

THE THEME OF LONELINESS IN T. S. ELIOT'S PLAYS

O Tema da Solidão nas Peças de T. S. Eliot das Thema der Einsamkeit in den Werken von T. S. Eliot

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SUMMARY

This paper analyses the theme of loneliness and estrangement in T. S. Eliot's plays, also making references to some of his poems. Loneliness is seen to co-occur with a process of inner disintegration, a step in the metamorphoses of Eliot's characters towards self-realization and wholeness. It also reveals Eliot's shift from tragedy to tragi-comedy together with an increasing use of some of the conventions of the masque.

RESUMO

O presente trabalho analisa o tema da solidão e do distanciamento nas peças de T. S. Eliot, fazendo também referências a alguns de seus poemas. Constata-se que a solidão ocorre simultaneamente com um processo de desintegração interna, uma etapa na metamorfose dos personagens de Eliot em busca da auto-realização e da plenitude. Demonstra-se também a transição da tragédia para a tragi-comédia, juntamente com um uso crescente de algumas das convenções da «masque».

The characters in T. S. Eliot's plays, in their metamorphoses towards self-realization and wholeness, start out with the awareness of something "dis-easing" them, which is usually conveyed by the objective correlative of filth and illness (Vieira, 1986). But before achieving wholeness, they go through a second stage of increasing inner disintegration, which leads them to express their loss as loneliness. They are lonely from the start, but at least they develop a social mask, living on the illusion of sham roles. However, when they become aware of this sham, their conflicting inner values cause a greater inability to relate to others. The breaking up of their relationships coincides with a climactic moment of recognition, when they walk off the stage and ask the "overwhelming question" — who am I? — in unbearable loneliness. When they strip away the actor's mask and costume of their outer selves, they feel there is a loss of personality. Headings explains the breakdown of the outer self, the masked actor: "Only in the illusory personality do we normally conceive of our identities, and our views of others are equally or perhaps even more erroneous. Once our illusions are shed, the lack of them seems at first an intolerable isolation" (Headings, 146). Shedding illusions, dropping masks, mixing actors with audience within metamorphosis of dramatic ritual is the

stuff of Eliot's plays, as it is the nature of that earlier form of entertainment, the masque.

It seems that Eliot adapted some of the conventions of the masque to modern drama especially in his later plays. His use of the image of the "masked actor" could be an influence of his readings of 17th century English entertainment. For example, in *The cocktail party*, the "guardians" make frequent irruptions into the host's house; sometimes they also take over Edward's role (Julia pours drinks, Alex prepares food), until the distinction between host and guest becomes blurred. But Eliot's greatest debt to the masque is to show, with great economy, the distinction between inner self (the face) and outer self (the mask). But instead of showing characters actually disguised in concrete masks and costumes, Eliot presents a mask which is philosophical in character: the playing of roles. The masks are, rather, devices his characters use to hide or to avoid confronting their inner selves. Whether belonging to the first group of characters, the martyrs and scapegoats, or to the second one of ordinary men, they wear a public mask to cover the inner suffering self. Eliot's shift from martyr-oriented plays to ordinary man-oriented ones coincides with a gradual shift from tragedy to tragi-

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comedy. It has been said that man answers to anxieties in two ways: in tragedy he defies death — therefore tragedy begins where the instinct for preservation ends; in comedy he tries to minimize the danger — therefore comedy begins with the instinct for preservation (Hodgson, 23) Accordingly, Eliot's martyrs, isolated from the world, reach communion by denying the flesh, their human mask. And the disintegrated and lonely common characters reach communion by bridging the public mask and the private face, or by putting on proper masks. No matter what method they use, it is nevertheless an attempt to integrate themselves and while away their painful isolation.

Eliot shows five categories of isolation, ranging from many to few people:

1. isolation from the world
2. isolation from one's country
3. isolation between friends
4. isolation within the family or between generations
5. isolation between a man and a woman.

In the first category, isolation from the world, we have Becket in *Murder in the cathedral* and Celia in *The cocktail party*. Becket, as a priest, is set apart from ordinary humanity. Thomas is well aware that his alienation from the world is part of a cosmic design, to be fulfilled when he has passed the stage of religious purgation. So, instead of postponing the moment of recognition, he forces "the moment to its crisis" by returning to England, facing the King's knights and ordering the priests to "unbar the doors" of the Cathedral, knowing the moment of his death has come.

Celia, through her lover Edward and her psychiatrist Dr. Reilly, also realizes that she does not belong to ordinary humanity and pursues her own way to martyrdom. Edward, in breaking with her, serves as a catalyst to quicken her awareness that she has always been alone and that one is always alone; she does not take the break as the end of an illusion, but as a revelation about her relationship with people — "It no longer seems worth while to speak to anyone". She feels she has to atone for the sense of emptiness and failure towards people, but at the same time she realizes that her kind of love does not belong to this life. Reilly, the priest wearing a doctor's mask, warns her that to achieve communion through martyrdom (entering the so called sanatorium) she would have first to suffer extreme loneliness. Celia accepts the hardest way. She finds the world a delusion, for communication here resembles a dumb show: people "make noises and think they are talking to each other; / They make faces and think they understand each other". She then abandons the world's masquerade for God.

As martyrs, Becket and Celia are rather unique cases. The ordinary masked actors sooner or later painfully have to confront their inner selves. That inner self must determine the conduct of the outer

self if the whole self is to lead a satisfactory life. But the martyr's concern transcends earthly happiness. His suffering is not only spiritual but physical on his way to illumination. Reilly, talking about Celia's death, says she probably suffered "the reluctance of the body to become a thing". In fact, the glory and communion of the saint is usually associated with the annihilation of the flesh. The process, thus, is not self-discovery but self-denial. The similarities to Christ's martyrdom are very clear in both plays. Both Becket and Celia choose to look inward, to follow their conscience, as symbolized in the Church, and thus become isolated and antagonistic to the world. The form of Celia's sacrifice also echoes Christ's death: she was crucified by heathens near an ant-hill. Becket overtly says that he is repeating Christ's death:

I am a priest,
A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ,
Ready to suffer with my blood.
This is the sign of the Church always,
The sign of blood. Blood for blood.
His blood given to buy my life
My blood given to pay for his death,
My death for his death

.....
For my Lord I am now ready to die
That his church may have peace and liberty
(81).

