

**Various Editions and Versions of T. S. Eliot's**

***Murder in the Cathedral***

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***Murder in the Cathedral***

**A dissertation**

**by**

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**Preface  
and  
Acknowledgements**

T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* is a disturbing play. First, one hears or reads beautiful poetry in it, but poetry, however beautiful, does not make a verse play all by itself. To make things worse, there are long prose passages in it, not once, but twice. Secondly, there isn't much of a drama in it. Thomas returns home from self-exile, knowing well that he is in danger; he is killed in no time; his followers mourn his death, his killers defend themselves. There is nothing more in the play. Lastly, it was commissioned for performance at a religious festival. It had to have a religious appeal, and it had it, in abundance. And yet it is an admirable work of art, admired by both the religiously-minded and those who are not so, and popular on the stage too. The enigma of *Murder in the Cathedral* remains, I think, yet to be resolved.

Thomas was killed (1170). Joan of Arc was burnt to death (1431). Mahatma Gandhi was murdered (1948). They were all deeply religious. They wanted to do good to mankind. And yet each had to die, at the hand of others. Are such men and women destined to die like this? 'O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to accept thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?' (Shaw, George Bernard, *Saint Joan*). This is the question at the heart of *Murder in the Cathedral* too, though not spelt out at length. The ground where 'a saint has dwelt', or died as a martyr, is 'holy ground, and the sanctity shall not depart from it' ever.

If I am not mistaken, *The Bangladesh Observer* had termed the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman a 'historic necessity'. [Maybe the newspaper had no choice but to say so in view of the change in power, then usurped by the killers.] How very close this argument is to the argument of the Knights! The Knights speak highly of Thomas, and yet claim that they were left with no choice but to kill him. History, we know, repeats itself; but does thought repeat itself too? Are murderers the same all over and at all times?

*Murder in the Cathedral*, if seen in the perspective of the fate of good men and women and the thought of those who find it necessary to kill them, turns into a deeply moving human document, going far beyond any religious belief or thought. This may be one reason why it is so unforgettable.

2

*Murder in the Cathedral* may also be seen as a protest, against (a) violence, and (b) injustice.

The killing of Thomas on the stage lasts for quite a while, covering the length of the Chorus 'Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them'. Why was it necessary to show it at all and that too for such a long time? The news that Thomas has been killed would have been good enough for the play to proceed further. Showing an act of violence in a work of art is a protest against that act and must be treated as such. If the world were free from violence, the need for writing a play like *Murder in the Cathedral* would not have arisen.

When the Knights bring a number of charges against Thomas, Thomas wishes to submit his 'cause to the judgement of Rome'. But he is denied the opportunity. The Knights take law into their hands, saying that they would return 'for the King's justice' and return 'with swords'. Justice that is dispensed with swords is no justice at all.

Neither violence, nor injustice, can be allowed to be perpetuated. *Murder in the Cathedral* is a reminder of the danger civilization in some parts of the world is faced with.

3

I do not remember when I read *Murder in the Cathedral* first, but I do remember that I have gone back to it a number of times. I may not be the only one to have done so. Each time I went back, I was rewarded by something new. It was only very natural that I would go back to it again, this time for a closer look from a different point of view.

This point of view is provided by the number of editions the play had gone through in three years, each year presenting a play different from the earlier one. Why wasn't Eliot happy with the play until the fourth edition? One must have a close look at the editions themselves and see how they differ from one another if an answer is to be found to the question. There doesn't seem to be any other way out.

A large part of this dissertation would fall, I suppose, in the category of textual criticism. How does it really matter if a comma in one edition is replaced by, say, a semi-colon in another, or if a line in one edition is dropped in another? Such differences are of no consequence at all unless they bring about basic changes in the work. Such changes occur, I think, in each edition of *Murder in the Cathedral* after the first.

While having a closer look at the editions, I have come to unforeseen conclusions from time to time. I have tried to look at the changes in each edition dispassionately and to argue my case logically. Whether I have succeeded or not is not for me to judge.

The dissertation is divided into three parts. In 'Part 1: Introduction', general information is given about the play; circumstances which led to the writing of the play recalled; and the need for having a closer look at the editions of the play explained. In 'Part II: Editions Compared', the editions of the play are compared line by line, and a few observations made on the basis of such comparison. In 'Part III: Versions Noted', an account is given of the versions of the play; and some of Eliot's views on film examined.

4

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My wife has kept me free from a thousand and one worldly worries, not because, I hope, she had to.

Quazi Md. Munzur-i-Mowla

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Table of Contents

Part I:	Introduction	9
Part II:	Editions Compared	75
Part III:	Versions Noted	207
	Bibliography	235



**Part I**

**Introduction**

## 1. The Objective of the Study

1.1 T. S. Eliot's first full-length play *Murder in the Cathedral*, published in 1935, went through five editions, two in 1935 and one each in 1936, 1937 and 1938. Of the two 1935 editions, one was brought out by the 'Friends of Canterbury Cathedral' in Canterbury on 15 June, 1935 when the play was first performed, and the other by Faber and Faber in London at about the same time. Faber and Faber also published all subsequent editions of the play. *Murder in the Cathedral* is, like all other plays of Eliot, a verse play.

1.2 Each edition of the play is different from the other.

1.3 As far as the present study is concerned, an 'edition' of *Murder in the Cathedral* means and includes any published text of the play different from all others.

1.4 Faber and Faber had, for example, brought out, in 1965, what it called an 'Educational Edition' of *Murder in the Cathedral*, 'With an Introduction / and Notes by Nevill Coghill' (Eliot 1985). In this 'Educational Edition', 'the text of the Fourth edition' - that is, the 1938 edition - 'is followed' (Eliot; 1985: 123). This cannot, therefore, be considered to be an edition of the play for the purpose of this study.

1.5 *Murder in the Cathedral* was telecast by the BBC on 21 December, 1936 (Behr 49). George Hoellering made a film out of the play in 1951 (Behr 69). An opera was made out of the play in 1959 (Behr 81).

1.6 For the purpose of this study, we would call these - the TV production, the film and the opera - versions of *Murder in the Cathedral*.

1.7 As far as the present study is concerned, a 'version' of *Murder in the Cathedral* means and includes presentation of the play in any form and/or medium except the print, with alterations demanded by such form or medium made duly, and the script for such presentation, if any. In a version in this sense, the play is just a material, or an instrument, for creating a different art form and is transformed from what it is into a new one.

1.8 The audio recording of the 1953 production of the play by the Old Vic with Robert Donat as Thomas (Helpmann 1953), the production which 'proved both a critical and a Box-Office favourite' (Rowell 145), or the audio recording of the play made by Caedmon Records with Paul Scofield as Thomas (Sackler 1968) cannot, for example, be considered to be a version of the play for the purpose of this study, since these are mere readings, or acting, of the play, and do not transform it into a new work of art.

1.9 The objective of the present study is

- (i) to compare the editions of *Murder in the Cathedral* with one another;
- (ii) to examine, in the context of the play, the nature of the changes made in different editions; and
- (iii) to make a note of the versions of the play.

## 2. Eliot's Early Attempts at Dramatic Writing

### (a) *Sweeney Agonistes*

2.1 *Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama* (Eliot 1932) was Eliot's first attempt at writing a verse play. This 'he began in about September 1923' (Gordon: 1989: 57). Eliot published *Fragment of a Prolouge* in *The New Criterion* in October, 1926, and *Fragment of an Agon* in the last issue of the same journal in January, 1927; he himself was the editor (Behr 31-32). [Incidentally, in a letter written, on 4 June, 1929, to Harold Monro, founder of the Poetry Bookshop, London, Eliot said that he 'rather' liked *Fragment of an Agon* (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 517).] *Fragment of a Prolouge* and *Fragment of an Agon* together make *Sweeney Agonistes*. It was first performed in Vassar in the US in 1933 by girls, with Eliot present (Gordon: 1989: 20; Ackroyd 200). In London, it was first performed in November, 1934 by the Group Theatre at its headquarters; Rupert Doone produced the play (Ackroyd 215). Apart from Eliot, Lady Ottoline Morrell and Aldous Huxley were present, the total number of the audience being about thirty (Behr 45). The 'entire

performance lasted for a little over half an hour'; Eliot was 'rather puzzled' by the performance (Ackroyd 215). Eliot 'expresses in this fragmentary piece the theme which, with variations determined by his changing theological position, was to be his throughout virtually all of his dramatic work: the dilemma of the spiritually aware individual forced to exist in a world unaware of spiritual reality' (Smith, Carol 12). Eliot never completed *Sweeney Agonistes*. This may now be seen in Eliot's *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (Eliot 1936). This is also included in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (Eliot 1969), under the heading *Unfinished Poems*. The labelling of the work from play to poetry is significant, since this was surely done by Eliot himself, or done with his consent. When, after Eliot's death on 04 January, 1965, homage was paid to him at the Globe Theatre, London on the 13th of June the same year, *Sweeney Agonistes* was performed 'with an unpublished last scene' (Lindsay 1965).

**(b) *The Rock***

2.2 In September, 1933, E. Martin Browne, a producer of plays, invited Eliot to write the words for a pageant he was preparing for raising fund for building new churches in London (Browne 6). 'The invitation . . .', wrote Eliot, 'came at a moment when I seemed to myself to have exhausted my meagre poetic gifts, and to have nothing more to say. To be, at such a moment, commissioned to write something which, good or bad, must be delivered by a certain date, may have the effect that vigorous cranking sometimes has upon a motor car when the battery is run down. The task was clearly laid out: I had only to write the words of prose dialogue for scenes of the usual historical pageant pattern, for which I had been given a scenario. I had also to provide a number of choral passages in verse, the content of which was left to my own devices ' (Eliot: 2009: 98). The pageant, called *The Rock*, was performed at Sadler's Wells in London from 28 May to 9 June, 1934 (Ackroyd 214; Gordon: 1989: 39). In the Prefatory Note to the published text of the pageant, Eliot said that he could not consider himself 'the author of the "play", but only of the words which are printed here' (Browne 7). From this Eliot learnt the lesson that 'verse to be spoken by a choir should be different from verse to be spoken by one person' (Eliot: 2009: 99). The choruses were published as *The Rock* the same year (1934) in both

London and New York and are now included in Eliot's *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (Eliot 1936) as *Choruses from 'The Rock'*. *The Times* of 29 May, 1934 said, 'Mr Eliot . . . has created a new thing in the theatre and made smoother the path towards a contemporary poetic drama' (quoted in Behr 46).

### **3. How Did Eliot Come to Write *Murder in the Cathedral*: A Brief Account**

3.1 George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, came to watch *The Rock*. He had, in December, 1930, invited Eliot, Martin Browne and his wife, among others, to spend a weekend with him, and had asked Eliot, then and later, 'to write for the stage' (Browne 34). Watching *The Rock*, he was convinced that he was right in doing so.

3.2 George Bell was Dean of Canterbury before moving to Chichester. At Canterbury, he founded an organization called the 'Friends of Canterbury Cathedral'. One of its tasks was 'to sponsor' 'a regular annual Festival of the Arts' 'within the precincts' of the Cathedral 'during the month of June' (Browne 34). Though away from Canterbury, Bell kept in close touch with the organization.

3.3 Bell invited Eliot to write a play for the Canterbury Festival of 1935, one of the conditions being 'that the subject should relate to Canterbury' (Browne 35). When Bell died, Eliot put on record his sense of 'gratitude' to him in *The Times* of 14 October, 1958 (Behr 46).

## **4. Eliot's Life: Years Preceding *Murder in the Cathedral***

### **(a) Poetry and the Poet's Life**

4.1.1 There is, obviously, a close relation between the life of a poet and his poetry, since a poet's work emerges from his life, and is not, in this sense, independent, devoid of all connections with the poet. It would follow that it is necessary to study the life of a poet in order to understand his poetry. There are one or two difficulties in entertaining such a view. First, the life of a poet may not be available to the reader of his poetry to study. Even if it is, the reader may not like, or may not have the time, to study it. It cannot be forced upon him. Secondly, if one enjoys reading the works of a poet, the pleasure of reading it should be one's only or

ultimate reward - one might not look beyond this, and if one does not, one would not be interested in the poet's life. If, on the other hand, the works of a poet do not appeal to a reader, there is no reason why the reader should be interested in the poet's life. Finally, if the work of a poet does not appeal to one who is not familiar with the poet's life, it ceases to be a work of art, since a work of art must have an independent existence, and must not depend on any external force or element for its appeal. Poetry cannot, obviously, be reduced to such a state.

