

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*



Iman Morshed Mohammad Hammad

Department of English Language and Literature, An-Najah National University

ABSTRACT: This paper aims to analyze the characters of T.S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* in an endeavor to prove that Eliot's characterization in the play is not to be tackled using conventional ways of analysis. Embracing these ways in the previous studies of the play resulted in a faulty assessment of characters as lacking psychological depth and dramatic tension. The paper argues that the method of character depiction employed in the play is meant to produce a ritualistic work celebrating Becket's martyrdom and glorifying the ideas it stands for. Since martyrdom is the central idea that the play revolves around, glorification of the individual is not expected, for what it requires is self-abnegation or self-erasure. Hence, the study proves that Thomas Becket did the right thing for the right cause after passing all the tests of faith similar to those described in morality plays and transcending the strong temptations he underwent. It is evident that Becket fell in love with martyrdom as an act of redemption, but his sacrificial death is far from being suicidal because he did not allow the powers of temptations to lead him astray.

KEY WORDS: T.S Eliot, Drama, Religious plays, *Murder in the Cathedral*, Characterization.

INTRODUCTION

T.S Eliot, "the prime leader of the modernist movement in Anglo American literature" wrote his first full length play *Murder in the Cathedral* for Canterbury Festival in 1935. (Example Essays, 2002, p.1). Despite the fact that the play has a historical background, Eliot does not focus on the historical framework of the play, but with his unrivalled craftsmanship and peculiar novelty, he tackles his first full length play which has a man of religion as a protagonist leaving his readers with a host of thorny questions.

In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot portrays the murder of the most prominent figure of the 12th century in the history of cathedrals. Becket whom Henry II appoints as Lord Chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury is murdered by the King's knights immediately after Christmas Day. Later on Becket's grave became the aim of pilgrims when the next day of Christmas has approached. Eliot's purpose is to expose the essence of struggle between those who serve God and those who serve the King (Moody, 1976, p.169). This struggle represents the everlasting conflict between the religious and the political institutions.

Eliot is greatly moved by the idea that his play is to be presented about fifty yards from the place in which Becket is slain before the alter of the cathedral. The cathedral itself stands as a powerful building that commemorates Becket's martyrdom. Eliot's play seems to be an attempt to revive the Greek tragedies which embody the holy themes which are still relevant to our contemporary life.

Murder in the Cathedral highlights what makes Becket the Saint of Canterbury rather than exposing a personal disagreement or a political struggle (Brown, 1970, p.36-7). But one needs to endow the play with more far-reaching universal dimensions since, as Cameron states, it exposes the life of society, and the connection between church and the government (1958, p. 138). Eliot is mainly interested in the errors of community: the decadence of religious values, the fading of Protestantism and the discredit of culture (p.140).

Murder in the Cathedral is a remarkable evocation of the previously mentioned fears, remarkable for the strength of these fears and the horrible beauty in which they are dressed; remarkable, too, for the religious conventions from which they spring (Smith, 1958, p.170). In this play as well as other plays, Eliot contests that life is absurd, frustrating and depressive, unless a power from within, "the individual soul" makes it meaningful. This meaning can be traced in Becket's martyrdom (Gardener, 1991 p. 155). Eliot's profound treatment of this motif invokes the quest for spiritual faith in his early poetry. Becket has reached a stage for which characters in "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men" and "Gerontion" yearn for.

Eliot was always concerned with religion and Christian themes. His "Christianity belongs to the very different tradition of a long, narrow and difficult but necessary Christian way, in which there may be more pain than joy, and very little ease. In his thought as far as we can follow it, the will plays a double role. For the individual will must be dissolved through identification with the will of God" (Schneider, p. 1110). Although he employs the historical by referring to Thomas Becket, Eliot's main aim is to stress the significance of accepting God's will. But Becket's final decision comes from within. Moreover, the language he employs to explain

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

his decision is inaccessible to the average man. He comes in touch with something transcendental beyond human grasp (Sharma, p. 122).

Murder in the Cathedral is not merely Becket's story. It is the well-being of a saint. Although he stands for a conception, it is not easy to puff life into this concept (Speaigh, 1938, p.71) unless one possesses the necessary insight and the same moral strength of the Saint.