Yet, Becket's bold statement that he is, like Christ, a redeemer and his haughty attitude throughout the play make the meaning of his death rather ambiguous. The play allows for the interpretation that Thomas acts not only out of submission to God, but also out of pride, as shown in the extreme views expressed by Zizola¹ and Smith.² If it is pride, the play is no longer a Christian Drama, but fits into the pattern of Classical Tragedy. The world is in chaos, because the powers which should order it (Church and State) are at variance. Thomas refuses to submit to the King's will. Therefore, the "wrong reason" may be also Becket's tragic flaw — pride. It is the Fourth Tempter who shatters Becket's confident belief that his death, like Christ's, is part of a cosmic design. To start with, since Becket compares himself to Christ, he expects three Tempters, not four. Moreover, the Fourth Tempter shows Becket that through death he can be more powerful than the King: "Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest / On earth, to be high in heaven" (41-2). He also adds that the king's power is transient: kings die, are succeeded by others, and soon forgotten. But the martyr's power is timeless. Through the acceptance of a glorious death, Thomas can take revenge on the King. Since the play is ambiguous, "blood" may be the blood of redemption, like Christ's. But "blood for blood" is quite suggestive of retribution or revenge, as the "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" in The Old Testament. And in the dispute with the King, Becket had the lion's share, for his

glory actually transcended time. From the point of view of Classical Drama Becket's death has a different purpose from that of sainthood — the hero's tragic flaw brings catastrophe to the land, and order is restored only by his death. Eliot wrote a Christian drama using a Classical model. It is likely that he did not realize the ambivalence of the play. He stated in "Poetry and drama" that his design was to write a play on Martyrdom (In Hayward, 78). And the martyrs, Becket and Celia, the instances of extreme alienation from the world, reach communion with God through death.

Another type of loneliness is not a step to "salvation" as Becket's and Celia's were. Gomez, Lord Claverton's friend in *The elder statesman* is the one instance of the second category of loneliness, alienation from one's country. After he had served a term in prison, he fled to the Republic of San Marco in Central America. There he became a successful businessman and raised a family according to the standards of the country. He also changed his name, previously Fred Culverwell, to Frederico Gomez, to make it sound like Spanish. But adopting foreign customs did not make him less lonely — he had put on a Spanish mask and costume, but he still did not feel he belonged. In his loneliness, he had his children learn English, but language alone could not give them an English outlook on life. This he explains to Lord Claverton, upon his return to England after an absence of thirty-five years. He compares ordinary loneliness to the alienation of the foreigner:

Gomez. I made my children learn English — it's useful;
I always talk to them in English.
But do they think in English? No, they do not.
They think in Spanish, but their thoughts are Indian thoughts.

O God, Dick, you don't know what it's like
To be so cut off! Homesickness!
Homesickness is a sickly word.
You don't understand such isolation
As mine, you think you do ...

Lord Claverton. I'm sure I do,
I've always been alone.

Gomez. Oh, loneliness —
Everybody knows what that's like.
Your loneliness — so cozy, warm and padded:
You're not isolated — merely insulated.
It's only when you come to see that you have lost yourself
That you are quite alone (23).

The process of losing one's outer self is a painful feeling for expatriates. They must adjust to a new environment without the aid of a mask. That adjustment causes a tension between the new outer self and the old inner self. Most of their inherited apparatus, including the cultural trappings, has to be left behind. As Gomez puts it, "I had

to fabricate for myself another personality". Gomez explains to Lord Claverton that he came back because he was a lonely man, "with a craving for affection". Considering his painful isolation, one agrees with his explanation, but is also inclined to think that, among other reasons, he came back to search for the reintegration of his lost self.

These two categories comprise extreme cases — the voluntary isolation of the martyr and the imposed alienation of the expatriate with their loss of the self. The other three categories, isolation between friends, isolation within the family or between generations, and isolation between a man and a woman, seem to have interrelated aspects in common: when the "masked actors" fail to play the proper roles, their communication becomes difficult, which accounts for their ambivalent attitude of willing both to meet and shun people; usually there is an outsider who helps the characters to reach a moment of recognition, when the "actors walk off the stage" and confront their inner selves. They may feel temporarily lonely, but sooner or later reach communion in varying degrees.

Lord Claverton, in *The elder statesman* comprises the three categories of ordinary loneliness. As a public man, he was a typical actor, wearing an "authority's costume". He tells his daughter Monica and her fiancé Charles:

I've spent all my life in trying to forget myself,
In trying to identify myself with the role
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 (55-6).

Accordingly, he is the clearest example of ambivalent attitude in his wish to meet and shun people. His social attitude is a contrast to the paradigms of the quasi-perfect relationship of Monica and Charles and also to the near-ideal relationship implicit in the periphery of the book.

Eliot dedicated the play to his second wife,⁵ and anticipates in it the idea of perfect, even non-verbal communication. He talks of "The breathing in unison / Of lovers ... / Who think the same thoughts without need of speech / And babble the same speech without need of meaning". In their perfect mutual understanding, lovers may or may not use words. Yet, as isolation is an essential part of the human condition, the words lovers use have meaning only for them: "The words mean what they say, but some have a further meaning / For you and me only". Even though the husband and wife can communicate, they are isolated from the rest of the world. But there is a shared isolation, and therefore a communion. Hence even in the best of relationships, as that between husband and wife, man's herd instinct leads him to seek out others in order to break the isolation. Yet, paradoxically, such a communion can create its own isolation.

Another case of a near-ideal relationship is Charles and Monica's successful struggle to escape

from isolation. At the beginning of the play we find them quarreling because they can not say what they want; it is not a problem of articulation, but of opportunity — they are always surrounded by people, either in restaurants or shops, or complying with Lord Claverton's summons, and, therefore, do not have enough privacy. But at the play's end, after helping Monica's father to escape the burden of his alienation, they try hard to express their feelings, showing that the love they share is not transient and has, moreover, a staying power:

Charles. Oh my dear,
I love you to the limits of speech, and beyond.
It is strange that words are so inadequate.
Yet, like the asthmatic struggling for breath,
So the lover must struggle for words.

.....
Monica. Age and decrepitude can have no terrors for me
Loss and vicissitude cannot appal me,
Not even death can dismay or amaze me
Fixed in the certainty of love unchanging.
I feel utterly secure
In you; I am a part of you (70).

Widely apart from those two paradigms of near-ideal human relationship, we find the aging and decrepit Lord Claverton. A failure as friend, lover, husband and father, he has nothing to face but extreme loneliness at the end of his life. But throughout the play he departs from this intense isolation exactly through the very people he had failed, and his daughter Monica. As the play opens, Lord Claverton has just retired from public life, and experiences not only isolation but a sense of emptiness. As a politician and a businessman, he had always surrounded himself with people because of his terror of being alone. Yet he shuns strangers, because they are unknown entities to him and may uncover his mask of success and expose his guilty conscience. He is like Prufrock in his ambivalence towards people, and like one of the Hollow Men in that his fear makes him impotent to act:

Lord Claverton. No, I've not the slightest longing for the life I've left
Only fear of the emptiness before me.
If I had the energy to work myself to death
How gladly would I face death! But
waiting, simply waiting,
With no desire to act, yet a loathing of inaction.
A fear of the vacuum, and no desire to fill it (17).