4.1.2 It is quite evident that the reader of a poem might enjoy reading it - and would in all probability do so - even if he is completely in the dark about the poet's life or the circumstances in which the poem was written. But he might have a better insight if he knew the life of the poet. He might enjoy reading the poem all the more. He might even have a completely different view of the poem. Any of these would be a considerable gain.

4.1.3 I do not, for example, know anything about Paul Muldoon except that he once worked for the BBC and later taught at Princeton. This amounts to virtually knowing nothing about him. And yet I enjoy reading poems like *Oscar* (Muldoon 8) or *The Sonogram* (Muldoon 29). I know nothing about Primo Levi except that he was Italian and a chemist and that all his poems are contained in a slim volume. And yet I enjoy reading poems like *Singing* (Levi 6) or *Almanac* (Levi 98). I know nothing about Tomas Tranströmer except that he was Swedish and a psychologist, won the Nobel prize in 1954 and died on 26 March, 2015. And yet I enjoy reading poems like *Streets in Shanghai* (Tranströmer 152) or *Air Mail* (Tranströmer 159). When asked about the relation between his poetry and his work as a psychologist, Tranströmer said, 'I believe there is a very close connection, though it can't be seen' (Tranströmer 253). There is always a relation between a poet's life and his works, though it might not be evident all the time.

#### **(b) Eliot's Case**

4.2.1 'Vivienne ruined him as a man, but she made him a poet' - this is what Theresa Garrett Eliot, T. S. Eliot's sister-in-law, thought of Eliot's first wife (Seymour-Jones 4-5).

4.2.2 'Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling' - so said Eliot about *The Waste Land* (Eliot, Valerie: page number not given, probably [1]).

4.2.3 Theresa and Eliot himself had really said the same thing - Eliot was an unhappy man, and poetry for him was a means for escaping from the harsh reality of life.

4.2.4 Eliot had gone through a difficult time in years preceding *Murder in the Cathedral*, trying to undo the mistake he had made in marrying Vivienne, and to find a faith more rigorous and more formal than the one in which he was born. 'As a Unitarian, Eliot had never been baptized in the name of the Trinity' (Gordon: 1988: 130).

4.2.5 To some, *The Rock* and *Murder in the Cathedral* might appear to be very close to each other. In *The Rock*, one is told, 'And if the blood of Martyrs is to flow on the steps / We must first build the steps' (Eliot: 1963: 175). In *Murder in the Cathedral*, one is told, '. . . the blood of Thy martyrs and saints / Shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy places' (Eliot: 1938: 87).

4.2.6 If the view of life taken in *The Rock* and in *Murder in the Cathedral* is the same, it is so because it emerged, I think, from the life as the poet had seen and lived himself.

4.2.7 It may be good to have a brief look at Eliot's life during the years preceding *Murder in the Cathedral*.

### (c) 1927

4.3.1 *The Monthly Criterion* came out in May (Behr 32). The words 'edited by T. S. Eliot' appeared on the cover (Ackroyd 166). The publication of *The New Criterion* had ceased in January (Behr 32).

4.3.2 In May, Emily Hale, a young girl Eliot had met while studying at Harvard, now a college teacher, wrote to him asking for advice on modern literature she should teach in her class. They

were not in touch with each other for thirteen years. Eliot told William Force Stead, 'poet, critic, diplomat, clergyman' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden: 2013: 786) and a friend of Eliot's, that the letter 'brought back something to me that I had not known for a long time' (Gordon: 1989: 8, 10-11). The affair between Eliot and Emily lasted until 1957 when he married Valerie Fletcher.

4.3.3 On 29 June, Eliot was baptized into the Church of England (Behr 33). His father and grandfather belonged to the Unitarian Church (Gordon: 1988: 9, 12). 'The standard of conduct was that which my grandfather had set; our moral judgments, our decisions between duty and self-indulgence, were taken as if, like Moses, he had brought down the tables of the Law, any deviation from which would be sinful' (Eliot: 1978: 44). People belonging to the Unitarian Church 'insisted on no doctrine, but taught . . . the means of leading a virtuous, useful, unselfish life, which they held to be sufficient for salvation' (Adams 34). This seemed to have lost its appeal for Eliot. In 1919, Eliot had told Pound, 'I am afraid of the life after death' (Gordon: 1989: 37). Eliot also told Pound, 'Hell must have real sin and sinners', 'people like himself' (Gordon: 1989: 88). 'Eliot told E. W. F. Tomlin (a writer on philosophy who had contributed reviews to the *Criterion*) that feelings of guilt and horror haunted him daily' (Gordon: 1989: 149). After moving from Unitarianism, Eliot had become an agnostic; he was attracted towards Buddhism for a while around 1922; finally he had chosen Catholicism of the Anglican kind (Eliot: October, 1933: 675). On 15 March, 1928, Eliot wrote to William Force Stead to say that he felt as if he 'had crossed a very wide and deep river', 'very certain' that he 'shall not cross back, and *that* in itself gives one a very extraordinary sense of surrender and gain' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 96). Eliot thought that 'the Church of England can no longer be, and must no longer be, a National Church in the old nationalistic or in the old Erastian way. The high power it may seem to have lost was either a bad power, or an obsolete power, or the shadow of a power' (Eliot: 1986: 383).

4.3.4 On 25 August, Faber and Gwyer published *Journey of the Magi* (Behr 33). In the last lines of the poem, the Magi return home, but are 'no longer at ease' there, with 'an alien people clutching their gods' (Eliot: 1963: 110).



4.3.5 On 02 November, Eliot became a naturalized citizen of Britain (Behr 34).

**(d) 1928**

4.4.1 In June, *The Monthly Criterion* became a quarterly (Behr 34).

4.4.2 In September, Faber and Gwyer published Eliot's poem *A Song for Simeon* (Behr 35).

4.4.3 In November, Faber and Gwyer published Eliot's book of essays *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order*. In the preface, Eliot said that the 'general point of view [of the book] may be described as classicism in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion' (Eliot: 1928: vii). He continued to be an Anglo-Catholic and a supporter of the monarchy 'in all countries which have a monarchy' all his life, but in later years 'the terms' 'Classicism and Romanticism' 'no longer' had 'the importance' to him 'that they once had' (Haque 103).

**(e) 1929**

4.5.1 In March, Gwyer withdrew his interest from Faber and Gwyer; Geoffrey Faber took the sole responsibility for running the firm; it was renamed as Faber and Faber (Behr 36). Eliot 'sold a bond to invest in shares in the new firm' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 651). When he first joined the firm as a director in September, 1925 (Ackroyd 153), he was paid £475/- per annum; now he was to draw £400/- per annum; he himself 'offered the reduction' 'when the business was reorganised', with the consequence that he had to write or lecture or broadcast or do 'anything' that turned up in order to supplement his income and 'felt a little tired at my age, of such irregular sources of income' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 652-53).

4.5.2 On 10 September, Charlotte Champe Eliot, Thomas' mother, died (Behr 37). It was a 'terrible and agonizing time' for Eliot, so noted Vivien, Eliot's first wife, in her diary (Ackroyd 178). On 19 October, Eliot wrote to Henry Eliot, his brother, 'I am very thankful . . . that mother is with father in Bellefontaine . . . I not only want them together, but want them in St Louis' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 650). Bellefontaine is a

cemetery in St Louis, Missouri. Of his mother's poems, he wrote, 'Some of them, indeed all of them in some degree, are good poems' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 651).

4.5.3 In October, Faber and Faber published Eliot's poem *Animula* (Behr 37).

**(f) 1930**

4.6.1 In April, Faber and Faber published Eliot's poem *Ash-Wednesday* (Behr 37).

4.6.2 In May, Faber and Faber published Eliot's *Anabasis*, a recreation from French of a poem by St John Perse (Behr 37).

4.6.3 In summer, Emily Hale came to England (Gordon: 1989: 12).

4.6.4 In September, Blackamore Press published Eliot's poem, *Marina* (Behr 38).

4.6.5 In early December, Eliot spent a weekend with George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester (Behr 38).

**(g) 1931**

4.7.1 In March, Faber and Faber published Eliot's *Thoughts After Lambeth*. Here Eliot dismissed the idea that he had, in *The Waste Land*, expressed 'the disillusionment of a generation', as some thought he had (Behr 39).

4.7.2 On 28 October, Eliot wrote to Mary Hutchinson to say that he 'wanted to write a poem in four sections, of which one feature would be political satire' (Ackroyd 190). Next day he wrote to Middleton Murry further explaining the idea (Ackroyd 190). One of the poems in the series was going to be *Triumphal March*, already published at the beginning of October; *Difficulties of a Statesman*, already written, was going to be another poem of the series (Ackroyd 190).

4.7.3 *Triumphal March* and *Difficulties of a Statesman* now appear under the heading *Coriolan* in Eliot's *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (Eliot 1936).

**(h) 1932**

4.8.1 Eliot's marriage was in trouble. He talked about it to Maurice, his wife Vivienne's brother, among others (Ackroyd 192). His friends wanted him to leave her (Gordon: 1989: 51).

4.8.2 In May, *The Criterion* came under fire from F. R. Leavis, the co-editor of *Scrutiny*, a newly founded journal (Behr 41). Expressing a 'general regret', Leavis said that 'the name of *The Criterion* has become so dismal an irony and that the Editor is so far from applying to his contributors the standards we have learnt from him' (Behr 41).

4.8.3 Eliot was invited to deliver the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard. He decided to go to the States leaving Vivien behind. On September 17, he sailed from Southampton. Vivienne and Maurice saw him off. 'When the ship left harbour, it was taking away her husband for ever' (Ackroyd 193). This was Eliot's first visit to the United States in seventeen years (Ackroyd 194).

4.8.4 In September, Faber and Faber published Eliot's *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (Behr 41).

4.8.5 In October, Terence and Elsa Holliday published Eliot's *John Dryden: The Poet, the Dramatist and the Critic* in New York (Behr 41).

4.8.6 On 04 November, Eliot started delivering lectures at Harvard (Behr 42).

4.8.7 At this time, Emily Hale was teaching in Claremont, California (Gordon: 1989: 16).

4.8.8 Eliot travelled three thousand miles by train to visit her (Gordon: 1989: 19). She received him at the station at 6.20 in a winter morning (Gordon: 1989: 19). They went to Balboa Island between Los Angeles and San Diego one day and spent time on Corona del Mar beach (Gordon: 1989: 19).

4.8.9 In December, Faber and Faber published Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama* (Behr 42).

**(i) 1933**

4.9.1 In January, five poems by Eliot called *Five Finger Exercises* appeared in *The Criterion* (Behr 42).

4.9.2 In February, Eliot asked his solicitors in England to prepare a Deed of Separation (Behr 42), 'enclosing a letter which the solicitor was to take personally to Vivien' (Ackroyd 202).

4.9.3 On 17 February, Eliot resumed his lectures at Harvard (Behr 43).

4.9.4 Emily came to Boston at the end of the spring semester of her college. Emily and Thomas went to the home of Dorothy Elsmith, a friend, a number of times and walked on the beach. When, on June 17, Eliot gave an address to the students in Milton Academy, his old school, Emily was present (Gordon: 1989: 20-21).

4.9.5 On 24 June, Eliot sailed from the States to return to England. His departure was kept a secret. After spending a night at his club in London, Eliot went to Surrey where Frank Morley, his colleague at Faber and Faber, lived. Here he stayed for some time in a cottage close to Morley's place. He used to walk down 'to Morley's farmhouse for dinner' (Ackroyd 205).

4.9.6 When Eliot visited Virginia Woolf in early September, she found him '10 years younger' (Gordon: 1989: 21).

4.9.7 On 22 September, E. Martin Browne asked Eliot to write the words for a pageant, to be named later as *The Rock*. Eliot accepted 'enthusiastically' (Behr 43).

4.9.8 In November, Eliot's Charles Eliot Norton lectures were published as *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* from Cambridge (the US) and London simultaneously (Behr 44).

4.9.9 Later Eliot was understood not to have been happy with the book 'except for a few isolated paragraphs' (Gordon: 1989: 262).

**(j) 1934**

4.10.1 In February, Faber and Faber in London and Harcourt, Brace and Company in New York published *After Strange Gods: A*

*Primer of Modern Heresy*, the Page-Barbour lectures Eliot had given at the University of Virginia in the US (Behr 45, 91). He later called it 'a bad book, a bad book, a bad book' (Behr 43).

