the lives of their characters. Instead of believing in the redemption of ordinary life, and manifesting this in an ordinary language that speaks divine truths, Eliot uses poetic language as an instrument to enable the redemption of ordinary life through its transfiguration into something beyond itself. Thus life as it is is not seen as redeemed except in so far as it is not itself.

In part this is a result of Eliot's lifelong poetic pursuit. There is a sense in which his struggle with the Incarnation focussed the artist's struggle between form and life. His creative struggle was with words that

> 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. 20

Words can only "reach/ The stillness" of peace, of perfection, of being, "by the form, the pattern".[21] They are threatened with being swallowed up by chaos:

> Shrieking voices
> Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
> Always assail them. 22

In his "Choruses from The Rock", a similar passage on the creativity of man expresses the struggle to create "Out of the slimy mud of words, out of the sleet and hail of verbal imprecisions ... the perfect order of speech, and the beauty of incantation."[23] The Christian poet asks:

> Lord, shall we not bring these gifts to your service?
> Shall we not bring to your service all our powers
> For life, for dignity, grace and order,
> And intellectual pleasures of the senses?

And the poet's great temptation is identified in the answer: "You must not deny the body."[24]

The choreography of "life, dignity, grace and order" into a dance of living liturgy wherein "you are the music/ While the music lasts"[25] is the aim of Eliot's art. It is achieved in "the trying"[26] in the Four Quartets and impeded in the plays largely because of his lack of faith in the dignity, grace and order of life. Instead of reflecting it he is intent upon trying to recreate it, through an imposed language. The play that is most intriguing in its reflection of life is the unfinished Sweeney Agonistes in which liturgy is combined with music-hall with a crude and basic directness that is captured in the pounding and snappy rhythm of its verse. Other plays, and particularly The Cocktail Party and The Family Reunion, are prefigured in it, with its image of the wedding and the murder, and the cannibalism theme that parodies Holy Communion while at the same time dramatizing the "Death is life and life is death"[27] paradox of crucifixion and redemption. But Eliot turns away from the crude power of its rhythms to the more refined verse that he develops from Murder in the Cathedral to The Elder Statesman.

Perhaps Sweeney Agonistes frightens him, in that it reflects too directly and too abundantly the death that he discovers in the midst of life, instead of the redemption that he wants to find and feels he ought to find, as a Christian and as an artist. In a sense, then, he decides to reflect what he ought to see rather than what he does see, in the hope that the poetic ideal will propagate order and life and its word will "purify the dialect of the tribe"[28], control the "shrieking voices" and inspire the slimy mud of flesh to the beauty of incantation. In this he works against what Malcolm MacKenzie

Ross calls "the Christian rhythm" which, in the history of culture "is always away from the sanctification of the profane to the profanation of that which is no longer sacred because no longer expedient."[29] Eliot chooses to work towards the sanctification of the profane, only thus able to perceive its redemption. Perhaps it is not he so much as his Church that was to blame for the imprisonment of the Word in a word that was not able to speak a word to men of its day. If the Church of The Confidential Clerk bears any resemblance to the Church that he experienced, it is not surprising that he found difficulty in dramatizing a radical redemption at work. Instead of pointing the way to relieve its language of unnecessary "Saint language" and replace it with life, the liturgy of Eliot's Church seemed perhaps the "disincarnate speech" of dead saints, expressed in "a worn-out poetical fashion".[30]

The Incarnation and Passion of Christ, as Auerbach says, abolished the distinction between "high" and "low" style: in it the Highest was treated as the Lowest, as Andrewes expounds. Thus was "created an entirely new kind of sublimity, in which the everyday and the low were included, not excluded, so that, in style as in content, it directly connected the lowest with the highest."[31] Andrewes' recognition of this is reflected in the liveliness of his prose, and Cranmer's in the life of the language of his Prayer Book. They shame not only the "divines" but the poets of this century, bound up in the dead cadences and stale metaphors of a mechanistic and profane age or the "saint language" - religious or aesthetic - that is out of place in our midst. Inspired by the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, Auerbach says, medieval Christian drama represents

simple and sublime truths: "Being a living representation of Biblical episodes as contained, with their innately dramatic elements, in the liturgy, it opens its arms invitingly to receive the simple and untutored and to lead them from the concrete, the everyday, to the hidden and the true".[32]