No matter how hard he tries to avoid people who would make him face his inner self, an old friend, Gomez, manages to have a meeting with him using the intruder's device of a change of names. And Gomez reminds Lord Claverton of his

pay off when they were at Oxford. Exactly when the conversation is getting to a climactic point, Lord Claverton manages to leave, using the device of "a pre-arranged interruption of a trunk call to terminate the unwelcome intrusion". This visit may have quickened his decision to look for privacy in a nursing home, where in the first fifteen days he is happy. But he was soon to be interrupted, first by the matron, then by a former lover, next by his son in distress and finally by Gomez again. The appearance of his former lover, Mrs. Carghill, also explains why he has a guilty conscience and avoids facing it. Lord Claverton had no responsibility for those who admired and depended on him. His son's visit also reveals another instance of neglect — instead of teaching Michael the proper values in life, he simply taught him to be Lord Claverton's son; upon his return, Michael shows his father what the prestige of an important name had done to him: he did not learn to be responsible for his own acts, being thus unable to keep a steady job and to pay for his debts. All of those charges are too much for Lord Claverton's distressed conscience — one is reminded of the waiter in "Dans le Restaurant", who could only relieve his mind by telling a customer his coward and careless attitude of abandoning a little girl threatened by dogs in a storm. Similarly, Lord Claverton feels he has to confess things to clear his conscience. He begins by admitting to Monica and Charles that there had been no real communication between himself and his wife — she did not even know that ghosts haunted his conscience. And Lord Claverton, like Prufrock, did not find it worth the trouble talking to people for fear of being misunderstood:

Lord Claverton. How open one's heart
When one is sure of the wrong response?
How make a confession with no hope of absolution?
It was not her fault. We never understood each other.
And so we lived, with a deep silence between us,
And she died suddenly. She had nothing to say (57).

For Lord Claverton and his wife communication had been utterly imperfect. But he can still make amends and improve communication with his children. Monica, Claverton's daughter, suggests that they should "break the silence". Lord Claverton is still reluctant, for Monica still holds a high opinion of him and the revelation of his past misdeeds might destroy the ideal image she has of her father. But Monica encourages him to confess, and, contrary to his expectations, she does not blame him or give the wrong response. Both Charles and Monica listen with understanding and sympathy and feel that the confession has not estranged them, but strengthened the bond between the two generations. Relieved after the confession and the friendly response he had, Lord Claverton, now an "unmasked actor", talks of the process of reconciliation of the selves

— man can achieve wholeness only after disintegration:

I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone
And in becoming no one, I begin to live.
It is worth dying, to find out what life is (69).

This paradoxical process of "murdering to create" to reach communion differs only in degree from the process used by the martyrs Becket and Celia. The martyrs annihilated the body to purify the spirit; Lord Claverton "dissolved" the outer self to purge the inner one and reach conciliation of the two selves. Having integrated himself, he can now integrate with people around him. He no longer feels isolated and is the more willing to face the "intruders":

Each of them remembers an occasion
On which I ran away. Very well.
I shan't run away now — run away from *them*.
It is through this meeting that I shall at last escape them (59).

In *The confidential clerk* Eliot had already dealt with the problem of communication between husband and wife and between generations. Characters here are not completely isolated, for they have reached the point of accepting intermediate possibilities and partial understanding. They are well aware that they play dual roles in life and manage to find a compromise between their private and public selves. As the play develops each character reveals his private self and attempts to fill in the gap between the two selves, to improve social interaction. Unlike Lord Claverton, they are not self-deceivers who have to drop off a mask. They have no masks. Rather, they feel Janus-faced, parted from their inner selves. And unlike Lord Claverton and Prufrock they do not have to "murder to create". Emphasis in this play lies rather on the wish to create and perpetuate.

The paradigm in this play of perfect communication between a man and a woman is Sir Claude's former confidential clerk, Mr. Eggerson, and his wife, whose "perfect" communication is accepting imperfect communication. An elderly childless couple, they live in the country, where they spend their spare time growing a garden. Even though they seem a very happy couple, Mr. Eggerson admits there is a lot he does not understand about his wife. Colby, the new confidential clerk who, in some ways carries on the tradition of the former one and perpetuates Eggerson's self-image, can explain more convincingly why human understanding is essentially partial. Colby says there is no end to understanding people because they are always changing. He echoes the Buddhist doctrine of universal impermanence, in which all existence is merely a process of becoming. If men's consciousness is a series of transitory states,

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 (53).

Colby also has his garden, an imaginary one, his metaphor for the search for privacy. But he explains that Eggerson's garden is more real than his, because he does not feel lonely there:

Well, he retires to his garden — literally
And also in the same sense that I retire to mine.
But he doesn't feel alone there. And when he comes out
He has marrows, or beetroot, or peas... for Mrs. Eggerson (50).

But what is more relevant about the garden is that it provides an opportunity of creating and giving things. And the act of creation has a special and symbolic meaning for the Eggersons. They had lost a son in wartime and, as an old couple, they cannot have another child. The vegetables he grows, especially marrows and beetroot, thus become anthropomorphic in the context. Marrow, besides being a vegetable, is also the soft tissue inside man's bones, the source of vigour. And the juicy, red beetroot is suggestive of blood. Both are images for man's vital fluids. Thus, giving her vegetables, Eggerson symbolically gives her a child. Gardening is then his life-giving work. And in his garden Eggerson can also enjoy his privacy.

Sir Claude, a businessman, escapes into the private life of his collection of porcelain. Having a pronounced artistic bent, he says that when he is among his china collection, "If it is an escape, is escape into living". His father had determined him for a financier, but he would like to be a potter. For dealing with his ceramics, however second-rate, Sir Claude has "that sense of identification / With the maker ... an agonizing ecstasy / Which makes life bearable". But making pots remains a dream for him, for his financial affairs take up most of his time. Unlike Eggerson, he cannot give life and shape things but as a financier, he buys whatever he would like to have created. His choice of a profession also has a direct bearing on his choice of a wife, who should be a good hostess. As he puts it, "I wanted a lady / And I'm perfectly satisfied with the bargain". In fact, Lady Elizabeth, an earl's daughter, is a suitable mate for a financier. On the other hand, Lady Elizabeth's parents, who thought her an ugly and feeble-minded child, rejected her, and had her brought up by a governess. Hence her choice of a husband of importance, to make her feel that at least the world accepted her. It seems that their marriage was satisfactory, for they had complementary needs. But after many years together they realize they took too much for granted — they know only each other's masks. In the natural tension that precedes the climactic point in plays (here Mrs. Guzzard's revelation of the characters' real identities) both husband and wife feel a drive

to speak their minds — Sir Claude reveals that his inner wish is to be a potter and Lady Elizabeth adds that she has always wanted to inspire an artist (hence the choice of her first love, a poet). If their marriage had been satisfactory on the surface so far, it can now be fully gratifying by bridging their complementary inner desires.

