

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, SIGNIFICANCE OF TEMPTER TRAGEDY, MODERN RELEVANCE, RELIGIOUS PLAY & MARTYRDOM

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~~BECKET~~ - BECKET AS A HERO

In writing 'Murder in the Cathedral' Eliot was aware of a new religious background available of tragedy of our times. He relates the theme of Christian Martyrdom to ritual human sacrifice in harmony with the cycle of death and renewal in nature a pattern out of which tragedy may be said to have originated. By sacrificing Becket before his death, Eliot certainly shapes the action as ~~about~~ the result of secular power on eternal power which in itself is a characteristic experience of our times. The drama presents the spiritual state of martyr, spiritual regeneration of poor woman and the opposition of secular to eternal power. The woman, the priests and the tempter exists as projection of successive state of Becket's soul in temporal order. It is a drama of symbolism or relationship where all the ingredients of tragedy are distributed among various characters who internalize Becket's experience. There is first a moral flaw, the original sin suggested in the tempter who tempt Becket with his own desires, in the knights whose will represent Becket's earlier willfulness and in the suffering of the chorus. Secondly there is a catastrophe of martyrdom. Thirdly Martyrdom is justified in the damnation of the knights, salvation of the chorus and the act of saint. Thus, the play is not about murder but about the spiritual state of Martyr Martyr facing death. As Prof. F. J. Moser has said "Milton's Samson Agonistes and Eliot's play are two examples of how if functions of drama are worked with fruitful results, religious experience, the surrender of martyrdom is by nature static, single in its rejection of the world and lack of strength that cannot be so easily made the stuff of the drama based on action and duality between opposed forces. The play is concern rather what happens through the man than what happens to him. Such characters as the priests, the chorus, woman and tempter are the projections

of the spiritual struggle. Part I is solely concerned with the struggle and Part II with the historical facts that are made symbolic as the refusal of Becket to have the deans cload and the knights saying "come away" Daniel to the lions den a jocular acknowledgment of the triumph of the Martyr even if degrading himself to the beasts, the storm storm after the murder has been made symbolic by the frantic cry of the chorus beginning. "Clear the air" or "A rain of blood has blinded my eyes". The historical has been transformed by Eliot into someone humble submissive accepting death not resisting it - the result of the abstraction of the two sided conflict between 'the princess of the church' and the 'state' into one sided assault by force upon sanctity. It is such kind of drama in which all the ingredients of the tragedy are present. There is a moral here original or personal sin. There is catastrophe and there is final judgement. The first is manifested in the suggestion of the temples in the will and act of the knights and

The action therefore has two levels one in which the characters are fixed, and the other in which the religious temptations only ~~are~~ were to glorify as Christ was glorified in the wilderness. The inward conflict of part one points the physical violence of Part II where the chorus looks at the physical violence in terms of humiliation and death of spiritual kind. If Becket is Christ then the women are the fallen, Adam and the knight of the Balcon that not only thus eternalize Christian martyrdom as heroic humbling of the will but enlarges religious drama into a ritual with implications. Becket and the women of Canterbury represent the duality of eternity, time spirit and flesh, still point and the turning of the world women are the passive receiver of pain and removal that issues from his sacrifice. But Becket has to learn a greater passivity of refraining from willing to suffer and die. In his own world he is just a receiver a will completely surrounded to god's will, the first agent alone does suffer.

The ritual motif, reminiscent of liturgy and the theme of death and birth are secondary patterns of the play. Besides this this allegory in this sense the pattern functions through the transcendent character of Becket who seems to achieve an awareness beyond earthly presence. When Becket speaks of the chorus he thinks of himself as actor the source of will and of the women as the passive recipients of sorrow and benefits of from this chorus of martyrdom but when the Fourth Tempter flings the same words "back to the truth you know and do not renew what it is to act and suffer" that suffering is acting. Becket realizes that unless a suffer refrains from fulfilling to suffer and sealing his hand with blood he cannot be a Martyr that he must be the passive and consent to the divine wheel - the un-suffering first agent "which in a wheel gives a motion the sun, Saturn, God and Becket they are final agents, the knights they by matter are to will, what despite them being justice because according to Spinoza eternity makes all partial evil universal good." The still wheel interlocks all good and evil while men can view as flux, on the turning wheel good as well as often produces evil, and evil produces good, only with good are these resolved without any change in their peculiar character into the perfection they aspire to. In desiring to be the center of the wheel, Becket would be inviting on his own responsibility, whatever evil might ensue from his choice. He realized that those who act out God and those who suffer are inseparable inevitably on the same wheel. Thus the fourth tempter would have made him so the "right deed but for the wrong reason" and thus extinction of self will - in the heroic victory. The heroism of discovering release from his own action rather than going

through it, the christian salvation in opposition to Greek sense of salvation.

The inward drama of a martyr's surrender and sacrifice is also a ritual of a victim, like Christ whose blood fertilizes the soil of the community and unites himself in common faith. In the poorest christian sense of struggle vindicates, the church not as priests represent it but as the women represent the common faith. Buckle's martyrdom, apart from being a religious experience like Dante's *spout* "in thy will is my peace" is something that helps the church and its community to a fresh realization of faith and values. The relevance of all this to the modern situation is in the typically modern way of clever, intelligent, diplomatic and the power of reason. Murakami's, "murder in the cathedral", involves in a pallid in which even this kind of secular and futile existence plays its own role, in glorifying the values that they are opposed to. "Murder in the cathedral" is therefore human tragedy merging with divine comedy, the church must be dedicated to humanity.