Despite "conditions/ That seem unpropitious",[33] in himself and in the world in which he lived, Eliot's ceaseless exploration is the final testimony to the reality of redemption. And his last creative work reaches towards the simplicity of style and content that adumbrates the Incarnation. Most of us, he says, "are only undefeated/ Because we have gone on trying",[34] for we walk not by sight, not by the light of a vision, but by faith. The world and oneself offer so little evidence of God being with us that the Incarnation is often a matter for sheer faith and "right action"[35] without a clear sign of the overcoming power of love. As Dante's vision of Hell and Paradise and the Purgatory between was "consumed" in "the eternal light"[36] of "The love that moves the sun and the other stars",[37] so Eliot's vision of perfection and his conviction of imperfection were consumed in the "certainty of love unchanging" (583). Dante writes that he

> saw how love had bound
> Into one volume all the leaves whose flight
> Is scattered through the universe around; ... 38

All the poets words are swallowed up and fulfilled in the one word of love. It is "the drawing of this love and the voice of this calling"[39] that realizes redemption for Eliot, as for Dante, and lends substance to the faith and the vision that "all shall be well/ And all manner of thing shall be well."[39]

FOOTNOTES

1 Flannery O'Connor, The Habit of Being. Letters, Selected and Edited by Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979, p.92

2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers From Prison. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1953, p.93

3 O'Connor, op. cit., p.90

4 T. S. Eliot, The Family Reunion in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p.294. All subsequent references to the plays are taken from this text and will be incorporated into the body of the chapter.

5 The superscription to Sweeney Agonistes includes the statement of St. John of the Cross: "Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings." Eliot, op. cit., p.115

6 Eliot, Four Quartets, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p.189-90

7 Four Quartets, p.186

8 Eliot, "John Marston", Selected Essays. London: Faber & Faber, 1932, p.232

9 Four Quartets, p.198

10 Nathan A. Scott, jr., The Wild Prayer of Longing. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1971, p.19

11 O'Connor, op. cit., p.100

12 Eliot, Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern. New York: House of Books, 1937, unpaginated

13 Lancelot Andrewes, Ninety-Six Sermons, Volume I. London: John Henry Parker, 1841, p.37

14 Andrewes, op. cit., p.92

15 Four Quartets, p.196

16 Andrewes, op. cit., p.93

17 Eliot, "The Aims of Poetic Drama", Adam, Number 200 (November, 1949), p.12

18 Denis Donoghue, "The Holy Language of Modernism", in Literary English Since Shakespeare, ed. George Watson. London: Oxford University Press, 1970, p.404

19 Andrew Kennedy, "Eliot" in Six Dramatists in Search of a Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.127

20 Four Quartets, p.175

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Eliot, "Choruses from The Rock", The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p.164

24 "Choruses from The Rock", p.165

25 Four Quartets, p.190

26 Four Quartets, p.182

27 Sweeney Agonistes, p.125

28 Four Quartets, p.194

29 Malcolm MacKenzie Ross, Poetry and Dogma: The Transfiguratio of Eucharistic Symbols in Seventeenth Century English Poetry. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954, p.19. "Essence and existence interpenetrate in wholly new but quite proper ways in Eliot's Four Quartets and Fry's Sleep of Prisoners." (p.19)

30 Four Quartets, p.179

31 Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953, p.154

32 Auerbach, op. cit., p.155

33 Four Quartets, p.182

34 Four Quartets, p.190

35 Four Quartets, p.190

36 Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy. 3: Paradise, tr. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962, p.345

37 Dante, op. cit., p.347

38 Dante, op. cit., p.345

39 Four Quartets, p.198

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I: PRIMARY SOURCES

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church According to the use of The Church of England. Oxford: Oxford University Press; London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1662

The Book of Common Prayer with the Additions and Deviations Proposed in 1928. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; London: S.P.C.K., 1928