4.10.2 *The Rock* opened on 28 May (Behr 45).

4.10.3 In May, Faber and Faber published *The Rock*.

4.10.4 On 15 July, Emily sailed from the US to come to England on a year's leave. She was to have a cottage in Gloucestershire, close to where the Reverend Perkins, her uncle, now lived. Eliot turned up there immediately (Gordon: 1989: 43).

4.10.5 Probably sometime in late August or early September, Emily and Eliot paid a visit to Burnt Norton, and explored the gardens there (Gordon: 1989: 45).

4.10.6 In October, Faber and Faber published Eliot's *Elizabethan Essays* (Behr 46).

4.10.7 In November, the Group Theatre produced *Sweeney Agonistes* (Ackroyd 215).

4.10.8 Eliot became a Warden of St Stephen's church and remained at this post until 1959 (Ackroyd 211).

#### **(k) 1935**

4.11.1 In April, Eliot wrote a short note that was to appear before the text in the 1935 Faber edition of *Murder in the Cathedral*. The 1935 edition makes no mention of the time when the note was written (Eliot: 1935: 7), nor does the 1936 edition where it is reprinted as a part of a longer note (Eliot: 1936: 7). But the time of the note is given in both the 1937 edition (Eliot: 1937: 7) and the 1938 edition (Eliot: 1938: 7). Presumably, Eliot had finished writing the play by April, 1935.

4.11.2 On 7 May, rehearsals of the play started in Canterbury (Browne 56; Behr 47). Some sort of a draft must have been made available to the Director of the play by that time.

4.11.3 George Bell watched *The Rock* 'during the second week' (Browne 34), which means some time in early June, 1934, since the pageant was performed, one may recall, 'between 28 May and 9 June' (Ackroyd 214). He could not have, therefore, asked Eliot to

write the play for the 1935 Canterbury Festival before the second week of June, 1934 at the earliest. If Eliot had finished writing the play by April, 1935, he must have written it in about ten months' time.

4.11.4 This is a remarkable feat, especially in view of the fact that he had to perform his duties at Faber and Faber, edit *The Criterion*, write for other journals, give time to St Stephen and be on his guard against Vivienne all the time, Vivienne's 'overriding aim' at that time being 'to see or waylay her husband' (Ackroyd 216).

4.11.5 On June 15, *Murder in the Cathedral* was first performed in the Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral (Behr 47).

## **5. Editions of *Murder in the Cathedral*: A Short Account**

### **(a) A General Observation**

5.1.1 No other play by Eliot has gone through as many editions as *Murder in the Cathedral* has. Indeed, it is difficult to recall any other play in recent times which has.

5.1.2 *The Waste Land* had undergone many changes, but that was before its publication, not after (Eliot, Valerie 1971). There are 'five drafts' of *Little Gidding* and as many as 'thirteen separate typescripts, extant' (Ackroyd 265). But being drafts, these are different from editions. [Hayward found Eliot's idea in parts of *Little Gidding* 'uncompromising' and 'rather laboured' (Gordon: 1989: 134).]

5.1.3 A line or two in Eliot's *Four Quartets* had their origin in *Murder in the Cathedral* (Ackroyd 228-29). Thomas' words to the Chorus - 'Human kind cannot bear very much reality' (Eliot: 1938: 69) - are used in *Burnt Norton* of *Four Quartets* too (Eliot: 1963: 190) - 'human kind / Cannot bear very much reality'. 'The lines excised from *Murder in the Cathedral* which had been ringing in his [Eliot's] head were on the nature of time and its irrecoverability; they had been spoken by the Second Priest, after the departure of the Second Tempter' (Ackroyd 230). The lines are: 'Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future'. *Burnt Norton* opens with these lines.

**(b) The Acting Edition**

5.2.1 The edition brought out by the 'Friends of Canterbury Cathedral' is known as the Acting edition. Eliot refers to it as the play 'in an abbreviated form' (Eliot: 1935: 7).

5.2.2 All editions of *Murder in the Cathedral*, except the 1938 edition, are rare, the Acting edition being the rarest. Only a few copies, perhaps no more than three or four, are believed to be available at the moment. A copy of the Acting edition, with an inscription on the cover in Eliot's hand, fetched £2,500/- only at Christie's, of London (sale no. 5315, 13 November, 2008).

5.2.3 The Acting edition is paperback, with light blue covers. The writing on the cover is purple. On the cover is written 'MURDER / IN THE / CATHEDRAL' in capital letters, 'MURDER' and 'CATHEDRAL' in a very large font and 'IN THE' in a smaller font. It is followed by 'by / T. S. Eliot' in a smaller font. The word 'by' in 'by / T. S. Eliot' is written in italics. This is followed by the monogram of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral. Below the monogram is written, in a font fairly large, but smaller than the font in which the name of the book is written, 'FRIENDS OF / CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL / EDITION'. This is followed by the words 'Canterbury / H. J. Goulden, Limited'. The title of the book and the name of the author are written on the title page inside in the same style as on the cover. This is followed by the words 'Acting Edition / for the Festival of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral / 1935'. The word '1935' is written in a small font. At the bottom of the page is written: 'Canterbury / H. J. GOULDEN, LIMITED / (by permission of the Author and Messrs. Faber and Faber)'.

5.2.4 This is followed by the page where the characters of the play are named and the time of the events of the play given in the following manner:

**'CHARACTERS**

THOMAS, *Archbishop of Canterbury*.

THREE PRIESTS.

A HERALD.

FOUR TEMPTERS.

THE FOUR KNIGHTS.

ATTENDANTS IN THE CATHEDRAL.

CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY.

#### TIME

DECEMBER 2ND AND DECEMBER 29TH, 1170 A.D.'

5.2.5 In the Acting edition, the characters are not named before Part II of the play, though in the 1935 and subsequent editions they are. In 1935, 1936, 1937 and 1938 editions, the Knights are not named in the list of characters given before Part I, and the Tempters not named in the list of characters given before Part II, for the simple reason that the Knights have no role to play in Part I and the Tempters none in Part II. In the Acting edition, however, the Knights and the Tempters are named together, and named only once, at the beginning of the play.

5.2.6 In Scene I of Part II of the Acting edition, events occur in 'THE CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS'. The events of Scene II of Part II, which begins when the priests bring Thomas in and ask for the door to be barred, are shown to have taken place 'IN THE CATHEDRAL'. In no other edition of *Murder in the Cathedral* is Part II of the play divided into scenes.

5.2.7 The Acting edition is different from other editions of the play, even from the 1935 Faber edition, which was 'FIRST PUBLISHED IN JUNE MCMXXXV' (Eliot: 1935: 6) - that is, in the same year and the same month as the first performance of the play and the bringing out of the Acting edition. It has, in fact, been claimed that Faber and Faber published the play 'just before the first night' (Ackroyd 226).

#### (c) The 1935 Faber Edition

5.3.1 The edition Faber and Faber brought out of *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1935 is the first of a series of editions brought out by a publishing house in due course of business. All subsequent editions published in due course of business must, therefore, be judged in the light of this edition.



5.3.2 The following words appear on page 7 of the 1935 edition:

'THIS play was written for production (in an abbreviated form) at the Canterbury Festival, June 1935. For help in its construction I am much indebted to Mr. E. Martin Browne, the producer, and to Mr. Rupert Doone; and for incidental criticisms, to Mr. F. V. Morley, and Mr. John Hayward.'

(Eliot: 1935: 7)

5.3.3 No name is appended to this note, but it is obviously from Eliot himself, since it is his duty to thank anyone for 'help' in the 'construction' of the play and the duty of no one else.

5.3.4 The note does not say why is the author of the note 'indebted' to Mr E. Martin Browne and to Mr Rupert Doone. The words 'producer' and 'construction', when read together, may, however, lead one to believe that Eliot had, while writing the play, taken into account Mr Browne's and Mr Doone's suggestions made from the point of view of the theatre.

5.3.5 The debt to Mr F. V. Morley and Mr John Hayward is obviously of a different kind, as is evident from the use of the semi-colon after the words 'Mr Rupert Doone'. The term 'incidental criticisms' is vague and may mean virtually anything. If Mr Morley's and Mr Hayward's criticism was not related to the production of the play, it may be safely presumed to have been literary.

5.3.6 E(lliott). Martin Browne directed all Eliot's plays (Browne 1970), except *Sweeney Agonistes*. He was the Director of Religious Drama for Chichester, 'a post created by' George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, 'for the first time in Church's history' (Browne 2). Bell introduced him to Eliot (Behr 38). Later he worked for the revival of English poetic drama, producing plays by new writers like Christopher Fry (Goetz 562).

5.3.7 Rupert Doone was a ballet dancer, rising to the 'most coveted position in that profession - *premier danseur* in the Diaghileff company' (Browne 38). He contributed to the founding of the Group Theatre, which advocated 'total theatre': 'a synthesis of all the elements of theatre - movement, mime, rhythm, speech

and design' (Browne 38). Doone produced plays by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, Louis MacNeice and Stephen Spender (Browne 38).

5.3.8 F(rank) V(igor) Morley, an American, did his Ph.D. in mathematics at Oxford - 'The story is that nobody in Oxford could understand it, and help had to be got from Cambridge' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 771). He was a founding director of Faber and Faber, and 'a close friend of TSE', sharing an office with him for a while (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 769). Morley went whaling at one time and wrote a book on it. One of his other books is about what he claims to be his unique contribution to the game of chess (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 770).

5.3.9 John Hayward, 'editor, critic, and anthologist' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 760), too was a close friend of Eliot's, sharing a flat with him for a long time. Unfortunately, a breach occurred in their friendship when Eliot married for a second time. 'My dear chap', Hayward said disarmingly on Eliot's return from honeymoon, 'why didn't you tell me?' (Gordon: 1989: 252). 'In the last months of Eliot's life, John Hayward asked after him tenderly, as if there had been no breach' (Gordon: 1989: 265). 'In the 1963 edition of the *Collected Poems*, Eliot removed his acknowledgement to John Hayward, originally printed before *Four Quartets*' (Gordon: 1989: 254).

5.3.10 Celebrated as a man of letters, Hayward was highly regarded by writers like Graham Greene and Paul Valéry (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 760). Eliot considered Hayward's edition of John Donne and Jonathan Swift as 'Nonesuch' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 761). Hayward's books include *T. S. Eliot: Selected Prose* (Hayward 1965) and *The Penguin Book of English Verse* (Hayward 1956).

5.3.11 A 'SECOND IMPRESSION' of the 1935 Faber edition came out in 'NOVEMBER MCMXXXV', in roughly about five months from the time of the first publication (Eliot: 1936: 6).

#### **(d) The 1936 Edition**

5.4.1 The 1936 edition came out in 'JANUARY MCMXXXVI' and is called the 'SECOND EDITION' (Eliot: 1936: 6).

5.4.2 The 1936 edition was reprinted thrice, in 'JUNE MCMXXXVI', 'DECEMBER MCMXXXVI' and 'FEBRUARY MCMXXXVII' (Eliot: August, 1937: 6).

5.4.3 The following words appear on page 7 of the 1936 edition:

'THIS play was written for production (in an abbreviated form) at the Canterbury Festival, June 1935. For help in its construction I am much indebted to Mr. E. Martin Browne, the producer, and to Mr. Rupert Doone; and for incidental criticisms, to Mr. F. V. Morley, and Mr. John Hayward.

In this second edition I have substituted, for the dialogue of the three priests at the beginning of Part II, a speech by the Chorus. The text is now in conformity with the recent production at the Mercury Theatre, London.

*January 1936.*

T.S.E.'

(Eliot: January 1936: 7)

5.4.4 Unlike the anonymous note of the 1935 edition, the initials of the name of the author appear at the end of this note. The note of the 1935 edition is reproduced without any change as the first paragraph of this note, thereby establishing, for the first time, the identity of the writer of that note.

5.4.5 The note draws attention to the fact that this edition is not the same as the 1935 edition. The author considered the change brought about in the beginning of Part II in this edition to be important enough to deserve a special mention in the note.

5.4.6 The author also informed the readers that the text was now 'in conformity with' a recent production of the play. This, I think, is an unnecessary piece of information.

5.4.7 First, this piece of information is relevant only to those who have both read the play and watched it performed at the Mercury Theatre at the time Eliot refers to, for they are the only ones who are in a position to verify and appreciate it. They must be fewer in number than many others who have only read the book, or

have only watched the play at a different place and at a different time. Why give a piece of information a large number of readers, or theatre-lovers, would have no choice but to ignore?