The fourth category of isolation is the problem of communication between generations. There is a common denominator for characters in *The confidential clerk*; except for Mr. and Mrs. Eggerson, all of them were, or felt themselves to be, either foundlings or bastards, therefore the characters try to fill a gap in the parent-child relationship. Sir Claude, the mildest case, had a father who forced his choice of a career. But there was a flaw in their relationship, as he explains:

All my life

I have been atoning. To a dead father
Who had always been right. I never understood
him.
I was too young. And when I was mature
enough
To understand him, he was not there (38-9).

No matter how imperfect Sir Claude's relationship with his father had been, he still has the basic human need of perpetuating himself. But what he thinks of as his two children, Lucasta and Colby, were illegitimate and, therefore, were brought up away from him. Before he learns that Colby is not actually his son, he perpetuates his father's mistake of trying to impose a career on the son — Sir Claude tries to introduce Colby into the business world, when the latter really wanted to be a musician. When the "father" asks Colby how he finds his work, Colby answers:

It's rather disturbing. I don't mean the work.
I mean, about myself. As if I was becoming
A different person. Just as, I suppose,
If you learn to speak a foreign language fluently
So that you can think in it — you feel yourself
to be
Rather a different person when you're talking it.
I'm not at all sure that I like the other person
That I feel myself becoming (36).

Colby, thus, temporarily shares with Gomez, the expatriate in *The elder statesman* the same sense of parting from one's self — we see in both plays the parallel to speaking a foreign language. Colby's supposed sister, Lucasta, provides another example of Sir Claude's inability to relate with his children. Lucasta hated her mother, first because she was addicted to alcohol and secondly because she had to become a prostitute to make ends meet. As an adult, Lucasta came to live in Sir Claude's household, but she says that he only accepted her like "a debit item / Always in his cash account". Because she was rejected she put on a protective mask — she got into the habit of giving the false impression of being frivolous, and of outwardly

not showing respect for people. She defies them by calling them by their first names; moreover she is unable to have a steady job and to keep control over her money. But deep inside she hates the image she has created around her, and wishes to drop off the mask and become herself. Talking to Colby and ignoring the fact that he is a bastard too, she says:

Little you know what it's like to be a bastard
And wanted by nobody.

I don't like myself,
I don't like the person I've forced myself to be;

.....
And I thought, now, perhaps if someone else
sees me
As I really am, I might become myself (56-7).

But it must be awfully difficult for Lucasta to integrate herself. Her case is more serious than a partial loss of the self, for she feels she is no more than an object at the mercy of fate, as she confesses to Colby:

I hardly feel that I'm even a person:
Nothing but a bit of living matter

Floating on the surface of the Regent's canal.
Floating, that's it (24).

Lady Elizabeth also floats in life. In spite of being an earl's legitimate daughter, her parents had rejected her. Her first love, a poet with whom she had a child, died suddenly in an accident, and she lost track of the baby when it was put up for adoption. She is satisfactorily married to Sir Claude, though childless. Her suppressed inner drive, forever seeking an outlet, finds an expression in her travels and social events designed to fill up the emptiness of her life. Believing that she has more insight than other people, she has the intuition that Colby is her lost child. It is then that Sir Claude decides to confess to her that Colby is his son. Each tries to provide the most reliable evidence to their claims, while Colby listens quietly, only to conclude later:

What does it matter
Whose son I am? You don't understand
That when one has lived without parents, as a
child,
There's a gap that never can be filled.
Never (77).

In fact, if one thinks of the part played by the family group in the socialization of the individual, one can understand Colby's introversion. If the family provides the first opportunity for social interaction, then there was no real interaction in Colby's case, for he lived alone with an aunt, therefore becoming an introvert and a self-sufficient person. Even his playing music is not really a means of contact with the world, for he likes to play mostly to himself. Moreover, he resents not having had a father whose image he could internalize

and perpetuate — this is probably the gap he refers to. Eliot, in his "Conformity to nature", has insisted on the importance of the family as a vehicle to transmit culture, including in it both craft and a way of life. He also adds that "when the family life fails to play its part, we must expect our culture to deteriorate" (In Hayward, 118). Colby sounds like Eliot's mouthpiece when he answers Mrs. Guzzard's question on what kind of father he would like to have:

I should like a father

.....
Whose image I could create in my own mind,
To live with that image. An ordinary man
Whose life I could in some way perpetuate
By being the person he would like to be,
And by doing the things he had wanted to do
(118).

When Colby was talking to Sir Claude about his feeling of becoming a different person in his new profession, he added later that when he walked alone in the night (probably an indirect allusion to his deep consciousness) he had to fight the disappointed organist inside himself. Little did he know that what he was trying to fight was exactly what he searched, his father's model. Again, it is Mrs. Guzzard who clears up the situation by revealing that he is actually the son of a poor musician. Colby then drops his mask of prospective businessman and follows his real father's model — an obscure church organist.

Mrs. Guzzard's information also enables Lady Elizabeth to discover that Kaghman, Lucasta's fiancé, is her lost child. Kaghman finds it slightly difficult to face the fact that he has a mother, for he has always lived with the idea that he is a foundling. To make things worse, it is exactly Lady Elizabeth, his prospective mother-in-law, and whom he does not admire much. He finds the situation so awkward and artificial, that he was given permission to call her "Aunt" Elizabeth. Like Colby, he had unconsciously adopted a father model, namely Sir Claude. As the play opens, he believes Sir Claude to be his future father-in-law and, as it closes, Sir Claude is both his father-in-law and step-father. And Kaghman had actually already followed his steps, for he was a successful businessman who wanted to be "a power in the city".

Unlike the other plays, characters in *The confidential clerk* have passed the stage of shunning people. Each character has two main concerns, trying to find his true vocation and his inheritance. The choice of true vocation depends on self-knowledge; but self-knowledge depends on communication with others and understanding them. This is the conclusion Lucasta draws when, talking to Colby, they realize that they have common features,⁴ insecurity, for example:

Oh, it's strange, isn't it,
That as one gets to know a person better

One finds them in some ways very like oneself.
In unexpected ways (48).