ELIOT, T. S. After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (The Page-Barbour Lectures at the University of Virginia, 1933). London: Faber & Faber, 1933

ELIOT, T. S. "The Aims of Poetic Drama", Adam, Number 200 (November, 1949), pp.10-16

ELIOT, T. S. "The Beating of a Drum", The Nation and the Athenaeum (6 October, 1923), pp.11-12

ELIOT, T. S. The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Faber & Faber, 1969

ELIOT, T. S. "Dramatis Personae", The Criterion, Volume 1, No. 1, October 1922; London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1923

ELIOT, T. S. "Five Points on Dramatic Writing" (A Letter to Ezra Pound), Townsman, Volume I (July 1938), reprinted in T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice by Carol H. Smith: Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, p.53

ELIOT, T. S. For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order. London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928

ELIOT, T. S. The Idea of a Christian Society. London: Faber & Faber, 1939

ELIOT, T. S. "Introduction", Nightwood, by Djuna Barnes. London: Faber & Faber, 1974

ELIOT, T. S. "Introduction", Savonarola: A Dramatic Poem by Charlotte Eliot. London: R. Cobden-Sanderson, 1926

ELIOT, T. S. "Introduction", Selected Poems of Ezra Pound, ed. T. S. Eliot. London: Faber & Faber, 1928

ELIOT, T. S. T. S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Worth Inc., 1971

ELIOT, T. S. "Introduction", Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, by S. L. Bethell. London: Staples Press Ltd., 1948

ELIOT, T. S. "Introduction", The Wheel of Fire, by G. Wilson Knight. London: Oxford University Press, 1930

ELIOT, T. S. "The Need for Poetic Drama", The Listener, XVI, 411 (25 November,1936), 994-995

ELIOT, T. S. Notes Towards the Definition of Culture. London: Faber & Faber, 1948

ELIOT, T. S. On Poetry and Poets. London: Faber & Faber, 1957

ELIOT, T. S. "Preface", English Poetry and its Contribution to the Knowledge of a Creative Principle. London: Faber & Faber, 1950

ELIOT, T. S. Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern. New York: House of Books, 2nd ed., 1954. (First published 1937), unpaginated

ELIOT, T. S. The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 3rd ed., 1932 (first published 1920)

ELIOT, T. S. "The Search for Moral Sanction", The Listener, Volume VII, No. 168 (30 March, 1932), pp.445-446; 480

ELIOT, T. S. Selected Essays. London: Faber & Faber, 1932
Selected Essays. London: Faber & Faber, 3rd ed. 1976

ELIOT, T. S. Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953 (reprinted Peregrine Books, 1963)

ELIOT, T. S. "To Criticise the Critic" and Other Writings. London: Faber & Faber, 1965

ELIOT, T. S. "Ulysses, Order and Myth", The Dial, Volume LXXV (1923)

ELIOT, T. S. The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism. London: Faber & Faber, 1933

II: SECONDARY SOURCES

Alternative Service Book 1980. Clowes: S.P.C.K., 1980

ANDREWES, Lancelot. Ninety-Six Sermons, Volume I. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841

ARDEN, John. To Present the Pretence: Essays on the Theatre and its Public. London: Eyre Methuen, 1977

AUDEN, W. H. "The Dyer's Hand" and Other Essays. London: Faber & Faber, 1948

AUERBACH, Erich. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. tr. Willard R. Trask. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953

AULEN, Gustaf. The Drama and the Symbols. London: S.P.C.K., 1970

BAUDKIN, Maud. The Quest for Salvation in an Ancient and a Modern Play. London: Oxford University Press, 1941

BERGONZI, Bernard. T. S. Eliot in Masters of World Literature Series, London: MacMillan, 1972

BLACKMUR, Richard. Language as Gesture. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954

BONHOEFFER, Dietrich. Letters and Papers from Prison. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1953

BOUYER, Louis. Life and Liturgy. London: Sheed & Ward, 1956

BROUSSARD, Louis. American Drama: Contemporary Authory from Eugene O'Neill to Tennessee Williams. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962