The major theme of the play is martyrdom. "The word martyr means witness, and the church did not at first confine the word to those who sealed their witness with their blood, it was a latter distinction that separated the martyr from the confessor. We are not to think of a martyr as primarily one who suffers for a cause, or who gives up his life for truth, but as a witness to the awful reality of the supernatural' (Gardner, 1991 p. 133) that he gets in touch with.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts an analytical framework for the study of the characters of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. It attempts to spot light on the symbolic value of presenting nameless characters who are endowed with allegorical values which cut deep into the thematic aspects of the play. Moreover, the process of analysis is intended to compare between twentieth political ideals that t Eliot witnessed and twelfth century ideals given to Becket and the audience, for characters represent abstract values which serve character revelation.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

Through analysis it is revealed that characters are meant to prove Becket's integrity and his decision to do the right thing for the right cause.

However, what strikes about *Murder in the Cathedral* is the symbolic value of characterization. One can safely argue that all the characters are allegorical. They are ideas and concepts besides their being characters in a play. In other words, they are not simply what they are but also what they stand for. Hence, conventional ways of analysis are not to be followed in analyzing them

A look at the dramatic persona reveals the fact that characters are not given names. As Martin points out, even the four Knights whose names are well-known, are left nameless. They are referred to as First, Second, Third and Fourth knight (Martin, 1972, p. 42) and this is an attempt on the part of the playwright to see beyond the name.

The characters of the play, however, undergo change even though they were passive at first. This willingness to change is what makes them similar. Becket, for instance, is proud and later on he perceives things which are new to him. The Chorus (Women of Canterbury), were also static and unconscious before Becket's murder. It is after his death that the Chorus become aware of what is going on. Similarly, the priests come to realize what they failed to realize at the beginning (Sharma, 1976, p. 123-24).

At any rate characters in Eliot's play are symbolic. The Tempters, the priest and the Chorus express ideas of hopelessness. But it is only through the request of the women of the Chorus that Becket is greatly moved and liberated (Brown, p. 43-44).

O Thomas Archbishop, save us, save us, save yourself that we may be saved

Destroy yourself and we are destroyed (Eliot, p. 47).

This quote proves that the appeal of the Chorus played an indispensable role in helping Becket to see God's will in his move in the direction of martyrdom away from his "ambitious or suicidal will"(English Literature, 2021, p.4).

Becket stands for "the order of mind" and is indulged in "the order of charity." The Tempters and Knights stand for "the order of nature." The Chorus are captured between the two. They refer "the order of nature", but they are also sorry for Becket's murder. Becket's murder torments them. Eliot thinks that the Chorus are "excited and sometimes hysterical women." However, they stand for the reaction of the public (Moody, 1979, p. 171) as they have always been in Greek plays.

The Priests

Although the Priests are not given names, they are precisely depicted and are skillfully characterized. The first priest is astute. He knows about people and life, but he is not brave.

Furthermore, he is not experienced in spiritual matters (Brown, p.42). In his book, Smith associates him with women (p. 195). The second priest, however, is powerful, definite and domineering. But he is not concerned with the soul like the Third Priest (Brown, p.42)." The Second Priest is indeed a symbol of moral strength of the knights," too much indulgent. He may not be bad, but he is "unsaintly" (Sharma, 1979, p. 126). Smith associates the Second Priest with Knights. In addition, "The second priest typifies the potential moral strength of knights immoral practicality" (p. 125). The Third Priest is separated from materialistic things (Brown, 1970, p. 42). The most important personal trait of the Third Priest is that he foresees events. It is he who warns his friends of the critical moment when he says:

Every day is the day we should fear or hope for. One moment weighs like another.

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral

Only is retrospection, selection, we say, that was the day. The critical moment
That always now and here, Even now is sordid particulars.
The eternal design may appear (60-61).

“The Third Priest”, unlike the women remains passive, though he understands all the implications of the conflict. In the final analysis, the conflict vindicates the church, but a church dedicated to humility, and represented by the women rather than the Priests. Eliot means to communicate two feelings; first that a church is not only the priest's and secondly, that a simple and sincere involvement, done out of a sense of humility, as that of the women Canterbury, constitutes the Church itself” (Sharma, 1979, p. 1976). The Third Priest, however, acts as a viewer of the action and does not take part in it like the Women although he perceives the final meaning (Smith, 1956, 195).

The principal idea, anyhow, is summarized in the speeches of the Priests “in what we might call a ratiocinative or factual sense. The Priests point out that the murder of Becket has reinforced the Church and “reduced the knights to spiritual suicide” (Peter, 1969, 169).