Lucasta had already said that one of the reasons for her insecurity is the false impression she gives to people — in other words, her outer self does not match her inner one. As the conversation goes on, Colby also shows that he feels uneasy about his professional choice. Since Lucasta is not very concerned about true vocations, she believes it to belong to the realm of the outer self. But Colby takes his wrong professional choice as the outer self; the true vocation belongs to the inner self. But it is through conversation with Lucasta or, communicating with people, that Colby concludes that, like her, he has two unrelated selves:

Lucasta. It's awful for a man to have to give up
A career that he's set his heart on, I'm sure:
But it's only the outer world that you've
lost.
You've still got your world — a world
that's more real.

.....
Colby. You may be right, up to a point
And yet, you know, it's not quite real
to me —
Although it's as real to me as... this
world.
But that's just the trouble. They seem so
unrelated.

.....
If you have two lives
Which have nothing whatever to do with
each other —
Well, they're both unreal (49-51).

Even though characters feel that talking to people is a process of self-knowledge, they are aware that communication is essentially imperfect. When one says something, his statements bear the value and sense of things as one sees them; but the listener translates them according to his own conception. The obvious consequence is misunderstanding, or, as Prufrock puts it, "That's not what I meant at all". Colby explains this essential flaw in communication in terms of music performance:

Always, when I play to myself
I hear the music I should like to have written,
As the composer heard it when it came to him;
But when I played before other people
I was always conscious that what they heard
Was not what I hear when I play to myself.
What I hear is a great musician's music,
What they hear is an inferior rendering (39-40).

Even though characters in this play say time and again that understanding and communication are essentially limited, they are most willing to improve both. The clearest example of this effort is their summoning an outsider, Mrs. Guzzard, to

unfasten the "knot of confusion". Lady Elizabeth shows how keen they are to face people by overstating her wish: "I must see this Mrs. Guzzard. I must confront her" (*italics mine*). And Mrs. Guzzard's accounts do help them first to know their inheritance and then to follow their true inner promptings. Through meeting people, understanding and communication among characters were improved, but not yet perfected. Lady Elizabeth, in her last speech in the play, sums up their wish to bring understanding nearer perfection:

Between not knowing what one should ask of other people,
One does make mistakes! But I mean to do better.
Claude, we've got to try to understand our children (127).

Lucasta and Kaghan then second Lady Elizabeth's words by saying they should also try to understand their parents.

In *The confidential clerk* Eliot develops some of the themes presented earlier in *The family reunion*. Both Colby and Harry, the protagonists in the two plays, learn that some of our apparently unaccountable promptings are inherited. The theme of communication is also common to both plays. But communication in *The family reunion* is a much more serious problem. Since the characters in *The Confidential clerk* have a higher degree of self-awareness, they can communicate better and do not feel so lonely. Harry, on the contrary, probably owing to his clouded self-understanding, finds communication awfully difficult. Even at the play's end he can only communicate better with his aunt Agatha and to a lesser degree with his cousin Mary. Isolation is a widespread disease in *The family reunion* where even the house, Wishwood, is cold and isolated in the country. Henn adds that the word "Wishwood" "suggests the confusion and the sinister character of the wood, and the desire of its inhabitants for the past" (222-23). "Wishwood" has, moreover, the connotation of a place that exists only in imagination, a sort of stage acting, as it were. In fact, Amy, Harry's widowed mother, has matriarchally imposed roles on the children and near relatives. As they grow up, she just changes the roles to be played, but remains a peremptory stage director, assigning parts, as Harry discloses to Agatha:

Family affection

Was a kind of formal obligation, a duty
Only noticed by its neglect. One had that part to play,
After such training, I could endure, these ten years.
Playing a part that had been imposed upon me:
And I returned to find another one made ready —
The book laid out, lines underscored, and the costume
Ready to be put on (76).

In fact, when Harry returns home after many years, Amy had already planned his life from then on for him. The occasion is her birthday. Realizing her impending death, Amy tries to assemble her sons, brothers and sisters to celebrate both her birthday and Harry's return, and to pass on to him command over Wishwood. This is his new part to be played. The aunts and uncles, who make up the chorus, also feel they are a set of amateur comic actors performing a play without the proper stage direction:

Why do we feel embarrassed, impatient, fretful,
ill at ease,
Assembled like amateur actors who have not
been assigned their parts?
Like amateur actors in a dream when the
curtain rises, to find themselves dressed for a
different play, or having rehearsed the wrong
parts,
Waiting for the rustling in the stalls, the titter
in the dress circle, the laughter and catcalls in
the gallery? (26).

Even though the chorus in this play⁶ does not have the traditional function of explaining, it has that one of anticipating as we can see in its foreseeing failure. In fact, throughout the play, we see Amy's plans and management collapsing. Her commanding attitude dates further back than Harry's return on her birthday or even his childhood. The first three years of her marriage were childless, and the couple did not get along well. Yet, her great concern about the future led her to keep the husband for seven years as "a discontented ghost / In his own house" and to "force sons upon an unwilling father". But at the end of Amy's life Harry is the first one to openly reject the roles she had imposed. In her loneliness at old age, because of failures dating from the past, she very much resembles and echoes Gerontion, the lonely old man tormented by winds. One of her last speeches before death is so pathetic that we are inclined to agree with Eliot that "we are left in a divided frame of mind, not knowing whether to consider the play the tragedy of the mother or the salvation of the son":⁶

So you will all leave me!

An old woman alone in a damned house.
I will let the walls crumble. Why should I worry
To keep the tiles on the roof, combat the endless
weather,
Resist the wind?

.....
It is no concern of the body in the tomb
To bother about the upkeep. Let the wind and
rain do that ((86)).

Harry had already rejected Amy's impositions eight years before, when he went away. Haunted by ghosts he could not explain, he left the house to drift in the world. It may be that he did this

to avoid collision with his mother, even though this is not stated in the play; but the fact is that, leaving the house to flee from his ghosts, he felt he was parting from himself and, as a consequence, experienced a very painful isolation:

At the beginning, eight years ago,
I felt, at first, that sense of separation,
Of isolation unredeemable, irrevocable —
It's eternal, or gives a knowledge of eternity,
Because it feels eternal while it lasts. That is
one hell.
Then the numbness came to cover it — that
is another —
That was the second hell of not being there,
The degradation of being parted from myself,
From the self which persisted. Only as an eye,
seeing (71-2).