5.4.8 Secondly, how does it matter if the two texts, one used in the book and the other on the stage, are the same or not? One who reads a play and one who watches it on the stage are two different persons, each with an identity of his or her own, even when they happen, physically, to be one and the same human being. Moreover, the reader of a play is not normally expected to compare his text with that of the director. One making such an attempt while watching a play would not be watching it at all.

5.4.9 If the text of the play was now in conformity with a recent production, as Eliot said it was, it must have been a happy coincidence. Such a thing does not always happen in the theatre, for the director of a play is under no obligation to present on the stage what the playwright has written in the book. The director's job is to interpret the play from his own point of view and to create a work of art of his own. When Nevill Coghill, talking about Rupert Doone's production of *Sweeney Agonistes*, asked Eliot if the meaning the producer read into a play was not the same as the one the playwright had in mind, wouldn't one meaning be right and the other wrong, the author's being right, Eliot said, 'Not necessarily', implying that both the meanings could be true at one and the same time (March and Tambimuttu 85). What Eliot said in the note in the 1936 edition goes to show that there was a good understanding between the playwright and the director when *Murder in the Cathedral* was produced at the Mercury Theatre. It does not seem to have any significance or meaning beyond this.

5.4.10 Ashley Dukes, a critic and a playwright, bought a building in Notting Hill Gate in London to set up a training school for Ballet Rambert, named after his wife (Browne 37). There was a small theatre in the building. There the Mercury Theatre opened in 1932 (Browne 38). It could seat only 136 persons (Browne 65). Dukes, the owner, was present during one of the performances of *Murder in the Cathedral* at Canterbury and offered the Mercury Theatre for the production of the play in London. Eliot recalled the offer in *The Times* on 07 May, 1959 (Behr 48).

5.4.11 *Murder in the Cathedral* opened at the Mercury Theatre on 01 November, 1935 (Behr 48), in less than five months' time from its first performance at Canterbury. The day seemed to be particularly appropriate, as it was All Saints' Day (Browne 66).

**(e) The 1937 Edition**

5.5.1 The 1937 edition came out in 'AUGUST MCMXXXVII' and is called the 'THIRD EDITION' (Eliot: August, 1937: 6).

5.5.2 The following words appear on page 7 of the 1937 edition:

'THIS play was written for production (in an abbreviated form) at the Canterbury Festival, June 1935. For help in its construction I am much indebted to Mr. E. Martin Browne, the producer, and to Mr. Rupert Doone; and for incidental criticisms, to Mr. F. V. Morley, and Mr. John Hayward.

*April 1935*

In the second edition a chorus was substituted for the introits which, in the first edition, constituted the opening of Part II. To this third edition the introits have been added as an appendix, and may be used instead of that chorus in productions of the play.

At the suggestion of Mr. E. Martin Browne, I have in Part II reassigned most of the lines formerly attributed to the Fourth Knight. When, as was originally intended, the parts of the Tempters are doubled with those of the Knights, the advantage of these alterations should be obvious.

*June 1937*

T.S.E.'

(Eliot: August, 1937: 7)

5.5.3 The director of the play has written to say that he 'wanted', while producing the play at Canterbury, 'to 'double' the parts of the Tempters with those of the four Knights' (Browne 57), meaning that the same actors should play the role of both the Tempters in Part I of the play and of the Knights in Part II. This is what Eliot had perhaps meant when he said that 'the parts of the Tempters' were 'originally intended' to be 'doubled with those of

the Knights'. The words 'originally intended' could, however, mean 'originally intended by the playwright', too. Eliot is not known to have ever so intended.

5.5.4 The director had his own reason, apart from a short supply of able actors, for doubling the roles: 'I believed, and still believe, that this doubling helps the audience to grasp one of the main theses of the play by showing a parallel between the force that Becket is fighting within himself and the antagonists from without' (Browne 57-58). The words 'I believed, and still believe' go to show how strongly he felt about it. The playwright obviously concurred with him, for otherwise he wouldn't have brought about the changes he had.

5.5.5 If Eliot did concur with the director about the doubling of the roles, why didn't he bring about the changes he refers to in the 1937 edition earlier - say, in the 1936 edition, if not in the 1935 Faber? One can perhaps think of two reasons for his not doing so: either time was too short for making the changes in the 1935 Faber edition or even in the 1936 edition, since the first came out simultaneously, or almost simultaneously, with the first performance of the play and the second within a short period of six months; or Eliot did not immediately see 'the advantage' he talks about, though it later appeared to be 'obvious' to him.

5.5.6 Even if Eliot did agree with E. Martin Browne in 1937, he did not do so later. In a letter written to Browne on 20 September, 1956, Eliot said, 'I am by no means now sure that it is not better to have the knights played by different actors from the tempters. I like to leave questions for the audience to resolve for themselves, and one question which is left for them if the knights and tempters are different actors, is whether the fourth tempter is an evil or possibly a good angel. After all, the fourth tempter is gradually leading Becket on to his sudden resolution and simplification of his difficulties' (Browne 58). Clearly, Eliot was in two minds about the matter for a long time.

5.5.7 Whether or not the role of the Tempters and of the Knights should be played by the same actors is a problem of the theatre and not a literary problem - that is, the problem of the director and not of the playwright. If a director decides to have two sets of actors to play the two roles, another may prefer to have one

and only one to play both. It is the director's choice and he cannot be forced either way.

5.5.8 What is important is the view that the playwright himself takes. If Eliot thought, even at a later stage, that the Tempters and the Knights represented two different aspects of the same thing, that deep down there was a similarity between the two, he ought to have rewritten the play, or parts of the play, to convey the message to the audience and to win it over to this view.

5.5.9 Whether 'the advantage' of the 'alterations' Eliot had made was 'obvious' or not cannot be judged without first having a look at the alterations themselves. This calls for a comparison of the present edition of the play with the earlier ones.

#### **(f) The 1938 Edition**

5.6.1 The 1938 edition came out in 'SEPTEMBER MCMXXXVIII' (Eliot: September, 1938: 6). It may be recalled that Faber and Faber, the publisher, had, in the 1935 edition, written, 'FIRST PUBLISHED IN JUNE MCMXXXV' (Eliot: London: June, 1935: 6); in the 1936 edition, 'SECOND EDITION JANUARY MCMXXXVI' (Eliot: January, 1936: 6); and in the 1937 edition, 'THIRD EDITION AUGUST MCMXXXVII' (Eliot: August, 1937: 6). He was, therefore, expected, in the 1938 edition, to write, 'FOURTH EDITION SEPTEMBER MCMXXXVIII'. He does not do so. Instead, he writes, 'FIRST PUBLISHED IN THIS NEW EDITION / SEPTEMBER MCMXXXVIII' (Eliot: September, 1938: 6). This is a departure from the earlier practice, worth noting, the emphasis being, from the publisher's point of view, on the newness of the edition. Eliot, however, refers to this edition as the 'fourth edition' (Eliot: September, 1938: 7).

5.6.2 The following words appear on page 7 of the 1938 edition:

'THIS play was written for production (in an abbreviated form) at the Canterbury Festival, June 1935. For help in its construction I am much indebted to Mr. E. Martin Browne, the producer, and to Mr. Rupert Doone; and for incidental criticisms, to Mr. F. V. Morley, and Mr. John Hayward.

*April 1935*

In the second edition a chorus was substituted for the introits which, in the first edition, constituted the opening of Part II. To this third edition the introits have been added as an appendix, and may be used instead of that chorus in productions of the play.

At the suggestion of Mr. E. Martin Browne, I have in Part II reassigned most of the lines formerly attributed to the Fourth Knight. When, as was originally intended, the parts of the Tempters are doubled with those of the Knights, the advantage of these alterations should be obvious.

*June 1937*

In this fourth edition certain further rearrangements and deletions have been made, which have been found advisable by experiment in the course of production.

*March 1938*

T.S.E.'

(Eliot: September, 1938: 7)

5.6.3 The note of March, 1938 makes the case for a comparative study of the editions of the play stronger. Here, for the first time, Eliot speaks of 'deletions'. What deletions were made, and why, ought to be explored.

5.6.4 He also speaks of 'certain further rearrangements'. This means that the 'rearrangements' made in this edition are in addition to those made earlier.

5.6.5 In the 1937 edition, Eliot had given a reason for reassigning certain lines, the reason being the need for doubling of the roles of the Tempters with those of the Knights (Eliot: August, 1937: 7). In this edition, he does not give any reason for making the changes he made.

5.6.6 Eliot also speaks, in the same note, of 'experiment in the course of production.' The experiment is, evidently, a continuous one and its outcome is duly reflected in the text of the play.



5.6.7 Is the restoration, in this edition, of the introits of the priests from the appendix to the main body an experiment too? Some may like to see this as one.

**(g) An Addition to Prefatory Note**

5.7.1 The following note occurs in a reprint of the 1938 edition of *Murder in the Cathedral*:

'In the second edition a chorus was substituted for the Introits which, in the first edition, constituted the opening of Part II. These introits have been restored to subsequent editions to follow that chorus.'

(Eliot: 1968: page number not given,  
presumably 7)

5.7.2 This follows the note of the 1938 edition (Eliot: September, 1938: 7), reproduced in this reprint.

5.7.3 The note of the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: June, 1935: 7) was reproduced in the 1936 (Eliot: January, 1936: 7), the 1937 (Eliot: August, 1937: 7) and the 1938 (Eliot: September, 1938: 7) editions. The note of the 1937 edition was reproduced in the 1938 edition. But the note of the 1936 edition was reproduced neither in the 1937, nor in the 1938, edition. It is not reproduced in this reprint either.

5.7.4 Why wasn't the note of the 1936 edition reproduced in the 1937 and the 1938 editions, though the note of the 1935 edition was? This is not easy to explain.

5.7.5 In the note in the 1936 edition, Eliot had, it may be recalled, spoken of the addition of a new speech by the Chorus at the beginning of Part II and of the deletion of the dialogue of the Priests to make room for this speech. The note in the reprint was, I think, necessitated by the need for clarifying the position of the dialogue of the Priests at the beginning of Part II - 'the introits', as it is called in the 1937 edition.

5.7.6 Eliot had spoken of another thing in the note in the 1936 edition: the conformity of the text of the book with that used in a

production of the play. This is not mentioned in this note. Did Eliot later consider this to be too small a matter to be brought to the notice of the readers of the 1937 and the 1938 editions?

5.7.7 No date is given at the end of the note. It must have been added sometime after September, 1938, when the 1938 edition was published, and before January, 1965, when Eliot died. The precise date is not known. The note speaks of 'subsequent editions'. No edition, as distinct from a reprint, is known to have come out since 1938.

5.7.8 The failure to include the 1936 note in the 1937 and the 1938 editions, or the deliberate decision not to do so, might give the readers of these editions the mistaken impression that no edition of the play came out in 1936. The fact that the notes of all previous editions are reproduced in all subsequent editions with meticulous care would strengthen this impression - the readers would not know, nor have any reason to suspect, that an edition came out in 1936 and that the note of that edition is missing.

5.7.9 The note of the reprint refers to a 'second edition'. Since the 1936 edition is not mentioned, the readers might take the 1937 edition to be this edition, which, obviously, is not correct. I would consider all such mistaken impressions very unfortunate.