BROWN, John Russell & HARRIS, Bernard, ed. Contemporary Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 4. London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1962

BROWNE, E. Martin. The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969

BUCHANAN, Colin; LLOYD, Trevor and MILLER, Harold, eds. Anglican Worship Today: Collins Illustrated Guide to the Alternative Service Book 1980. London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1980

CATTAUI, Georges. T. S. Eliot, tr. Claire Pace & Jean Stewart. U.S.A.: The Merlin Press Ltd., 1966

DANTE ALIGHIERI. The Divine Comedy. 1: Hell, tr. Dorothy L. Sayers, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1949
The Divine Comedy. 2: Purgatory, tr. Dorothy L. Sayers. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1955
The Divine Comedy. 3: Paradise, tr. Dorothy L. Sayers. and Barbara Reynolds. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962

DICKONSON, Hugh. Myth on the Modern Stage. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1969

DIX, Gregory. The Shape of the Liturgy. Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945

DONOGHUE, Denis. The Third Voice: Modern British and American Verse Drama. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959

DREW, Elizabeth. T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950

EDWARDS, Francis. Ritual and Drama: The Medieval Theatre. London: Lutterworth Press, 1976

ELIADE, Mircea. Myth and Reality, World Perspectives. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964 (first published Harper & Row Inc., New York, 1963)

FABRICUS, Johannes. The Unconscious and Mr. Eliot. Copenhagan: NYT Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1967

FERGUSSON, Francis. The Human Image in Dramatic Literature. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1969

FERGUSSON, Francis. The Idea of a Theatre. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949

FINDLATER, Richard. The Unholy Trade. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1952

FRYE, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957

FRYE, Northrop. Eliot. London: Oliver & Boyd Ltd., 1968

FRYE, Northrop. A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965

GARDNER, Helen. The Art of T. S. Eliot. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1959

GASSNER, John, ed. Ideas in the Drama. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964

GORDON, Lyndall. Eliot's Early Years. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977

HALL, James & STEINMANN, Martin, eds. The Permanence of Yeats. New York; New York: Collier Books, 1961

HEBERT, A. G. Liturgy and Society. London: Faber & Faber, 1935

HENN, T. R. The Harvest of Tragedy. London: Methuen & Co., 1956

HINCHCLIFFE, Arnold P. Modern Verse Drama in The Critical Idiom Series, gen. ed. John D. Jump. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977

HIRST, David L. Comedy of Manners in The Critical Idiom Series, gen. ed. John D. Jump. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979

HUNT, Hugh, RICHARDS, Kenneth & TAYLOR, John Russell. The Revels History of Drama in English, gen. ed. T. W. Craik, Volume VII: 1880 to the present day. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978

JEFFREY, David L., ed. By Things Seen: Reference and Recognition in Medieval Thought. Ottawa, Canada: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979

JONES, C., WAINWRIGHT, G. & YARNOLD, E., S.J., eds. The Study of Liturgy. London: S.P.C.K., 1978

JONES, David E. The Plays of T. S. Eliot. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960

JONES, Gesenius. Approach to the Purpose. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964

KENNER, Hugh. The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960

KENNER, Hugh, ed. T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962

KERMODE, Frank. Romantic Image. London: Fontana, 1971

LEECH, Clifford. Tragedy in The Critical Idiom series, gen. ed. John D. Jump. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969

LEWIS, C. S. An Experiment in Criticism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961

LITZ, A. Walton, ed. Eliot in His Time. London: Oxford University Press, 1973

LUCY, Sean. T. S. Eliot and the Idea of Tradition. London: Cohen & West, 1960

LUMLEY, Frederick. Trends in Twentieth Century Drama: A Survey Since Ibsen and Shaw, rev. ed. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972

MANNHEIM, Karl. Diagnosis of Our Time. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1943

MARCH, Richard and TAMBIMUTTU, eds. T. S. Eliot: A Symposium. London: Editions Poetry London Ltd., 1948

MARGOLIS, John D. T. S. Eliot's Intellectual Development. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972