To avoid solitude, he tried to mingle with the crowd. But, like Prufrock, merging with the crowd did not make him feel less lonely. On the contrary, it seems that the crowd was as aimless and lost as Harry, or maybe merely his projection, therefore making things worse. His resemblance to Prufrock is so great, that even the image of the etherized person is used here to show the quester covered with a mist of unknowing:

The sudden solitude in a crowded desert
In a thick smoke, many creatures moving
Without direction, for no direction
Leads anywhere but round and round in that
vapour —
Without purpose, and without principle of
conduct
In flickering intervals of light and darkness.
The partial anaesthesia of suffering without
feeling
And partial observation of one's own
automatism (30).

During his absence, Harry got married but again he was no less lonely nor free from his ghosts. He tried to escape them through violence, that is, by pushing his wife overboard during a voyage; Harry himself is not sure whether her death was an accident or not, as he comments later in the play; but either witnessing or committing violence did not help him:

One thinks to escape
By violence, but one is still alone
In an over-crowded desert, jostled by
ghosts (30).

Being then a widower and away from home for eight years, Harry could no longer bear his tormented loneliness. Not only has his inner integrity collapsed, but he does not even feel he is a person — as he puts it, "all this last year, I could not fit myself together / . . . Diffused, I not a person, in a world not of persons / But only of contaminating presences" (72). Considering his painful condition, one can easily understand his

impulse to return to the point of departure, believing that at Wishwood he would "fit himself together". This is exactly what Mary concludes upon his return:

But surely, what you say
Only proves that you expected Wishwood
To be your real self, to do something for
you (46).

But returning home did not make things fall into place. On the contrary, as soon as Harry enters the house, the ghosts long tormenting his conscience become now visible — the first thing he sees are the Eumenides in the window. Mary adds later that a change of places is useless, because what he needs to alter is something inside him. The family assembled for the birthday party readily notices Harry's distress and tries to get him to explain it. Yet his affliction is so great that he is unable to articulate his feelings. The more he talks about his sufferings, the less does the family understand. Harry himself concludes that what has happened or is happening to him is unspeakable, untranslatable, and explaining would only set him farther away from them. Moreover, to explain that he has been living on several planes at once, he would need several voices — thus, the only way for them to understand is by seeing. But the family's concerns are too practical and down-to-earth, therefore hindering their penetrating into Harry's mind. They remain then as spectators. There are, however, two exceptions — Mary and Agatha, the most sensitive characters in the play. The latter even tells her brothers and sisters that they cannot simply watch is going on as a passive audience:

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 (67-8).

Agatha has a private talk with Harry and unfastens the "knot of confusion" which the uncles and aunts had helped to tighten. Harry's instinct to return, believing that things would readily fall into proper places, had proved a failure so far. But he certainly senses that the origin of his sufferings is there in the house. He had already unsuccessfully tried to find a way of talking with Dr. Warbuton that would get him somewhere. But it is Agatha who finds this way. By revealing his family's past, she enables Harry to learn the nature of his ghosts. Agatha's revelation of the past to order the present is very similar to Mrs. Guzzard's in *The Confidential clerk*. Moreover, both of them are outsiders; even though Agatha is a relative, Amy has considered her an intruder since she had tried to take her husband away from her thirty years before.

As mentioned before, Harry learns through Agatha that he is the unconsciousness of his unhappy family. Harry realizes that an inherited

curse is part of his self. Having found out what had been unknown about his own self, Harry experiences a feeling of wholeness, however precarious it may be. And this sense of integrity enables him for the first time to communicate perfectly with Agatha, who also shows to be his real spiritual mother. Instead of saying his habitual "you do not understand", he asks Agatha whether she also feels "a communication, a scent / Direct to the brain". No longer clouded, Harry now sees his ghosts, the Eumenides, as angels he must follow.

This higher degree of self-awareness also enables Harry to make more conscious choices. He drops the mask of his outer self given him by his mother, openly rejecting the roles she had designed. He decides to leave not to shun people as he had done for eight years, but because, again like Lord Claverton, having integrated himself, he has learned to accept solitude. Once more the family is bewildered, this time with the news of Harry's sudden leaving.

But he has not yet learned to communicate with them. He tells them he is sure of what he is doing; but if he says anything it will only be to avoid their thinking he is concealing an explanation. Harry's driver, Downing, is also an outsider who has more insight than people within. When the family asks him whether he would still be with Harry, he says he will, but he has the feeling that Harry will not need him long now. Downing cannot explain why, and adds later that soon Harry will need neither him nor anybody else. In this respect Harry bears some resemblance to the martyrs Celia and Becket, who reach communion through complete solitude, that is, by isolating from the world. The martyrs also sacrifice the self to expiate a general curse or sin — and Harry also says that he will worship in the desert and feel thirst and deprivation, he will expiate the family curse by sacrificing his self.

Harry's resemblance to Celia is not the only similarity between *The family reunion* and the play Eliot wrote next, *The cocktail party*. Agatha, Harry's amateur therapist, has an analogue in Dr. Reilly, the psychiatrist who treats the widespread disease of loneliness and also, more specifically, estrangement between a man and a woman in *The cocktail party*. When Harry decides to leave, he asks Agatha whether they will ever meet again. She answers that "Meeting is for strangers / Meeting is for those who do not know each other". Reilly echoes and expands Agatha's views in his admonitions to Edward: he should meet his wife as a stranger when she comes back, for "at every meeting, we are meeting a stranger". In fact, it is during his wife's absence that Edward realizes how little he knows her, therefore a stranger to him.

When Edward first meets and confides in Reilly, the latter was an Unidentified Guest at the cocktail party — then a stranger and to a certain extent an intruder. He is the last guest to leave the party. Feeling distressed by his wife's sudden leaving, Edward had tried to put people off, but could not get hold of all of them. He had meant to shun the

guests, knowing beforehand he would not be able to play the host's role properly. Throughout the party he tries to act as if his wife's absence were only a momentary mishap, but could hardly wait for the party to end, to drop off the pretence. Left alone with the Unidentified Guest, Edward asks him: to remain and listen to him. Edward had wanted to disclose to someone, but it should be someone he did not know. His choice of a stranger as a confidant is understandable — a stranger would not expect him to play the sham role of the happy husband and host he was used to. He could therefore say what he really feels. But the Unidentified Guest warns him that "to approach the stranger / ... Is to start a train of events beyond your control". In fact, facing the two strangers, the Unidentified Guest and his wife as he now sees her, Edward painfully feels the disintegration of his personality. Using a party, an actor and a staircase as metaphors, the Unidentified Guest explains to Edward what has happened to him:

When you've dressed for the party
And are going downstairs, with everything
about you
Arranged to support you in the role you have
chosen
Then sometimes, when you come to the bottom
step,
There is one step more than your feet expected,
And you come down with a jolt. Just for a
moment
You have the experience of being an object
At the mercy of a malevolent staircase (30).