Hence, one can conclude that even though The Priests are three, they constitute one unit. They all contribute to the understanding of the audience to the challenges that Becket faces, for they furnish a sort of religious predictions about Becket's critical position and the threats that he is likely to encounter once he decides to surrender to God's will regardless of the political atmosphere which is obviously hostile to his sole subjection to God.

The Tempters

A crucial part of symbolism, one can argue, is conceived in the portrayal of the Tempters who try to lead Becket astray. The Four Tempters make endeavors to delude Becket and to cause his death.

However, the physical appearance of the Tempters is meant to give form to the inner struggle of Thomas Becket. Eliot's creation of the Fourth Tempter provides the play with a new scope even his appearance is very dramatic because it reveals Becket's spiritual conflict and his struggle of motives that heighten when Becket draws nearer from his end. Therefore, it is a struggle of motives in the first place. Why does he approach his death? There are many interpretations. It could be, abstractedly speaking, to be great among humankind. It could be that he wants to be glorious in heaven and to put those who conspire against him to shame (Brown, 1970, p. 43)

What is peculiar about the Fourth Tempter is that he offers Becket something new, something different from what the three Tempters have offered since they offer materialistic things and mundane rewards which he could easily reject. The three Tempters are presented to reveal the essence of Thomas' beliefs that even the “impossible temptation” is still a temptation (Peter, 1969, 162).

Therefore, the Fourth Tempter culminates Becket's torment as he reiterates the very words that Becket himself utters when he arrives changing the idea of taking action as a rebellion against heaven(Brown, 1970, p.43).

In an eternal action, an eternal patience to which all must consent that it
May be willed and which all must suffer that may will it that the pattern
May subsist, for the pattern is the action and suffering, that the wheel may
Turn and still be forever still (p. 22).

The Four Tempter has a great impact on Becket's mind. He is the one has his finger on Becket's pulse; he knows what Becket is longing for: being a martyr, a typical saint and having glory in heaven. Being aware of Becket's thought, he touches upon the fact that sainthood is temporal and due to destruction and the shrine fades out. Glory in heaven is the only thing that counts

Your thoughts have more power than kings to compel you. You have also
Thought, sometimes at your prayers, sometimes hesitating at the angle of
Stairs and between sleep and waking, early in the morning, when the bird
Cries, have thought of further scoring.... That the shrine shall be pillaged.

It is evident that the Four Tempter has the greater impact on Becket's mind because he offers eternal glory, for what he hints at is present in Becket's mind.

Seek martyrdom, make yourself the lowest on earth to be the highest in

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

Heaven and see far off below you, where the gulf is fixed, your persecutors,
In timeless torment, parched passion, beyond expiation. (p. 42)

What The Fourth Tempter proposes is totally different from the other three Tempters. Suggesting that Becket should become a martyr would endow him with glory and would condemn his enemies as well, for his name would long outlive those who murdered him. Becket himself deep inside realizes this as the worst temptation ever because it incites him to do the right deed for the wrong reason. However, Becket contends that he will not seek martyrdom, but will show acceptance to his fate, whatever it might be (Mambrol, 2018, p. 48).

Afterward Becket realizes the seriousness of the temptation and says:

Who are you, tempting with my own desires? Others have come, temporal
Tempters with pleasure and power and power at palpable price. What do you
Offer? What do you ask? (p. 42).

Obviously this quote proves that The Fourth Tempter has the most harmful effect on Becket's spirit, for he is the most piercing figure. His argument goes in opposite direction of the other Tempters. He intends to deceive the audience into thinking that Becket is inclined to like the idea of being a martyr to satisfy his pride.

After this dialogue "tempter" and "tempted" begin to appear. Becket is no longer fully in common with his mentality. Many motives are now mixed in his mind. Becket feels that he wants somebody to prompt him to take a final decision. This decision is prompted by the Chorus who asks him to save them (Peter, 1969, 163). Despite the attraction of Tempters' offers, Becket stays steadfast and does not sink into "the abyss of sin" (Ivy Panda, 2019, p.2).