**(h) A Summing-up**

5.8.1 Editions and reprints of *Murder in the Cathedral* from 1935 to 1938 may be summed-up as follows:

*Murder in the Cathedral*

Editions and Reprints

1935-1938

SI No.	Month / Year	Publication Details	Comments
1	June, 1935	An abridged version published by the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral on the occasion of the first performance of the play. Published at Canterbury.	<u>Edition.</u> Known as the Acting edition. Eliot refers to it as 'play' 'written for

			production (in an abbreviated form) at the Canterbury Festival, June 1935'.
2	June, 1935	The first full length edition published by Faber and Faber, London.	<u>Edition.</u> Eliot considers this to be the first edition. Published almost simultaneously with the Acting edition.
3	November, 1935	Second impression of the 1935 edition, published by Faber and Faber.	<u>Reprint.</u>
4	January, 1936	Second edition, published by Faber and Faber.	<u>Edition.</u>
5	June, 1936	First reprint of the second edition, published by Faber and Faber.	<u>Reprint.</u>
6	December, 1936	Second reprint of the second edition, published by Faber and Faber.	<u>Reprint.</u>
7	February, 1937	Third reprint of the second edition, published by Faber and Faber.	<u>Reprint.</u>
8	August, 1937	Third edition, published by Faber and Faber.	<u>Edition.</u>
9	September, 1938	Fourth edition, published by Faber and Faber.	<u>Edition.</u>

5.8.2 The coming out of so many editions and reprints in such a short time might seem surprising. This should be taken, I think, as a testimony to the popularity of the work. A large number of the religiously inclined might have bought the book, but there is no evidence that they did. I would consider such a development rather unlikely, for the simple reason that (a) those who went to watch the play and later decided to buy the book must have been a disparate crowd; (b) those who bought the book without, or before, watching the play had no opportunity of being religiously influenced; and (c) the religiously minded people are more likely to buy a religious treatise rather than a literary work in order to satisfy their religious zeal. Those who bought the book without watching the play perhaps read reviews like the one that appeared in *The New Statesman* - 'Mr Eliot is to be thanked for having broken away from the naturalistic tradition of historical drama' (quoted in Behr 47), or in *The Times* - '. . . this is the one great play by a contemporary dramatist now to be seen in England' (quoted in Browne 67). *The Times* was not all praise, though - '. . . when Becket is confronted with the fourth tempter, who tempts him with his own aspiration to martyrdom, the argument becomes too subtle to be readily apprehended under the conditions of the stage' (quoted in Browne 67). Reviews like these praised the play or found fault with it, not from a religious, but from an artistic, point of view. If ordinary people with no particular allegiance had bought the book, the play must have had, to them, an appeal more artistic or humanitarian than religious.

5.8.3 The 1938 edition, being the final edition, has been reprinted many times. The Acting edition, being an abridged one, was never reprinted.

5.8.4 Of the three editions in between - 1935, 1936 and 1937 - the 1936 edition was reprinted the largest number of times. This may be seen as an evidence of this edition's being the most popular among all the editions. Is this popularity explained by the addition of a speech by the Chorus at the beginning of Part II of this edition?

5.8.5 Apart from the Acting edition, the 1937 edition was the only edition which was never reprinted. This may be seen as an evidence of this edition's being the least popular among all the editions. Is this explained by the relegation in this edition of the

introduits by the Priests to a rather unimportant and inconspicuous place like the Appendix?

## 6. *Murder in the Cathedral: Difference between Editions*

### (a) An Overview

6.1.1 Consider the following table:

#### *Murder in the Cathedral*

#### **Lines in Different Edition**

#### Number Of Lines

Editions	Part I	The Interlude	Part II	Total	Appendix	Grand Total
Acting Edition	563	83	515	1161	-	1161
1935 Edition	717	98	677	1492	-	1492
1936 Edition	717	98	667	1482	-	1482
1937 Edition	717	98	666	1481	38	1519
1938 Edition	707	86	650	1443	-	1443

6.1.2 The difference in the number of lines from edition to edition is explained by the changes Eliot brought about in the play from time to time. Some of these changes may be basic; others cosmetic. But one wouldn't know until a comparative study is made.

### (b) A Shorter Version

6.2.1 The Acting edition has fewer lines than any other edition. This is because it is a shorter version. But why was it at all necessary to have a shorter version for performance at Canterbury?

6.2.2 The director of the play does not, in the account he gives of its making (Browne 34-79), say that he ever asked the playwright to abridge the play. It may, therefore, be presumed that

there was, from the point of view of the theatre, no need for making the play shorter.

6.2.3 He, however, says that 'the text had to be abbreviated to a set length' (Browne 72). He does not say why, nor does he say who had determined this 'length'. It seems that there was some sort of a compulsion, though Browne prefers not to give any further information.

6.2.4 Eliot was 'unable to attend rehearsals', since he was busy 'preparing the first edition for Faber and Faber to be published simultaneously with the Canterbury production' (Browne 72). This means that either the cuts in the play were made before the rehearsals started - 'at Canterbury on 7 May' (Browne 56) - or Eliot did not make them.

6.2.5 Since 'the text had to be abbreviated to a set length', the director says that 'I was obliged to make some mutilations' (Browne 72). This is astounding, but Browne seems to have acted with the consent of Eliot. Browne goes on to add that the 'special Canterbury edition' 'showed the special cuts, and the rearrangements necessitated by the varying skills of the actors' (Browne 72).

6.2.6 In a letter to Browne Eliot had written on the 1st of February, 1935, he said, 'The full length [of the play] should be between sixteen and eighteen hundred lines,' - there are actually 1443 lines in the play in its final shape - 'and as I don't suppose it could be acted at the rate of 20 lines a minute, it must be cut down. That I shall leave to you, but the cutting down will be the least of our troubles' (Browne 345). This might mean that Eliot had agreed, only in principle, that the play should be shortened, leaving the task of shortening it to Browne.

6.2.7 Eliot himself said that *Murder in the Cathedral* 'was a religious play, and people who go deliberately to a religious play at a religious festival expect to be patiently bored and to satisfy themselves with the feeling that they have done something meritorious' (Eliot: 2009: 84). This means that Eliot had a captive audience, an audience which, if unable to enjoy the play, would have agreed to suffer it for virtually any length of time if left with

no other choice. There was therefore no need, from Eliot's point of view, for making any abridgment of the play.

6.2.8 Why did Eliot think that there was no choice but to have the play 'acted at the rate of 20 lines a minute'? There was, as far as we know, no such compulsion, unless, of course, the sponsors had set a time limit.

6.2.9 They seem to have set it, as is evident from the testimony of the man who played Becket: '... for some reason that I have never understood no play at Canterbury was allowed to last more than an hour and forty minutes. So the choruses and parts of the dialogue had been considerably shortened' (Speaight: 1966: 176).

### (c) The Chorus at the Beginning of Part II

#### (i) The Chorus in Different Editions

6.3.1 The position, in different editions of the play, of the chorus at the beginning of Part II - the chorus which begins with the line 'Does the bird sing in the South?' - may be summed up as follows:

#### The First Chorus in Part II

Edition	Position
Acting	Not there.
1935 Faber	Not there.
1936	Included for the first time, replacing the dialogue of the three priests, which marked the beginning of Part II in the Acting and the 1935 Faber editions, but is dropped now.
1937	Part II continues to begin with the Chorus. The dialogue of the three priests is, however, brought back as an appendix.
1938	Part II continues to begin with the Chorus. The dialogue of the three priests is restored in the main body. It follows the Chorus. There is no appendix.

6.3.2 Since the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: 1935) was published in June without the Chorus, and the play opened at the Mercury Theatre, London in November the same year (1935) (Behr 48) with the Chorus at the beginning of Part II (Eliot: January, 1936: 7), it is obvious that Eliot had taken less than five months to include the Chorus in the play.

**(ii) A Second Look**

6.3.3 The Chorus was, in fact, 'drafted at an early stage' and, as Eliot put it in a letter written to the director on 09 October, 1935, 'suppressed' by Eliot himself (Browne 49). The director 'was doubtful' whether, at the Canterbury performance, 'the chorus would stand well immediately after the sermon or would make the passage of time clear' (Browne 48).

6.3.4 It is not very clear when the Chorus was written and when it was suppressed - 'drafted at an early stage' is a vague statement and does not indicate any specific time; no time for its suppression has been indicated either. The doubts the director expressed about the suitability of the Chorus at the Canterbury performance may lead one to believe that it was ready by the time of that performance. If so, the Chorus was ready for use in the Acting edition (Eliot: Canterbury: June, 1935) and the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: June, 1935) too. The date of Eliot's letter - 09 October, 1935 - only confirms that the Chorus must have been suppressed before that date.

6.3.5 The director claims that, at Canterbury, he was 'faced with the demand that there should be no interval' (Browne 48). Browne does not say who made the demand and why.

6.3.6 Since there was going to be an interval in the performance at the Mercury Theatre, the director felt that 'it would be better to open Part II with a chorus as originally planned' (Browne 49).

6.3.7 Whether or not there would be any break during the performance of a play is a matter of the theatre, to be decided by the director. This should normally be no concern of the playwright, unless he felt it necessary to have a break for the sake of the play itself. But it is this - the opportunity of having a break, as at the Mercury Theatre, or a lack of such opportunity, as at Canterbury -



which seems to have determined the construction and the shape of *Murder in the Cathedral* in the 1936 and the Acting editions.

6.3.8 If the Chorus at the beginning of Part II (Eliot: January, 1936) was 'drafted at an early stage' (Browne 48), why wasn't it used in the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: June, 1935)? Eliot might have suppressed the Chorus at the Canterbury production - and thereby also in the Acting edition (Eliot: Canterbury: June, 1935), which was based on that production (Browne 72) - though I do not see how he could have possibly done that. He was in London at the time of the rehearsal (Browne 72) and had nothing to do with the Canterbury production - he was surely not in a position to decide whether or not 'the chorus would stand well immediately after the sermon'. Eliot could have, I think, easily included the Chorus in the 1935 Faber edition if he so wished - that is, if he had written it before the 1935 Faber edition went to press.

6.3.9 At the beginning of Part II, the three Priests play two roles: (a) they mark the passage of time before Thomas' martyrdom, and (b) they try to relate Thomas' martyrdom to martyrdom of the past. Both demand a foreknowledge of Thomas' death, particularly of its nature and time. Did the Priests have it? If they did, how did they have it? This remains unexplained in the play.

6.3.10 Whether Eliot was aware of this problem or not, he, at one time, seemed to consider both these roles either unimportant, or unnecessary, and, therefore, dispensable. This is why, I think, he had no difficulty in dropping the three Priests' dialogue entirely in the 1936 edition (Eliot: January, 1936).

6.3.11 He, however, seemed to have a second thought and brought it back in the next edition of the play, but only as an appendix (Eliot: August, 1937). This looks like a sort of compromise. Eliot was not perhaps yet convinced that the Priests had an important role to play at the beginning of Part II. Finally, he restored the dialogue to the main body of the play, but not to begin Part II with it, as was the case in the Acting and the 1935 Faber editions; the dialogue was now to follow the Chorus. This solved the problem of how to accommodate both the Chorus and the dialogue of the Priests, and rescued Eliot from a state of indecision.

6.3.12 Though Eliot was in two minds about the dialogue of the Priests for a long time, his stand on the Chorus at the beginning of Part II was unwavering throughout.

6.3.13 Once introduced, the Chorus remained firmly placed at the beginning of Part II in all subsequent editions. This gives the impression that Eliot was more concerned about the Priests' dialogue than about the Chorus and that he was trying to find a way to make the best use of the Priests' dialogue keeping the Chorus undisturbed.

6.3.14 Strangely, the director of the play was given, in the 1937 edition, the freedom to use the introits of the three Priests instead of the Chorus if he or she so wished (Eliot: August, 1937: 7). I do not recall any other play in which the director is given such freedom.

6.3.15 Eliot obviously thought that the Chorus was replaceable by the introits of the Priests. Was it really so?

6.3.16 The purpose of the speech of the Chorus at the beginning of Part II of the play is entirely different from that of the introits - it gives rise to an atmosphere of doom, and that is the only role it plays. It has nothing to do with the Priests' role of marking time and relating the present with the past (paragraph 6.3.9 above). How could then one replace another?

6.3.17 If the Chorus and the introits of the Priests are interchangeable - that is, if the two have an either-or relation between them - how could both find a room in the play at one and the same time, as they do in the 1938 edition (Eliot: September, 1938)?

### **(iii) Not the Only Option**

6.3.18 Why weren't the introits of the Priests placed before the Chorus in the 1938 edition? This could have been easily done. It would have restored the original beginning of Part II - the beginning of Part II in the 1935 edition - and would have, at the same time, found a place for the Chorus, introduced in the 1936 edition. Perhaps it would have been more logical too.