This choice of interrelated metaphors is pertinent here. The first one, the party, readily recalls Edward and Lavinia's "amateur Thursdays" when they gather people at their flat. Edward's explanation of those weekly parties has to do with the metaphor of the actor — Lavinia wants to play the hostess, and therefore needs the husband to play the successful professional to supply a background for her kind of public life. One may go a step further and interpret the party as a search for anonymity or self-escape in the crowd, knowing that when the couple mingles with the guests they avoid facing each other and the staleness of their life as husband and wife. But postponing is useless, for eventually the couple has to admit how frail the bases of their mutual life are. This idea of fragility leads to the third metaphor, the malevolent staircase — the person going down can conceal some underlying weakness with a neat outward look, but an unexpected last step is there to betray him. Eliot had used this image before when he showed Prufrock in an elegant coat and tie, willing to go down the stairs, but reluctant to do so, foreseeing that his feeble limbs would fail him. In his disclosure to Celia that same night, Edward shows other features he has in common with Prufrock. He says that, since his wife's departure that morning, he met himself as a middle-aged man beginning to

know what it is to feel old and having a desire for inaction. Edward also has a painful feeling of being confined in a place — but torn by intolerable contradictions he is unable to leave and remains within his hell of loneliness. There are also parallels to Sartre's *Huis clos* in Edward's words:

There was a door

And I could not open it. I could not touch the handle.

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 (99).

The image of the character in a close, confined room, isolated from the world without is the same in the two plays. Yet, Edward's "Hell is oneself" is a counterstatement to Garcin's "Hell is . . . other people". People in *Huis clos* are free to open the door and leave, but they prefer to close it. They choose to stay within the hell of their despair. But Edward's despair is momentary and only one of the steps in the process of achieving a full life.

It is the Unidentified Guest who leads Edward to understand why he feels like a damned soul torn into pieces. His wife's going away not only means that their marriage had gone on the rocks, but also makes Edward feel he has lost his personality. The Unidentified Guest explains man's basic dichotomy of matter / spirit or physical self / personality in very simple terms: man is an object as well as a person. If man loses touch with the person he thought he was, he is suddenly reduced to the state of an object. He is like etherized Prufrock on a table, as the Unidentified Guest says:

Or, take a surgical operation.

In consultation with the doctor and the surgeon,

In going to bed in the nursing home,

In talking to the matron, you are still the subject,

The center of reality. But, stretched on the table,

You are a piece of furniture in a repair shop
For those who surround you, the masked actors.

All there is of you is your body.

And the "you" is withdrawn. May I replenish? (30-31).

If we take an operation as a cure, the first step is removing the impaired part; similarly, to fix a piece of furniture one removes the broken part, replaces it with a new one and then assembles the parts again. Likewise, Edward had "lost" his personality and can only integrate himself by "fixing" himself another one. This quotation from *The cocktail party* provides an outstanding example of the Unidentified Guest's ambiguous talk throughout the play. The question "May I replenish" is left open, because "replenish" is a transitive verb; but here the object is missing. Since they had been

fixing cocktails, the question may be simply his asking permission to fill in the glasses. But they had also been talking about loss of personality; so the question may be the priest-psychiatrist offer to provide what was missing in Edward, namely the "you".

Julia, who also appears at the parties under a mask of guest, is actually Reilly's partner in the "fix-it-shop". She also talks of disintegration as a step that precedes integration. She uses the image of the masked actor to convey her meaning:

All we could do was to give them the chance.
And now, when they are stripped naked to their souls

And can choose, whether to put on proper costumes

Or huddle quickly into new disguises,

They have, for the first time, somewhere to start from (146).

Edward is stripped naked to his soul, but he still has to grope for a starting point. His ambivalent attitude is the first sign of his being lost in the world. He wants his wife back, yet, at the same time, he wants to be alone. He faces a painful dilemma, for his life is empty without Lavinia, but is unbearable with her, as he tells Reilly:

Without her, it was vacancy.

When I thought she had left me, I began to dissolve,

To cease to exist. That was what she had done to me!

I cannot live with her — that is now intolerable;
I cannot live without her, for she has made me incapable

Of having any existence of my own.

That is what she has done to me in five years together!

She has made the world a place I cannot live in
Except on her terms. I must be alone,

But not in the same world (112).

To solve his dilemma and lead a gratifying married life, Edward must first find out who he is and what he really is among people, according to Reilly. Edward had taken both his wife and himself for granted and, therefore, lived on a very meagre knowledge of what they really were. "Replenishing" one's naked soul requires self-knowledge — and Edward, in his clouded condition, tries to find who he is in a sort of trial and error method. His first attempt is trying to be alone, maybe to muse over the situation. But one guest interrupts in as soon as the other leaves, and the attempt proves a failure. His next attempts have to do with meeting people, rather than shunning them. To start with, he wants Lavinia back, "to find out who she is, to find out who I am". Later, Edward has the chance of seeing a situation analogous to his own. Peter, another of his guests is in love with Celia, but she has broken with him. Not only does one situation

mirror the other, but Peter's words also echo Edward's:

But I must see Celia at least to make her tell me
What has happened, in her terms. Until I know
that
I shan't know the truth about even the
memory (48).

Analogies increase self-awareness. By distancing the problem, one can see it in a broader context and reason it out. Celia, coming back later that same night, provides Edward with another method — seeing oneself through the eyes of other people. Celia is Edward's lover; if Lavinia had left Edward, he is now free to marry her. But this possibility makes Celia think about the affair and realize it is dream-like. She then also breaks with him. After their respective metamorphoses Celia sees Edward as no more than a Kafkan insect:

I looked at your face: and I thought that I knew
And loved every contour; and as I looked
It withered, as if I had unwrapped a mummy.
I listened to your voice

.....
What I heard was only the noise of an insect,
Dry, endless, meaningless, inhuman

.....
I looked
And listened for your heart, your blood,
And saw only a beetle the size of a man
With nothing more inside it than what comes
out
When you tread on a beetle (67).

When Lavinia comes back she is changed, or as Reilly had warned Edward, a stranger to him. Edward says he has also changed and in reply to her question on how it happened, he says it is "The change that comes / From seeing oneself through the eyes of other people".