Consequently, one can safely argue that the Tempters represent evil powers. They try to deceive Becket so as to lead him astray. Despite the fact that the king is involved in this struggle, he is not present in the play. On top of that, the empty promises of The Three Tempters are not adequate to win Becket's soul. Eventually, what the Fourth Tempter offers is the most difficult to turn down. One can sense his closeness to the Devil as he goes in his temptation as deep as the blood of the tempted. He seems to have read Becket's mind. However, Becket eventually resists by subjecting his martyrdom to God's will not his.

The Knights

The knights are present in the play, not as individuals but as abstract ideals. As Gardner points out, at the beginning they are very much like a "gang" and "a set of attitudes" whom Becket encounters twice (1991, p. 133). Other critics contest that splitting the encounter with the knights into two decreases tenseness. It is worth mentioning that this division is a historical fact in the first place (Brown, 1970, p. 73). Apart from that, the Four Knights who are connected together because of their military duties are separated from each other when they are free from their duty (p. 42). "In the personnel of the knight and the Chorus, Eliot has devised a magnificent method; he contrasts action with suffering-the masculine with the feminine, the violator with the vanquished, and the killer with the killed" (Sharma, 1976, p.79).

Furthermore, The Four knights help us to see one of the main themes of the play by showing parallelism between the forces that Becket faces: forces from within and forces from outside (Brown, 1970, 57). When the knights give their warning and come back to kill the saint, they are placed in a stiff way. They are "unwitty agent of the eternal design" (Moody, 1979, 171). They seem to be awkward executors.

After The Knights perform their bloody action, they address the audience in an attempt to justify their action. However, what they say is neither convincing nor appealing, but their speech has its own aim. First, the audience can never trust such people. Second, their speech show the uncompromising antithesis between the concepts they stand for and those of Becket (world values and human values). Third, as Peter argues, "these speeches allow a pause to intervene between the initial revulsion heard in the penultimate Chorus and the tone of reconciliation that we find in the last" (1969, p.168).

In fact, what the Four Knights actually do is to elaborate on what Eliot wants us to perceive. He aims to point out the falsifications of politicians and the naivety of people who are deceived by the vulgar who misled them.

On the other hand, Sharma suggests that the Knights symbolize sin, the suffering of women and Becket's sacrifices. According to Theodore Spencer, as quoted by Sharma, "the characters- the priests, the women, the Knights, and Becket himself –live at different

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

levels of moral consciousness, which is the resultant outcome of the way each character looks at reality under divergent condition of life" (1976, p. 124-25). Moreover, what the four Knights speak gives the play a modern touch and helps us to perceive whether the Tempters emphasize an analogy between Becket's time and contemporary life.

According to the Knights, Becket has committed self-murder (Brown, 1970, p.73). Above all, in part II, Becket is despised and accused by the Knights. They betray him of low background and this meaning is conceived in the word "back stairs" (Unger, 1966, p. 204). At last, the knights are condemned and left alone:

Go, weak sad men, lost erring homeless in earth or heaven.... Placing forever
In the hell of make-believe which never is belief: this is your fate on earth and
We must think no further of you (91).

To sum up, The Knights are not portrayed in sharp contrast with one another like The Four Tempters. They are just meant to perform one task which is basically using cunning and guile in their political oratory to vindicate themselves from the blame of being hideous murderers of a holy man. They substantially represent political expediency in its serious conflict with the spiritual meanings.

The Chorus (The Women of Canterbury)

Reading the literature written about Eliot's employment of a typically classical convention through using the Chorus, which consists of the women of Canterbury, reveals a serious controversy over whether he succeeded in doing so or not.

For some critics, the Chorus is perceived as an indispensable component of the play. Barbara Everett, for example, argues that T.S. Eliot is "a brilliant writer of chorus" (1980, p. 52), a view which perceives Eliot's endeavor as commendable.

For some other critics, Eliot was unlucky in his employment of methods and devices that are obsolete (Gardner, 1991, p.153). However, one cannot but disagree with what Gardner suggests with regard to Eliot's revival of the Chorus as a dramatic technique since through the Chorus, he was able to encompass modern innovations with classical originality. Moreover, the women of the Chorus make the women of Sophocles spring alive in our memories. The most striking example of resemblance is the supplication of the Chorus for salvation which reminds readers of the one performed by the women of the Chorus in *Oedipus the King* when they implore Oedipus to save their plighted city from plague.