MARTIN, Graham, ed. Eliot in Perspective. London: MacMillan Press, 1970

MATTHIESSEN, F. O. The Achievement of T. S. Eliot. New York: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, with a chapter by C. L. Barber on Eliot's later works, 1959

MINEAR, Paul S. Eyes of Faith: A Study in the Biblical Point of View. London and Redhill: Lutterworth Press, 1948

MOORMAN, Chalres. Arthurian Triptych: Mythic Materials in Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis and T. S. Eliot. Berkeley: University of Califormia Press, 1960

MOORMAN, John R. H. A History of the Church in England. London: Adam and Charles Black, reprinted with amendments, 1963 (first published 1953)

MELCHIORI, Giorgio. The Tightrope Walkers: Studies of Mannerism in Modern English Literature. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956

NEILL, Stephen. Anglicanism. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958

O'CONNOR, Flannery. The Habit of Being. Letters, selected and edited by Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar, Staus, Giroux, 1979

OSTERWALDER, Hans. T. S. Eliot: Between Metaphor and Metonymy: A Study of His Essays and Plays in terms of Roman Jakobson's Typology. Verlag Bern: A. Francke, 1978

PINTER, Harold. No Man's Land. London: Eyre Methuen, 1975

RAINE, Kathleen. The Lion's Mouth. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977

ROSS, Malcolm MacKenzie. Poetry and Dogma: The Transfiguration of Eucharistic Symbols in Seventeenth Century English Poetry. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954

RUTHVEN, K. K. Myth, in The Critical Idiom Series, gen. ed. John D. Jump. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976

SAYERS, Dorothy L. The Mind of the Maker. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1941

SAYERS, Dorothy L. Unpopular Opinions. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1946

SCHNEIDER, Elisabeth. T. S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1975

SCOTT, Nathan, A., jr. The Broken Center. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966

SCOTT, Nathan A., jr. Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958

SCOTT, Nathan A., jr. ed. The New Orpheus: Essays Towards a Christian Poetic. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964

SCOTT, Nathan A., jr. The Poetry of Civic Virtue. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976

SCOTT, Nathan A., jr., Rehearsals of Discomposure: Alienation and Reconciliation in Modern Literature: Franz Kafka, Ignazio Silone, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot. New York: King's Cross Press, 1952

SCOTT, Nathan A., jr. The Wild Prayer of Longing. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1971

SENCOURT, Robert. T. S. Eliot: A Memoir. London: Garnestone Press, 1971

SKELTON, Robin. The Poetic Pattern. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957

SMIDT, Kristian. Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot. New York: The Humanities Press, 1961

SMITH, Carol H. T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963

SMITH, Grover. T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950

SPANOS, William V. The Christian Tradition in Modern British Verse Drama: The Poetics of Sacramental Time. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1967

SPENDER, Stephen. Eliot, in Fontana Modern Masters, ed. Frank Kermode. Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1975

STYAN, J. L. The Dark Comedy: The Development of Modern Comic Tragedy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962

STYAN, J. L. The Elements of Drama. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960

TATE, Allen, ed. T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967

TYRRELL, Rev. G. W., A.M. The Ritual of the United Church of England and Ireland. London: John W. Parker, 1840

UNDERHILL, Evelyn. Worship. London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 4th Impression, 1941

UNGER, Leonard. T. S. Eliot. Pamphlets of American Writers, No. 8. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961

UNGER, Leonard. T. S. Eliot, Moments and Patterns. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966

UNGER, Leonard, ed. T. S. Eliot: A Selected Critique. New York: Rinehart & Co., 1948

WARD, David. Between Two Worlds. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973

WEALES, Gerald. Religion in Modern English Drama. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961

WESTON, Jessie L. From Ritual to Romance. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1957

WILDER, Amos. The Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry. New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1940

WILLIAMS, Charles. "The Image of the City" and Other Essays, selected by Anne Ridler. London: Oxford University Press, 1958

WILLIAMS, Charles. Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933

WILLIAMS, Raymond. Drama from Ibsen to Brecht. London: Pelican, 1976

WILLIAMS, Raymond. Drama from Ibsen to Eliot. London: Chatto and Windus, 1954

WILLIAMS, Raymond. Modern Tragedy. London: Chatto and Windus, 1966

WORTH, Katherine J. Revolutions in Modern English Drama. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1972