6.3.19 The Chorus drops the first hint about Thomas' martyrdom as soon as the play begins. Thomas was 'always kind to his people', says the Chorus, adding, 'But it would not be well if he should return' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 20-21). True, the Chorus did not at this stage say that Thomas was going to be killed. But the Chorus did not take long to say it, either: 'Return. Quickly. Quietly. Leave us to perish in quiet. / You come with applause, you come with rejoicing, but you come bringing death into Canterbury' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 149-150). Thomas too speaks of the danger of his being killed while narrating the story of his return from France: 'found at Sandwich / Broc, Warenne, and the Sheriff of Kent, / Those who had sworn to have my head from me' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 240-242). So the note of death is introduced. The Fourth Tempter reminds Thomas of 'glory after death' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: line 528). He says, 'King is forgotten, when another shall come: / Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 531-532). Thomas takes the Fourth Tempter to task, but betrays himself as he does so: 'Who are you, tempting with my own desires?' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: line 574). When the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters speak alternately, the theme of death recurs. The Chorus says, 'Death has a hundred hands and walks by a thousand ways.' The Priests add, 'He may come in the sight of all, he may pass unseen unheard.' Even the Tempters say, 'Come whispering through the ear, or a sudden shock on the skull' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 630-632). Again the Chorus says, 'A man may walk with a lamp at night, and yet be drowned in a ditch.' The Priests say, 'A man may climb the stair in the day, and slip on a broken step.' The Tempters say, 'A man may sit at meat, and feel the cold in his groin' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 633-635). It is none of the Chorus', the Priests' and the Tempters' business to talk about death, and yet they do so. In the speech in which he says he has made up his mind, Thomas too says that 'what remains to show' one of his 'history' might appear to some as 'Senseless self-slaughter of a lunatic' (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 695 and 697).

6.3.20 The theme of death takes a moving turn in the Interlude when Thomas tells his audience, 'dear children, I do not think I shall ever preach to you again', adding, 'it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr' (Eliot: 1938: Interlude: lines 80-83).

6.3.21 Step by step, an atmosphere of death and doom is created. Thomas' sermon makes it darker. This note is deeply disturbed, even shattered, when the Chorus beginning with the line 'Does the bird sing in the South?' is introduced immediately after Thomas' sermon. Here too the Chorus speaks of death and does so three times. It refers first to the old: 'Only the death of the old: not a stir, not a shoot, not a breath' (Eliot: 1938: Part II: line 4); then to an owl: 'The owl rehearses the hollow note of death' (Eliot: 1938: Part II: line 9); and finally to Christ: 'And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it' (Eliot: 1938: Part II: line 15). The first two are death in the ordinary sense, with no special connotation. The death of Christ and his role as the Saviour are common too. These have nothing to do with what has gone before in the play.

6.3.22 The introits of the Priests are, on the other hand, directly related to the play, taking the theme of death forward and preparing the audience for the martyrdom of Thomas. The appearance of the Priests immediately after Thomas' sermon would have been more natural too. The Chorus breaks the continuity of the theme. It is a jerk. It is advisable to avoid jerks in a play, unless needed for any specific purpose. There was, in the present case, no such need.

6.3.23 The Chorus' statement beginning with the line 'Does the bird sing in the South?' is more philosophical than dramatic. If it were made after the Priests had finished their introits, it would have provided a gap between the thought of martyrdom and its actual occurrence. Recall the last words of the Chorus: 'the time is short / But waiting is long' (Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 26-27). These are immediately followed by the introits of the Priests. But these do not lead to the introits. Why is the time short? Why is the waiting long? The introits give no answer to questions like these. If the words of the Chorus were followed, not by the introits of the Priests, but by the arrival of the Knights demanding an immediate word with Thomas, the situation would have been different, more tense and therefore more dramatic.

6.3.24 Eliot had, obviously, more than one choice open to him. Did he make the right one in the interest of the play?

6.3.25 Is it possible that the thought of placing the Chorus after the introits never occurred to him?

## 7. ***Murder in the Cathedral: A Play Made to Order***

### (a) **Eliot's Objectives**

7.1.1 Eliot's commission was to write a play for the Canterbury Festival (Browne 34).

7.1.2 This means that the play Eliot was going to write was guaranteed to be performed. This never happened in Eliot's life before. Eliot had to wait for 'some ten years before' Rupert Doone produced *Sweeney Agonistes* (Ackroyd 215). There was no such delay in the production of *The Rock*, however. But it was a spectacle, and not a play; Eliot did not design it; he only contributed a few prose dialogues and 'a number of the choral passages in verse' (Eliot: 2009: 98).

7.1.3 The play Eliot was going to write was not only to be performed, but performed (1) within the precincts of a Cathedral, and (2) in the course of a religious festival. Eliot had therefore no choice but to write a religious play - religious not only in spirit, but also in appearance, and in all other possible ways - so that he did not disappoint either the audience, expected mostly to be religiously minded, or the organizers.

7.1.4 Virginia Woolf, 'novelist, essayist, and critic', 'the centre', in Eliot's language, 'not merely of an esoteric group, but of the literary life of London' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 790-791), the founder, along with her husband, Leonard, of the Hogarth Press, which published Eliot's *Poems* in 1919 and *The Waste Land* in 1923, 'denounced' *The Rock* and told Stephen Spender, the poet, that 'Eliot seemed to be turning into a priest' (Ackroyd 219-220). 'Other friends' accused Eliot of 'a kind of betrayal' (Ackroyd 220). At one time Eliot 'wanted to write a drama of modern life (furnished flat sort of people) in a rhythmic prose 'perhaps with certain things in it accentuated by drum-beats' ' (Flower 52). Now he was on his way to write a play of an entirely different kind.

7.1.5 There was only one condition formally attached to Eliot's commission: the play 'should relate to Canterbury' (Browne 35).

Tennyson's *Becket* was performed at Canterbury in 1932 and 1933 (Browne 34). The play was, 'originally', 'a thrilling success' (Eliot: 1985: 152). Laurence Binyon's *The Young King*, which too, in a way, 'dealt with the Henry-Becket story', was performed at Canterbury in 1934 (Browne 34). Eliot was under no obligation to write a play about Becket. For one thing, the regular visitors to the festival at Canterbury might have got a little tired of Becket, having watched plays about him for three consecutive years. For another, Canterbury had many other 'interesting' personalities in its history (Browne 35) and Eliot could have easily chosen one of them as the protagonist of his play. And yet he decided to write about Becket.

7.1.6 In these circumstances, Eliot *had* to write something new, something different from the plays that were performed at Canterbury in the previous years, something that would appeal to the audience in spite of the story being retold, something that would keep its interest alive.

7.1.7 Here, then, was a poet, (1) writing a full length play for the first time in his life; (2) writing it to meet the deadline for production at an annual festival; (3) writing it in verse, trying to give verse a new life in the theatre; (4) writing it at the request of some, including a Bishop keen on 'the re-establishment of drama as an ally of the Church' (Browne 2), and trying to be equal to their expectations; and (5) writing to please also those in the audience who had seen the same story enacted in the recent past. Here, again, was a poet obliged to make the play religious and new, traditional and innovative, at one and the same time.

### **(b) Problems of the Theatre**

7.2.1 One problem was how to present information about Thomas' past - information relating, say, to his days as Chancellor. Another was how to show his state of mind after return from exile and the process through which he arrived at it. The director of the play suggested that characters like 'a crony of his youth', 'a fellow-politician' and 'a baron' be introduced as visitors to Thomas (Browne 43). But both Eliot and Browne thought that 'it did not suit the style of the play' (Browne 43). Then Rupert Doone came up with the idea that the visitors might appear 'as Tempters embodying the conflicts in his [Thomas'] own mind' (Browne 43).

7.2.2 At one point Eliot thought of including Herbert of Bosham as a character, and of giving ten minutes to Thomas for dismissing him (Browne 47). Herbert does not, eventually, appear in the play. We do not know why Eliot dropped the idea of including him. Herbert was a friend of Thomas', and the introduction of Herbert would have shown that Thomas had a friend to help him and to stand by him at his difficult time. Now Thomas is presented as a lone person, determined and dedicated, with legions of followers and admirers, but without any friend. This goes, I think, to Eliot's advantage.

7.2.3 But it created a problem, too. Thomas was expected to dismiss Herbert after his sermon. The time allotted to Herbert was now badly in need of filling in. In the Canterbury performance, there was a long gap of 'twenty-five minutes' between the Thomas' sermon and the entry of the Knights (Browne 48). The director suggested that in order to fill in the gap 'a scene should be created for the Priests, using the liturgical days of the calendar which fall between Christmas and 29 December' (Browne 48). Eliot not only agreed, but 'added a brilliant stroke' 'by making the Priests begin, for the 29th (a 'ferial' day with no saint to celebrate), the Introit *Gaudeamus*' (Browne 48). [*Gaudeamus* means 'a revel, esp. of college students'; *Gaudeamus igitur* means 'Let us therefore be joyful': *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, New York: Gramercy Books, 1994, page 587.] Thomas was, it may be recalled, killed on the 29th of December, 1170. When the three Priests come to the 29th covering, one after another, the days since Christmas, they continue singing, '*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day*' (Eliot: 1938: Part II: line 53), as if it was the day of another saint to celebrate. Then the First Priest asks, bewildered, 'To-day?'. The Second Priest echoes, 'To-day, what is to-day? For the day is half gone.' The Third Priest adds, 'Even now, in sordid particulars / The eternal design may appear' (Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 53-54 and 61-62). The Priests do not realize why they celebrate the 29th in the way in which they do. That is a masterstroke.

### (c) Literary Problems

7.3.1 In order to be new, Eliot (1) avoided blank verse almost entirely; (2) modeled his play on *Everyman*, a late 15th century morality play; (3) used alliteration liberally; and (4) rhymed verses

unexpectedly. The inclusion of two large prose sections also helped him to be new.

7.3.2 Eliot thought that the 'rhythm of regular blank verse had become too remote from the movement of modern speech' (Eliot: 2009: 85). He therefore 'kept in mind' 'the versification of *Everyman*', 'hoping that anything unusual in the sound of it would be, on the whole, advantageous' (Eliot: 2009: 85). '*Everyman* . . . is very irregular in the matter of verse-length, verse-forms, and rhyme' (Cawley xxvii).

7.3.3 'An avoidance of too much iambic, some use of alliteration, and occasional unexpected rhyme, helped to distinguish the versification from that of the nineteenth century' (Eliot: 2009: 85). Eliot 'was persuaded that the primary failure of nineteenth-century poets when they wrote for the theatre [and most of the greatest English poets had tried their hand at drama] was not in their theatrical technique, but in their dramatic language; and that this was due largely to their limitation to a strict blank verse which, after extensive use for non-dramatic poetry, had lost the flexibility which blank verse must have if it is to give the effect of conversation' (Eliot: 2009: 85).

7.3.4 There can be no verse play without poetry. Poetry in *Murder in the Cathedral* is so good, so frequent and so abundant that it might lead one to believe that the play was written by a poet and not by a playwright.

7.3.5 But there is a problem, too. In a verse play, poetry, writes Eliot, 'must be as widely distributed as characterization permits' (Eliot: 2009: 100). This is not the case with *Murder in the Cathedral*. The women of the Chorus speak poetry more than anyone else, even Thomas. This creates a serious imbalance.

## **8. Verse Play: Some of Eliot's Thoughts**

8.1.1 In his review, in *Athenaeum*, of John M. Murry's *Cinnamon and Angelica: A Play*, Eliot said that writing a verse play was 'the most difficult, the most exhausting task that a poet can set himself' in modern times (Eliot: 1920: 635). But why should a poet write a play at all? Eliot's answer to the question is: 'The ideal medium for poetry, to my mind, and the most direct means of social 'usefulness' for poetry, is the theatre' (Eliot: 1933:



153). For Eliot, a play 'is not something to be read; it is meant to be seen on the stage' (Levy and Scherle 40-1).

8.1.2 Eliot thought that the verse in a verse play 'will only be 'poetry' when the dramatic situation has reached such a point of intensity that poetry becomes the natural utterance, because then it is the only language in which the emotion can be expressed at all' (Eliot : 2009: 78). Eliot had earlier observed, 'The human soul, in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse' (Eliot: 1986: 46). The characters in a verse play do not experience 'intense emotion' all the time. When they do, they speak poetry.

8.1.3 Eliot calls the verse that is not poetry 'the more pedestrian parts of a verse play', and goes on to argue that these parts too should be written in verse instead of prose in order, first, 'to avoid calling the audience's attention to the fact that it is at other moments listening to poetry', and, secondly, to let 'the verse rhythm' 'have its effect upon the hearers, without their being conscious of it' (Eliot: 2009: 78).

8.1.4 In *Poetry and Drama*, the Theodore Spencer Memorial Lecture that Eliot gave at Harvard in 1950, he quoted lines 165-167 and a half of line 168 from Scene I, Act I of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

'So have I heard and do in part believe it.  
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.  
Break we our watch up.'

He thought this was 'great poetry', and 'dramatic' at the same time (Eliot: 2009: 80).

8.1.5 He noted that line 165 was 'a line of the simplest speech which might be either verse or prose' and that the first half of line 168 was 'hardly more than a stage direction' (Eliot: 2009: 81). But when 'we hear the lines' in between, said Eliot, 'we are lifted for a moment beyond character' (Eliot: 2009: 81).