The Chorus of *Murder in the Cathedral* can be given various interpretations, and can be treated in plenty of ways. First, they overstate the assassination so much so that the Knights have to struggle in order to justify their horrific deed. In other words, the Chorus, here, is a very important pillar. They are also a mouthpiece for the Christian society. They talk of their feelings and reactions especially those who love their saint (Brown, 1970, p. 88). In doing so, they are so eloquent since they speak for the committed and the faithful people of the city; they are devoted to God and to Becket as well.

At any rate the role of the Chorus can be traced on two levels. First, they are presented as viewers and observers. Then, they assume the role of commenting on the events to prepare the audience for the upcoming events and to arouse their feelings (Peter, 1969, p.159-60). However, there seems to be a shift in the role of the Chorus. First, they were used in a passive way; then, they end up being a major element in the "passive consciousness" and bring the audience to take part in the action "with its own reluctant passion". They move from "the almost subhuman" towards the "superhuman". Even the language of the Chorus in part I moves from "half rationalized" to "the near hysteria" after Becket's murder (Kenner, 1962, p. 104).

On the other hand, Sharma believes that the Chorus' crucial role is to clarify the concept of martyrdom in terms of Christian rituals (1979, p. 78). One of the most important ideas that are expressed by the Chorus is the anguish and alienation from God. After the Chorus are brought into harmony with God's will, they praise God and submit to his will (Moody, 1979, p. 72). Moreover, the Chorus reflect on Becket's murder because they are supposed to make people comprehend God's ways and to see the discrepancy between heavenly law and earthly law.

The highest point in Eliot's use of the Chorus as a means of participating in the "ritual sacrifice" and not only a means on commenting on the event (Kenner, 1962, p. 99). However, one should not forget that the Chorus presents a searching study of the significance of martyrdom as symbolized by Becket. Being aware that Becket's conflict comprises forces from within and from without, the Chorus can be considered as forces from without.

Apart from that Sharma argues that, "it is through the Chorus that the women of Canterbury acquire dignity (1976, p. 87). Peter, on the other hand believes that the Chorus prepare us to a violent scene by drawing horrible imagery from animals such as the owl"

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

(1969, p.167). Unger, as well as Peter, talks about "thematic imagery", which is elaborated when the knights meet Becket for the first time. The Chorus reflect on that by delivering a long speech employing all kinds of senses. (1966, p. 291).

Eliot employs the sense of smell to symbolize the most profound and intensive type of "awareness" while the Chorus make use of all the senses to reflect the sense of awareness especially in the last portion of part I.

There is no rest in the house. There is no rest in the street. I hear restless movement
Of feet. And the air is heavy and thick. Thick and heavy the sky. And earth passes
Up against our feet. What is the sticky smell, the vapor? The dark green light from
Cloud on a withered tree? The earth is hearing to parturition of issue of hell (43).

"The women of Canterbury confess and consent as does Becket himself." They long for an end to their torments. In fact, their main functions are to reflect upon the events they see. The Chorus, who suffer symbolize the weakness of human beings without any pretension (Sharma, 1976, p.79). The Chorus admit that they are responsible for their evil. Moreover, they associate themselves with evil that has caused assassination. They are now ready to encounter the worst rather than "the terrible challenge of God". Accordingly, they need mercy and prayers. They need those who experience the challenge to pray for them. (Brown, 1970, p.54). But after the murder of Becket, the Chorus become resonantly affirmative, sounding their frightfulness (Peter, 1969, p. 1969).

From another perspective, one can see that a lot of things happen in front of the Chorus because men at that time did not listen to women and did not take what they said seriously. (Mega Essays, n.d, p.1).

All in all, one can conceive the Chorus as an integral part of the play. However, how their role is perceived largely depends on the attitude of the person towards Eliot's craftsmanship and his skill in manipulating a classical dramatic convention. In general The Chorus keep the action of the play going through their commentaries, predictions, expression of fears and response to the actions of other characters. Far from being passive, they serve as clogs which keep the wheel of action going. One can see them as threads which spin the fabric of Eliot's plot.

Thomas Becket

Thomas Becket, the saint of Canterbury, who occupies the central role in the play should be given the focus of attention when one examines *Murder in the Cathedral*. Moreover, Becket ought to be tackled in the light of certain conceptions which necessarily stand in sharp contrast with those of the other characters. He is the most famous saint in Western Europe during the medieval period. Indeed, his fame is well-deserved, for he stands for ideals and conventions which outlive his person.