III: SECONDARY SOURCES: ARTICLES

ANONYMOUS. "Entertainment and Reality", Times Literary Supplement, No. 2513 (30th March, 1950)

ANONYMOUS. "Poetry and Theatre", Times Literary Supplement, No. 2505 (3rd February, 1950),p.73

ANONYMOUS. "Writing for the Theatre", Times Literary Supplement, No. 2534 (25th August, 1950), p.viii

ARROWSMITH, William. "The Comedy of T. S. Eliot" in Modern Drama Essays in Criticism, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, ed. Travis Bogard & Oliver William

ARROWSMITH, William. "English Verse Drama (11): The Cocktail Party", Hudson Review, Volume III, No. 3 (Autumn 1950)

ARROWSMITH, William. "Notes on English Verse Drama, Christopher Fry", Hudson Review 3 (Summer, 1950) pp.203-5

AUERBACH, Erich. "Figura", in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays, tr. Ralph Mannheim. New York: Meridian Books, 1959

BARBER, C. L. "The Power of Development" in The Achievement of T. S. Eliot by F. O. Matthiessen. New York: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, 1959

BARTH, J. Robert. "T. S. Eliot's Image of Man: A Thematic Study of His Drama", Renascence, XIV (Spring, 1962), pp.126-138; 165

BENTLEY, Eric R. "The Drama at Ebb", Kenyon Review, Volume VII, No. 2 (Spring, 1945)

BENTLEY, Eric. "Old Possum at Play?", New Republic, Volume 130 (22nd February, 1954), p.22

BLACKMUR, R. P. "Lord Tennyson's Scissors 1912-1950", Kenyon Review 14, pp. 1-20

BRADBROOK, M. C. "The Liturgical Tradition in English Verse: Herbert and Eliot". Theology, Volume 4 (January, 1942), pp.13-23

BRANDT, G. W. "Realism and Parables: from Brecht to Arden", Contemporary Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 4, John Russell Brown & Bernard Harris, eds. London: Edward Arnold, 1962

BROOKS, Cleanth. "Sin and Expiation", Partisan Review, 6 (Summer, 1939), pp.114-116

BROWNE, E. Martin. "T. S. Eliot in the Theatre", in T. S. Eliot The Man and His Work, ed. Allen Tate. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967

CHASE, Richard. "The Sense of the Present", Kenyon Review, Vol. VII, No. 2 (Spring, 1945)

COLBY, Robert A. "The Three Worlds of The Cocktail Party: The Wit of T. S. Eliot", University of Toronto Quarterly, Volume XXIV, No. 1 (October, 1954), pp. 56-69

DONOGHUE, Denis. "The Holy Language of Modernism" in Literary English Since Shakespeare, ed. George Watson. London: Oxford University Press, 1970

GARDNER, Helen. "The 'Aged Eagle' Spreads His Wings": A Seventieth Birthday Talk with T. S. Eliot. The Sunday Times (21st Setpember, 1958), p. 8

GARDNER, Helen. "The Comedies of T. S. Eliot", in T. S. Eliot: The Man and His work, ed. Allen Tate. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967

GOLDMAN, Michael. "Fear in the Way", in Eliot in His Time. A Walton Litz ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1973

GROSS, John. "Eliot: From Ritual to Realism", Encounter, 24 (March 1965), pp.48-50

HALL, Donald. "The Art of Poetry 1: An Interview with T. S. Eliot", The Paris Review. London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., Number 21 (Spring-Summer, 1959)

HAMILTON, Iain. "An Interview with T. S. Eliot", World Review, 9 (November, 1949). London: Edward Hulton, 1949

HEILMAN, Robert. "Alcestis and The Cocktail Party", Comparative Literature, Vol. 5 Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1953

KENNEDY, Andrew K. "Eliot" in Six Dramatists in Search of a Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975

KENNER, Hugh. "Eliot and the Tradition of the Anonymous", College English, Volume 28, Part 8, 1966, pp.558-564

KENNER, Hugh. "Possum by Gaslight", in T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays, Hugh Kenner ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1962.