In his "trial and error" method, Edward at least learns that one's personality includes both a deep and an outer self which must be integrated, or else the whole collapses, as he discloses to Celia:

I see that my life was determined long ago
And that the struggle to escape from it
Is only a make-believe, a pretence
That what is, is not, or could be changed
The self that can say "I want this — or want
that —
The self that wills — he is a feeble creature;
He has to come to terms in the end
With the obstinate, the tougher self; who does
not speak,
Who never talks, who cannot argue;

.....
The willing self can contrive the disaster
Of this unwilling partnership — but can only
flourish
In submission to the rule of the stronger
partner (66-7).

This is already a step towards self-knowledge but not yet the way of integrating the selves. As Lavinia points out to Edward, "You're much too divided to know what you want". Upon the advice of Lavinia and Celia, Edward decides to go and make the visit to the psychiatrist. Edward talks of the symptoms of his "illness": loneliness, a fear of the death of the spirit, his being obsessed by the thought of his own insignificance and his feeling that he is incapable of loving. But Reilly had noticed some of these symptoms in Lavinia before, with the difference that she feels incapable of being loved. Reilly does not treat Edward's symptoms, nor does he integrate his personality. He leads them to find a way out of loneliness, exactly by sharing their isolation. Like Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth, they also have complementary needs:

And now you begin to see, I hope,
How much you have in common. The same
isolation.
A man who finds himself incapable of loving
And a woman who finds that no one can love
her.

.....
See it rather as the bond which holds you
together (124-25).

The Chamberlaynes learn that isolation is man's essential feature. But acceptance of human limitation and mutual tolerance may be ways out of loneliness toward integration. And it seems that Reilly's method works. In the last party Lavinia and Edward are satisfactorily reconciled to each other and to themselves. Moreover, the love triangles at the beginning of the play, a sign that loneliness within leads to the need to complement from outside, no longer exist at the play's end.

This is only one instance of the many changes in Eliot's plays. Within the action of each play, the characters learn that loneliness and disintegration are steps to communion and wholeness. But considering the plays as a whole, we notice a changed

outlook in Eliot's treatment of the characters' metamorphoses. Archbishop Thomas, Eliot's most tragic character, is the symbol *par excellence* of extreme alienation. Believing that secular life is not his assigned lot, he faces his death squarely. Harry, the lonely pathetic sufferer in *The family reunion*, is unable to communicate except with Agatha and Mary. He leaves his mother to expiate a curse in the desert. Celia, the martyr in *The cocktail party*, chooses a dangerous way of life which she is well aware may lead to death. Certain that it is not even worth while speaking to anyone, she abandons the world's dumb show, and, like Becket, reaches communion with God through death. Except for Celia, from *The cocktail party* on, Eliot presents ordinary masked characters. The plays also grow lighter in tone, and the distinction between tragedy and farce becomes blurred. Accordingly, the character as scapegoat has disappeared — emphasis lies rather on individual responsibility.

Loneliness and suffering grow less extreme and salvation is therefore intermediate. Edward and Lavinia, lonely at first, drop their mask of sham to put on a proper one — they also learn how to tolerate each other. In *The confidential clerk* the less lonely, yet Janus-faced characters manage to integrate their previously conflicting mask and inner self, thereby improving social interaction. As Unger points out, this play, from the start, shows a brighter perspective on marriage and mutual respect; and in *The elder statesman* there is the most marked departure from isolation, for in this play there is, rather, an affirmation of human relationship as exemplified by Monica and Charles (Unger, 13). Even though at the beginning of the play Lord Claverton is an old lonely man torn by ambivalences, Monica's love has a healing power for him. He has a "happy" death.

One outstanding feature in the last three plays is that most of the characters drop their masks, but put on new ones. It is just a matter of changing an inadequate mask for a proper one. Yet, the mask remains. This is a metaphorical way of saying that masks or illusions are necessary to one's integrity.

Man may take refuge from a harsh reality in beneficial illusions. The Eggersons in *The confidential clerk* provide the clearest example of illusion not as an escape from reality, but as a means of making reality less bitter. As mentioned before, they had to face the pain of losing their only child. But retiring to their dream-like garden, they enact a symbolic creation, thereby filling in the void.

Human illusions and trespasses receive a much more tolerant treatment in Eliot's last plays. For example, in *The cocktail party* Lavinia and Edward are not rebuked for their respective illicit affairs. Instead, through Reilly, Eliot tries to show why people act in a particular way, therefore arguing from causes and less from effects. On the other hand, in the first plays innocents suffer — the consequences of one individual's sin hand themselves from one person to another. If sin grows, spreads and deteriorates the world, man can only achieve wholeness in the after-death. The characters are helpless puppets of a cosmic design. But it seems that in the last plays Eliot presents a more human point of view — the individual can learn why he suffers, and therefore find a relief for his pains.

NOTES

- 1 Zizola examines in detail the pride motif in «Orgoglio e sanità nel Tommaso Becket di Eliot». He says, for example, «*Murder in the cathedral* ha il senso di un mistero medievale. Respira un clima liturgico, emerso da schemi rituali ... Nonostante tutto questo, *Murder in the cathedral*, più che tradizionale profilo di Santo, è tragedia dell'orgoglio... Nonostante la malizia reffinata del tentatore, l'Arcivescovo sopravvive intellettualmente al gorgo del sentimental, li calcola, li vigilia, li segue nel loro itinerario e precipite» (649-53).
- 2 Smith, on the other hand, argues that «instead of assuming the common judgment of Becket as overwhelmingly arrogant, ... Eliot depicts him as humbly submissive, accepting death, not resisting it... Since in *Murder in the cathedral* Becket speaks to the Knights sternly, without discourtesy or scuffling, he retains dignity and escapes arrogance.» (183-84).
- 3 Unger's studies — *T. S. Eliot's moments and patterns* and *T. S. Eliot* have been particularly useful in their examination of the theme of communication in Eliot's poems and plays.
- 4 Harding has some ingenious remarks about Colby and Lucasta's relationship. It seems that he stretched the psychological interpretation too far and his comments sound *ad hoc*. He says, for example, «a prominent and moving part of the play conveys the possibility that Colby and Lucasta may become deeply in love... Between the two states of mind there intervenes the entertainment device of the supposed incest barrier» (150-52).
- 5 In «Poetry and drama» Eliot says that «he has made some progress in dispensing with the chorus» in *The family reunion*. Even though he admits that «the device of using four of the minor personages, representing the Family, sometimes as individual character parts and sometimes collectively as chorus does not seem... satisfactory», I cannot agree with him that this was an improvement over the convention of the chorus in *Murder in the cathedral* (In HAYWARD, 80).
- 6 «Poetry and drama», in HAYWARD, 82.

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