It is no wonder then that Becket's awareness of the eternity of his beliefs nurtured his solidarity.

People are still attracted to his dedication and motives. Above all, Becket sacrifices his own life to his beliefs that are permanently of universal appeal. The most important ideal that he enthusiastically advocates is that God's law is superior to that man:

It is not time that my death shall be known; it is out of time that my decision is
Taken. If you call that decision to which any whole being gives entire consent to
Give himself to the law of God above the law of man (79).

The intellectual event of the play is Becket, the martyr, who gives his own life for the sake of transcendental principles. As a martyr, Becket gives his own life to defend a deeply rooted ideal which is God's will is above man's desires. Becket's murder is conceived with symbolic meanings, for he is murdered while being genuinely indulged in his prayers. The knights surround him and point their swords towards him in his very holy act.

Robert Speaigh argues that Becket was "a man more acted upon than acting, but there was a tremendous force in his passivity. His submitted will had the strength of resilience of steel (p. 71).

Speaigh's attitude encompasses two concepts which are religiously contradictory: passivity and submission. One can safely argue that Becket is submissive to God's will, but this does not mean that he is passive. He is eventually devoted and resilient.

Eliot's central characters are fragmented between their real selves and the role they have to play. Eliot empowers the real self. The performing self is very much in the foreground unconscious of its vulnerability to be taken over by the speechless self.

In *Murder in the Cathedral*, we have the fragmented self. The conflict is both "psychological" from within and "physical" from outside. In the first part of the play, Becket is portrayed as a human being surrounded by temptations, but the second part depicts

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

him in a rather different way. (Sharma, 1976, p. 123). The shattering conflict which torments Becket is significantly relevant to the essence of religious faith. Conflict occurs when one has spiritual beliefs which clash with mundane interests. But without faith, choice would be much easier and conflict will not exist. The fragmented self has to struggle with pressures of two kinds: internal and external. Becket experiences temptations which are temporal and otherwise and he has to make up his mind. After each temptation, Eliot depicts Becket in a new way.

Becket delivers a sermon on Christmas. This sermon serves as a kind of introduction to Becket's martyrdom. Eliot associates the Christmas tree with the Cross of Christ. This sermon is meant to embody Eliot's concept of "Incarnation". The saint struggles to unite Christ's Birth and Death and to identify deep pleasure with the end of Christian martyrs (Moody, 1979, p. 132). On the other hand, Martin contests that the sermon is an important part in historical story as well as the play. The final statements are collected from those who hear the sermon allows Eliot to introduce the state of quietness that Becket achieves from the temptation. Moreover, it reflects Becket's yield and submission to God so as to deserve being a martyr. The sermon is the most prominent scene in the play. What comes to one's mind when he remembers the play is the sermon which is characterized by simplicity and smoothness. The sermon adds to the suspense of the play when the protagonist says good-bye (1972, p. 46-47).

The interpretation of Becket's murder differs from one critic to another, but all critics attribute a symbolic value on Becket's death. Moody believes that Becket's murder is associated with holy deeds and martyrdom for sacred beliefs. Becket's death is represented as a rite showing pity or agony, in this case is a misunderstanding (1979, p. 170).

On the other hand, Peter considers Becket as "martyr in part II, a type of Christ, who also suffered temptations before entering upon the drama of action through suffering, as Becket's human temptations to sin, the Tempters are the whispering Adversary as sinners and sufferers, the women of Canterbury are types of fallen Adam, enacting the inward strife in imitation of Becket, who enacts in imitation of Christ, and as persecutors, the knights are Satan going to and fro in earth and walking up and down it. Becket, like Christ is tested, slain and exalted, not for his sin but for other men's" (Peter, 1969, p. 186).

As far as Smith is concerned, the play though deriving its theme from the murder of Thomas Becket is not simply about murder. It is about the intellectual state of a saint attaining to his death. It is about educating the women of Canterbury who witness Becket's sacrifice (1956, p. 181).

While Jones states the fact that the audience's temptation goes in parallel with that of Becket's (1962, P. 61), Peter does not consider Becket's death a murder. For him, it is only "an act of redemption, and not murder (1969, p. 157).