LEWIS, C. S. "Myth Became Fact", in God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970

LYNCH, William F. "Adventure in Order", Thought, XXVI, 100 (Spring, 1951), pp.33-49

MARTIN, Graham. "Language and Belief in Eliot's Poetry", in Eliot in Perspective, ed. Graham Martin. London: MacMillan Press, 1970

MOORMAN, Charles. "Order and Mr. Eliot", South Atlantic Quarterly, Volume 52 (January, 1953), pp.73-87

MUIR, Kenneth. "Verse and Prose", Contemporary Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 4. John Russell Brown & Bernard Harris, ed. London: Edward Arnold, 1962

MURRY, John Middleton. "The Plays of T. S. Eliot", Unprofessional Essays. London: Jonathan Cape, 1956

PAUL, Leslie and SALMON, Christopher. "Two Views of Mr. Eliot's New Play", The Listener, LI (4 September, 1958)

PEACOCK, Ronald. "Public and Private Problems in Modern Drama", John Rylands Library Bulletin. Volume 36 (1953-54). Manchester: The Manchester University Press, 1954

PELLEGRINI, Alessandro. "Arts and Letters: A London Conversation with T. S. Eliot". Sewanee Review, Volume 57 (Spring, 1949), pp.287-292

PETER, John. "The Family Reunion", Scrutiny, 16 (September, 1949), pp.219-230

RAGO, Henry. "Faith and the Literary Imagination: The Vocation of Poetry", in Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Literature. ed. Nathan A. Scott, jr Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1968

RANSOM, John Crowe. "T. S. Eliot as Dramatist", Poetry, 54 (August, 1939), pp.264-71

RIDLER, Anne. "A Question of Speech", in T. S. Eliot, ed. B. Rajan. London: Doris Dobson Ltd., 1947

ROBERTS, Preston. "A Christian Theory of Dramatic Tragedy", The Journal of Religion, Volume XXXI, Number I (January, 1951), pp.1-20

ROGERS, Daniel John. "Dramatic Use of the Liturgy in the Plays of T. S. Eliot: A Secular Evolution." University of Wisconsin, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1964

SCOTT, Nathan A., jnr. "T. S. Eliot's The Cocktail Party: Of Redemption and Vocation", Religion in Life, Volume XX, Part 2 (Spring, 1951), pp.274-285

SCOTT, Nathan A., jnr. " Theology and the Literary Imagination", in Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Literature, ed. Nathan, A Scott, jnr., Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1968

SISSON, C. H. Review of Two in One by E. Martin Browne with Henzie Browne. Times Literary Supplement, 22 May, 1981

SMITH, H. A. 'Dipsychus Among the Shadows", Contemporary Theatre Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 4. John Russell Brown & Bernard Harris, eds., London: Edward Arnold, 1962

STAMM, Rudolf. 'The Orestes Theme in Three Plays by Eugene O'Neill, T. S. Eliot and Jean-Paul Sartre", English Studies, XXX (1949)

WAIN, John. 'T. S. Eliot", Encounter, 24 (March 1965)

WARD, Anne. "Speculations on T. S. Eliot's Time World: An Analysis of The Family Reunion in Relation to Hulme and Bergson", American Literature, 21 (March, 1949), pp. 18-34

WILLIAMS, Raymond. "Tragic Resignation and Sacrifice", Critical Quarterly 5 (Spring, 1963), pp.5-19

WILSON, Edmund. "T. S. Eliot", in Axel's Castle. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931

WINTER, Jack. "'Prufrockism' in The Cocktail Party", Modern Language Quarterly, Volume 22, 1961. Seattle: University of Washington, 1961

WOOLF, Leonard. 'Hogarth Press", The Publish-it-Yourself Handbook Literary Tradition and How-To, ed. Bill Henderson. New York: The Pushcart Press and Harper & Row, 1980, pp.59-75

WORTH, Katherine J. 'Eliot and the Living Theatre", in Eliot in Perspective ed. Graham Martin. London: MacMillan & Co., 1970