8.1.6 Earlier in the same lecture Eliot said that 'if poetry is merely a decoration, an added embellishment, if it merely gives people of literary tastes the pleasure of listening to poetry at the same time that they are witnessing a play, then it is superfluous. It

must justify itself dramatically, and not merely be fine poetry shaped into a dramatic form. From this it follows that no play should be written in verse for which prose is *dramatically adequate*' (Eliot: 2009: 75-76).

8.1.7 In the Introduction to his mother's book, *Savonarola: A Dramatic Poem*, Eliot said that the 'next form of drama will have to be a verse drama but in new verse forms. Perhaps the conditions of modern life (think how large a part is now played in our sensory life by the internal combustion engine!) have altered our perception of rhythm' (Eliot, Charlotte xi).

## 9. Survey of Literature

### (a) Eliot Remembered

9.1.1 Much has been written on Eliot - by way of remembering him; on his poetry; on his plays; on his critical writings; on his social and religious views. Bertrand Russell remembers him fondly in his autobiography (Russell 1967, 1968, 1969). Joseph Chiari has written a memoir, putting on record, among other things, how 'unbearable' Eliot had found the 'atmosphere of jealousy and envy' 'in a late-night party' in Edinburgh where 'many writers and journalists' were present (Chiari 22). Clive Bell recalls a party given by Mrs St. John Hutchinson where she had 'invited, so she said, the ten cleverest men in London to meet the ten most beautiful women' and where John Maynard Keynes, the celebrated economist, and T. S. Eliot came up with answers to riddles as soon as they were propounded (Bell 18-19). Matthews has tried to define Great Tom (Matthews 1974).

9.1.2 Vivienne, Eliot's first wife, was certified and confined to a private asylum in August, 1938 (Gordon: 1989: 77). When Maurice, her brother, saw her later, he realized that he and Eliot 'had done something very wrong . . . She was as sane as I was' (Seymour-Jones 2002 Preface 3). When, on 23 January, 1947, Vivienne died unexpectedly, Eliot did not marry Emily Hale, with whom he had a long affair. Nor did he treat Mary Trevelyan kindly. Mary was a close friend; 'would urge him not to strain his health, would cheer and console, and above all would listen' (Gordon: 1989: 196); she wanted, in 1949, to marry him (Ackroyd 306). Mary kept a record of her days with him, calling it *The Pope*

of *Russell Square* (Gordon: 1989: 194). 'Mrs Morley, who had harboured Eliot during the summer of 1933 when he broke with Vivienne, found, when she met him some years later, that he hardly seemed to know who she was. He had a capacity, not to forget in the ordinary way, but to wipe out what did not fit the model of existence as he devised it' (Gordon: 1989: 253-54). These lead one to believe that Eliot never took into account 'the human cost to others of the life he pursued in his quest for genius and sainthood' (Kaveney 2014). Eliot saw Ezra Pound on 22 September, 1914 in London with an introduction from Conrad Aiken; on 30 September, 1914 Pound declared that 'Prufrock' was 'the best poem I have yet had or seen from an American'; Pound helped him to get published; Pound told Eliot's parents that Eliot had decided to become a poet instead of a philosopher; and yet when, by the end of 1920, Pound decided, out of frustration, to move to France, Eliot did little to help him change his mind (Moody 2009). Eliot seemed to suffer from an intense sense of horror. A critic calls it his 'dark angel', traces its origin in Bertrand Russell's taking Vivienne to bed and finds Eliot's trauma reflected in the Sweeney poems (Schuchard 1999). Charges of being anti-Semitic too have been brought against Eliot (Julius 2003). On the other hand, Collingwood, philosopher and Professor, Oxford, said that he was much indebted to Eliot for his book, *The Principles of Art*, since Eliot in his poems dwelt with the decay of civilization (Inglis 2009), and as outstanding a person as Aldous Huxley told Julian, his brother, that he thought Eliot to be highly cultured (Murray 2002). The BBC TV had, I believe, put out a programme on Eliot sometime in early 1971. Presented by Hope Mirrless, author of *Paris*, a 'minor modernist masterpiece' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2012: 433), it was called *The Mysterious Mr Eliot* - rightly so.

9.1.3 Eliot influenced literary thought in places as divergent as Germany and France, Romania and Iceland, Japan and Bengal, to name only a few (Däumer, Elisabeth and Bagchee, Shyamal 2007). 'Young Bengali writers responded to Eliot's works for much the same reasons as did young British writers' (Bose 225). 'In an odd way he [Eliot] did in literature what Marx had done in the broader sphere of social and political life' (Dey 97). Eliot's ability as an editor and the difficulties he faced as one have been put on record in an account of *The Criterion*, which, apart from literary criticism,

also published writings on the norms of a good society and on detective fiction (Harding 2002). The differences in the critical approach of Eliot and John Middleton Murry and the rivalry between Eliot's *The Criterion* and Murry's *The Adelphi* too have been explored (Goldie 1998). Angus Calder has written on Eliot's views on Christianity (Calder 1987). Bernard Bergonzi has edited a book on *Four Quartets* (Bergonzi 1969). Helen Gardner has written on the composition of *Four Quartets* (Gardner 1979). Childs gives the background of some Eliot's poems, in the light, especially, of his relation to people close to him (Childs 1997). Singh examines Eliot's initial indifference to and later admiration for Tennyson (Singh 2005). These are but only a few examples.

9.1.4 My purpose in giving this short account is to show that (a) both Eliot the man and Eliot the poet have been seen from a large number of point of view, some, like the charge of being anti-Semitic, rather unexpected; (b) nearly fifty years after his death, Eliot is not quite dead yet, his works calling for new interpretation; and (c) a considerable reversal seems to have taken place in recent times in the earlier, mostly favourable, view taken of Eliot's life and work.

9.1.5 It would not be surprising to see these trends affecting the thinking on *Murder in the Cathedral*.

### **(b) *Murder in the Cathedral*: Eliot's Views**

9.2.1 Writing on the relation between poetry and drama, Eliot commented on his own plays, including *Murder in the Cathedral*, by way of illustrating the points he was trying to make in defence of verse play. He thought that the style of *Murder in the Cathedral* 'had to be *neutral*, committed neither to the present nor to the past' (Eliot: 2009: 85), and that, from his point of view, 'the play was a dead end' (Eliot: 2009: 84). Eliot 'wanted to bring home to the audience the contemporary relevance of the situation' (Eliot: 2009: 85) he was writing about. Eliot also thought that 'in so far as it [versification of *Murder in the Cathedral*] solved the problem of speech in verse for writing to-day, it solved it for this play only' (Eliot: 2009: 85), equipping the playwright with 'no clue' as to the kind of verse he should write in the future. In the play the Knights defend their action in what Eliot calls 'platform prose' (Eliot: 2009: 86). This, said Eliot, was done 'to shock the audience out of their

complacency', admitting that this was 'a kind of trick' (Eliot: 2009: 86).

**(c) *Murder in the Cathedral*: Comments in passing**

9.3.1 A considerable portion of what has been written on *Murder in the Cathedral* seems to have been written, not for the sake of the play itself, but to illustrate some point, or to write a history, or as part of the total view taken of Eliot's plays. Denis Donoghue had a look at Eliot's plays (Donoghue 1959). So had D. E. Jones (Jones 1960) and Grover Smith (Smith 1975). Williams has written on drama from Ibsen to Brecht, and has, in the process, commented on *Murder in the Cathedral* (Williams 1968). E. Martin Browne has given an account of how he had directed Eliot's plays, devoting a chapter to *Murder in the Cathedral* (Browne 34-79). 'Eliot's picture of the people of Canterbury may not be historically exact but it is imaginatively moving. He is able to visualise their lives within the context of values and conflicts which the play is about' (Spender 196). 'But for all its lack of action and its unconvincing protagonist, *Murder in the Cathedral* is intensely moving and at times exciting when performed. The real drama of the play is to be found in fact where its greatest poetry lies - in the choruses' (Gardner: 1949: 136). 'The formal simplicity of the character groups, the contrast between the crisp verse of the Hero or his enemies, and the nightmare dreams of the Chorus, or its lyrical hymns, achieve a consistent simplification. It is a classically severe style' (Bradbrook 163).

9.3.2 Eliot 'developed a trick, very simple, as good theatre tricks usually are, to engage' the audience: Thomas addresses it twice, in his last speech in Part I for the first time, and during the sermon again; the Knights appeal to it as jury; the 'audience has something in common with the chorus . . . it becomes the common people' (Howarth 319). 'In its conception, its thought, its considered invention of a whole idea of the theatre, *Murder in the Cathedral* is unique in our time; . . . Part II as a whole . . . is rhythmic, visual, exciting and musical - contrasting with Part I which is addressed essentially to the understanding' (Fergusson 223, 225). Hugh Kenner speaks of 'the effectiveness of the second act, which so impresses us with Becket's human force, his energetic fortitude before death, that the interchange with the

Fourth Tempter is obliterated from memory' (Kenner 241). It has been said that 'far from any other play requiring a quite different language-pattern, what he [Eliot] had created for *Murder in the Cathedral* might very well be capable of infinite variety' (Evans 161).

**(d) *Murder in the Cathedral*: (i) Edited; (ii) Anthologies; and (iii) Reviews**

**(i) Edited**

9.4.1 Nevill Coghill claims that Eliot had given 'his full approval' to the Introduction he had written to a reprint of the 1938 edition of *Murder in the Cathedral* (Eliot: 1985: 20). He had also written 'Notes' on the text (Eliot: 1985: 95-137), and short pieces on the historical background, the metre of *Everyman* and Tennyson's *Becket*, which were given as 'Appendices' (Eliot: 1985: 141-157). His name does not, however, appear as the editor of the book.

**(ii) Anthologies**

9.4.2 Harold Bloom has edited a book under the title *T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral* (Bloom 1988). This is one of a number of books published in a series called *Modern Critical Interpretations*, of which Bloom himself is the general editor. Apart from an Introduction by Bloom, the book contains eleven articles. These are: *Murder in the Cathedral: The Theological Scene* by Francis Fergusson; *The Language of Drama* by Helen Gardner; *The Saint as Tragic Hero: Saint Joan and Murder in the Cathedral* by Louis L. Martz; *The New Rhythm* by Carol H. Smith; *Eliot and the Living Theatre* by Katharine Worth; *Fear in the Way: The Design of Eliot's Drama* by Michael Goldman; *Murder in the Cathedral: The Pain of Purgatory* by David Ward; *Poetic Drama* by Stephen Spender; *Murder in the Cathedral: the Countersacramental Play of Signs* by Michael T. Beehler; *Murder in the Cathedral: A "Liturgy Less Divine"* by Robert W. Ayers; and *Murder in the Cathedral and the Saint's Play Tradition* by Clifford Davidson.

9.4.3 An article or two of Bloom's collection appeared elsewhere as well. Michael Goldman's article *Fear in the Way: The*

*Design of Eliot's Drama*, for example, appeared in *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land*, edited by Litz, Arthur Walton (Litz 1973). In fact, the article appeared in Litz's anthology (1973) before it did in Bloom's one (1988). It is in this article that Goldman said, 'The aim of *Murder in the Cathedral* is to make its audience 'watch and wait', to 'bear witness' - to see the event in several perspectives, each enriching the other, so the pattern may subsist, so the action may be seen as pattern, and so that our own relation to the action, our part of the pattern, may be fully and intensely experienced' (Goldman 175).

9.4.4 David Clark too has edited an anthology on *Murder in the Cathedral* (Clark 1971). There are fourteen articles in the collection. These are: *T.S. Eliot : the Wheel and the Point* by Louis L. Martz; *Murder in the Cathedral : the Theological Scene* by Francis Fergusson (also included in Bloom's collection); *Action and Suffering : Murder in the Cathedral* by Grover Smith; *Murder in the Cathedral : the figura as mimetic principle* by William V. Spanos; *In the Cathedral* by Patricia M. Adair; *Sources* by J.T. Boulton; *The Chorus* by David E. Jones; *The Priests* by E. Martin Browne; *Blessed Thomas* by Carol H. Smith; *Becket as Job* by Robert N. Shorter; *Thomas's Temptation* by H.Z. Maccoby; *The Temptation of the Abundance* by David E. Jones; *A Shaft of Sunlight* by Kristian Smidt; and *The Variations in the Text* by E. Martin Browne.