In contrast, Gardner argues that Thomas can hardly be said to be tempted for the play opens so near its climax that any inner development is impossible. Except for recapitulations of what has happened rather than a present trial; and the last temptation is so subtle and interior that no audience can judge whether it is truly overcome or not" (Gardner, 1991, 143). Sharma, however, argues that an average reader judges Becket's murder as martyrdom, the clever audience considers it an act of "redemption" (1976, p. 123). This argument qualifies Becket to be a Christ figure whose death makes a new spiritual figure whose death marks a new spiritual life. In short, Becket fell in love with his martyrdom, but he did not commit suicide. He did the right thing for the right cause.

CONCLUSION

Eliot's verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral* has been treated by critics using the same traditional ways of analysis overlooking the fact that it's a historical piece of work, and this thing imposes certain limitations on the playwright. Hence, using familiar ways of analysis results in underestimating Eliot's craftsmanship in his portrayal of characters. Eliot intended to produce a ritualistic play embodying a cherished Christian concept which is martyrdom.

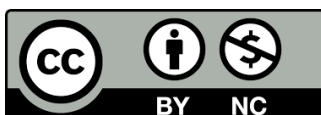
Eliot's dramatic techniques are tailored to convey his conception of martyrdom, for the protagonist of the play, Thomas Becket, is a well-known historical figure and the other characters are assets to illuminate the far-reaching ramifications of Becket's sacrificial death. Eliot is not trying to prove his depth of characterization or the excitement of the dramatic tension which would keep the audience thrilled throughout the play.

Consequently, any reasonable approach to the play should take into consideration that it is essentially a religious allegorical piece with historical roots. Hence, characters are perceived as symbols in a work of an allegorical nature. The overall goal, therefore, is to present Becket as a Christ figure whose sacrificial death paves the way to a new spiritual life baptized by the blood of a saint who did the right thing for the right cause after transcending serious temptations and vanquishing erroneous political oratory after his memorable death.

The Archbishop Who Fell in Love with Martyrdom: Characterization in Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral

REFERENCES

- 1) Brown, E. Martin. (1970). *The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays*. Cambridge University Press. Cameron, J.M. (1958). "T.S. Eliot as a Political Writer" in *T.S. Eliot: A Symposium for his Birthday*
- 2) Ed. Neville Braybrooke, New York: Farrar Straus and Cudahy.
- 3) English Literature. (2021). "Interpretation: of Murder in the Cathedral." Available on <https://www.englishliterature.info/2021/02/interpretation-murder-in-cathedral.html>. Retrieved on April 16th, 2022.
- 4) Example Essays. (2002) "Murder in the Cathedral" Available on <https://www.exampleessays.com/viewpaper/46736.html>. Retrieved on April 16th, 2022.
- 5) Gardner, Helen. (1991). *The Art of T.S. Eliot*. 3rd Ed. London: Faber and Faber.
- 6) Ivy Panda. (2019). "Murder in the Cathedral: The Constant Battle between the Two Antipodes." Available at <https://ivypanda.com/essays/murder-in-the-cathedral-the-constant-battle-between-the-two-antipodes/> Retrieved on April 16th, 2022.
- 7) Jones, David Edwards. (1962). *The Plays of T.S. Eliot*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- 8) Kenner, Hugh ed. (1962). *T.S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliff: Prentice Hall
- 9) Martin, Graham. (1972). *Eliot in Perspective: A Symposium*. London, Macmillan.
- 10) Moody, A.D. (1979). *Thomas Stearns Eliot*. Cambridge: CUP.
- 11) Mambrol, Nasrullah. (2019) "Analysis of Murder in the Cathedral." Available at: <https://literariness.Org/2018/07/19/analysis-of-murder-in-the-cathedral/>. Speaight Retrieved on April 9th, 2022.
- 12) Mega Essays. "Living and Partly Living". Available at <https://www.megaessays.com/Viewpaper/77041.html>. Retrieved on April 9th, 2022.
- 13) Peter, John. (1969) "A New Interpretation of the Waste Land." *Essays in Criticism* 19.140-75.
- 14) Schneider, Elizabeth. (1922). "Prufrock and After." *PMLA* 87. 1103-1119.
- 15) Sharma, H.L. (1976). *T.S. Eliot: His Dramatic Theories*. New Delhi: Chord and Company.
- 16) Smith, Grover. (1956). *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*.
- 17) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press., Robert. (1938). *Thomas Becket*. London, Longman
- 18) Unger, Leonard. (1966). "T.S. Eliot's Images of Awareness." *Sewanee Review* 74.197-224.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.