9.4.5 Nitai Saha and Srimoti Ghosh have edited an anthology of articles on *Murder in the Cathedral* (Saha and Ghosh 2014). The articles included are: *An ABC of T. S. Eliot and Murder in the Cathedral* by Nitai Saha and Srimoti Ghosh; *Murder in the Cathedral: Revisiting the History of Becket's Assassination* by Pinaki Roy; *Ordeals of a Christian Saint: Thomas Becket's Journey through Different Temptations in Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral* by Jaydip Sarkar and Supriya Debnath; *Staging the Ethos of God: T. S. Eliot's Delineation of the Notion of 'Martyrdom' in Murder in the Cathedral* by Kaustav Chakraborty; *Significance of the Interlude in T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral: 'the wheel on which (t)he (play) turns'* by Joy Mukherjee; *The Wheel of Time in Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral* by Zinia Mitra; *Bonding of Power, Resistance and Ethics in Eliot's*

*Murder in the Cathedral* by Nirjhar Sarkar; *From Partly Living to Living: A Study of the Chorus in Murder in the Cathedral* by Joydeep Bhattacharyya; *Becket's Passage towards "the still centre of eternity": The role of the Knights in the prelude to Martyrdom* by Nitai Saha and Srimoti Ghosh; *'I have therefore only to make perfect my will': Charting the Spiritual Evolution of Thomas Becket in Murder in the Cathedral* by Pathik Roy; and *Eliot's search for an alternative drama in Murder in the Cathedral* by Arpita Dasgupta.

### (iii) Reviews

9.4.6 Michael Grant collects eight reviews of *Murder in the Cathedral*, all published in 1935 (Grant 1997). The first is an unsigned review, called *Mr. Eliot's New Play*, which appeared in *Times Literary Supplement* in June. The second too appeared in June, in *Spectator*; Grant quotes it from *Poetry, Drama and Satire* by I. M. Parsons. The other articles are: *Mr. Eliot on Holy Ground* by James Laughlin (*New English Weekly*, July); *New Literature* by Edwin Muir (*London Mercury*, July); *The Holy Blissful Martyr* by Mark Van Doren (*Nation* [New York], October); *T. S. Eliot's Drama of Becket* by F. O. Matthiessen (*Saturday Review*, October); a review by Edward Shillito (*Christian Century*, October); and excerpts from *Drama of Action* by Frederick A. Pottle (*Yale Review*, December).

9.4.7 Aiken, who was present at the first performance, too had written a review, saying, that 'one was witnessing a play which had the quality of greatness. . . . Performed in a barn, and before an audience of sceptics, *Murder in the Cathedral* would still be a profound and beautiful thing. . . . One's feeling was that here at last was the English language literally being *used*, itself becoming the stuff of drama, turning alive with its own natural poetry' (Aiken 193). After the first night, *The Daily Telegraph* said, 'How good it is, then, to be able to salute in T. S. Eliot a distinguished man of letters who can use the stage for his purpose while not depriving it of its own quality' (Behr 47).

9.4.8 All reviews were not complimentary, however. In the July, 1936 issue of *The Criterion*, Michael Sayers, in an article called *A Year in the Theatre*, said that Thomas in *Murder in the Cathedral* was 'a bore most of the time' (Behr 49).



9.4.9 This list may not be complete.

**(e) Books on *Murder in the Cathedral***

9.4.10 A number of books published on *Murder in the Cathedral* are notes or study guides, designed and written for the benefit of students. In this category would fall books by Lobb (Lobb 1950), Mason (Mason 1962), Gallagher (Gallagher 1977), Bareham (Bareham 1981), Lapworth (Lapworth 1988) and Smith (Smith 1993). Tydeman's work on two of Eliot's plays is, basically, of the same kind, but it tries to see the plays from the point of view of production. (Tydeman 1988). There are, I think, many more.

9.4.11 Interest taken in *Murder in the Cathedral* in countries where English is not the first language should not go unnoticed. Oxenford had undertaken a study of the play in Argentina (Oxenford 1942). Bowers had given a public lecture on it in South Africa (Bowers 1965). Kivimaa had written on the style of the play in Finland (Kivimaa 1969). In Egypt, Hefni thought of Aeschylus's *Choephoroi* as a possible source of the play (Hefni 1984). In Italy, Marchesi's concern was 'the language of evil' in the play (Marchesi 2009).

9.4.12 I am afraid I do not know of any book on *Murder in the Cathedral* that has come out in either Britain or the United States comparable, in nature or scope, to the books named in paragraph 9.4.11 above.

9.4.13 The list above may not be exhaustive.

**(f) *Murder in the Cathedral*: Articles in Journals**

9.4.14 The relation between *Murder in the Cathedral* and Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* was explored in an article in 1991 (Leach 14-18). Jones and Thormahlen had a look at *Murder in the Cathedral* at Stratford (Jones and Thormahlen 146-161). The language of the play was the theme of an article in 1994 (Blaim and Gruszevska 17-25). An attempt was made to find the source of the sermon in the play (Edgecombe 3-4). The reception of the play in postwar Germany was considered in one article (Daumer 79-99). Coupe considered meaning of violence in the play in an article in 1995 (Coupe 28). Osborne wrote on Virginia Woolf's reaction to

*Murder in the Cathedral* (Osborne 46-55). One article considered the verse pattern of the play (Munzur-i-Mowla 1-12).

9.4.15 More articles might have been written on the play.

**(g) An Exception**

9.4.16 It would appear from the short account above that those who had chosen to write on *Murder in the Cathedral* were not, by and large, attracted by differences between its editions, and did not, therefore, think it worthwhile to make a comparative study.

9.4.17 There is, however, an exception.

9.4.18 The exception is E. Martin Browne. In the last section of chapter 2 of his book - the chapter called *Murder in the Cathedral* - he notes a number of changes that were brought about in the text of the play and tries to explain them (Browne 72-79). He undertakes this exercise though, as he himself puts it, his 'is not a book of textual scholarship' (Browne 72).

9.4.19 Browne claims that the task of 'assigning' 'lines to specific individuals', especially when they form a group 'such as the Priests or Knights', was 'mostly' carried out by himself 'in production and adopted into the text afterwards' (Browne 72). 'Thus, in the scene with the Messenger', 'the eager questions of the Priests were in the first edition assigned to the First Priest only; in production it was clear that the rest could not stand round and wait speechless while one of their number fired a whole battery of queries, and the division was made in the subsequent editions' (Browne 72).

9.4.20 In the 1935 Faber edition, the First Priest does make a number of queries as soon as the Herald announces that the Archbishop 'is in England, and is close outside the city' (Eliot: London: June, 1935: Part I: lines 76-85). These lines remain unchanged in the 1936 edition (Eliot: January, 1936: Part I: lines 76-85), and also in the 1937 edition (Eliot: August, 1937: Part I: lines 76-85). Only in the 1938 edition are the lines divided among all three Priests, the First Priest speaking two and a half lines, the Third Priest speaking one and a half line, the Second Priest speaking two and a half lines and the First Priest speaking three and a half lines again (Eliot: September, 1938: Part I: lines 76-85).

It cannot therefore be said that 'the division was made in the subsequent editions'; it was made in one edition only.

9.4.21 I find it hard to believe that a playwright would not know that all that is required to be spoken in a particular scene should not be spoken by a single person, however important, unless so demanded by the theme or the technique of the play itself, and that he or she will have to depend on advice from the director for assigning the lines to a number of characters. 'In a verse play', writes Eliot, the playwright 'will probably have to find words for several characters differing widely from each other' (Eliot: 2009: 100).

9.4.22 Why did then Eliot, in the first place, give all the lines to the First Priest to speak? I think this is because, though the First Priest asks quite a number of questions, his speech is short. There are only ten lines in the speech, expected to be delivered in a couple of minutes. This is not like the Tempters' scene at the performance at Canterbury where the Chorus and the Priests 'had to 'freeze' in full view' 'for twenty minutes' (Browne 57). The argument that 'the rest could not stand round and wait speechless' does not, therefore, hold good. Dividing the First Priest's lines among all the Priests introduced a little variety; it provided the other priests an opportunity to participate and express their anxiety; but I do not think that it made a basic difference. The Priests do not seem to have any personality of their own as individuals; they are just Priests, and nothing else; therefore it does not really matter whether the words spoken by them are spoken by one person or by more than one.

9.4.23 'Similarly with their final scene, after the Third Priest's apostrophe to the departed Knights', says Browne, 'the others divide the appeal to the new Saint' (Browne 72). If Browne is referring to the scene after the exit of the Knights and before the final statement by the Chorus, it is certainly not the 'final scene' of the Priests, since in no edition of the play do the Priests leave the Cathedral before the play comes to an end. The play does not say what they are expected to do when the prayer by the Chorus is in progress, but they may surely join the Chorus as silent participants. That would be most befitting for them.

9.4.24 It is not clear what does Browne mean by 'the Third Priest's apostrophe to the departed Knights' - in this scene, the Third Priest does not interact with the Knights at all. He merely spells out the significance and the meaning of Thomas' death - if Browne calls this 'apostrophe to the departed Knights', his description might not appear too apt to some.

9.4.25 In the 1935 Faber edition, the First Priest is the first to speak after the exit of the Knights and is followed by the Third Priest (Eliot: London: June, 1935: Part II: lines 608-644). It is the same in the 1936 and the 1937 editions. The First Knight's speech remains unchanged in the 1938 edition (Eliot: September, 1938: Part II: lines 581-589). The first twenty-two lines and a half of the Third Priest's speech too remain unchanged (Eliot: September, 1938: Part II: lines 590-612). Then the rest of the lines of the Third Priest's speech in the 1935 Faber edition are spoken by the First Priest (two half lines and one full line in between), the Second Priest (again, two half lines and one full line in between) and the Third Priest (one half line and one full line) in the 1938 edition. It may be noted that (i) though divided among three Priests in the 1938 edition, the speech of the Third Priest in the 1935 edition does not undergo any change, and (ii) it remains the Third Priest's responsibility to deliver the most of it. Browne does not give these details. If one of the Priests spoke twenty-two lines and a half first and then a half line and a full line again, making a total of twenty-four lines out of twenty-nine, what was the point in dividing the speech among three of them?

9.4.26 Browne next refers to Eliot's statement in the 1937 edition that he had, on the advice of Browne, 'reassigned most of the lines formerly attributed to the Fourth Knight' so that 'the parts of the Tempters' could be 'doubled with those of the Knights' (Eliot: August, 1937: 6). Since Eliot had himself said it earlier, this confirmation was unnecessary. Browne could have instead shown how the lines were reassigned and the benefit that had accrued from it. This he did not do.

9.4.27 Browne claims that in 'the Third Tempter's scene, Becket has, in the first edition only, three lines which never appear again' (Browne 76). Thomas' speech dismissing the Third Tempter has thirteen lines in the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: June, 1935: Part I: lines 464-476). It is the same in the 1936 edition (Eliot:

January, 1936: Part I: lines 464-476), and also in the 1937 edition (Eliot: August, 1937: Part I: lines 464-476). In the 1938 edition, however, lines 466-468 of the 1935 Faber edition are dropped (Eliot: September, 1938: Part I: lines 457-466). So Browne's claim that 'three lines' of what Becket says to the Third Tempter can be seen 'in the first edition only', and in no other edition, is not true.

9.4.28 Browne points out that Thomas' words at nearly the end of his first encounter with the Knights in the 1935 Faber edition are different from his words in the Acting edition, calling this difference 'one of the most considerable' among 'the differences between the Canterbury and the first Faber editions', both of which 'were in the press at the same time' (Browne 76). One line from the Acting edition (Eliot: Canterbury: June, 1935: Part II: lines 154-164), line 155, is missing in the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: June, 1935); the word 'For' in line 156 of the Acting edition is replaced by the word 'And' in the 1935 Faber edition; and four lines, lines 169-172, are added to the lines of the Acting edition at the end of the speech (Eliot: London: June, 1935: Part II: lines 163-172). Why Browne thinks that this difference is 'one of the most considerable' is not, however, clear. The line (line 155 of the Acting edition) dropped is: 'But those who would have him more than king'. The lines added are: 'Go then to Rome, or let Rome come / Here, to you, in the person of her most unworthy son. / Petty politicians in your endless adventure! / Rome alone can absolve those who break Christ's indenture'. I do not see how the line dropped, or those added, can make a 'considerable' difference, since these cannot be thought of as profound, or, basic, either from the point of view of the play, or as philosophy.

9.4.29 Browne concludes his comments on the text of *Murder in the Cathedral* by saying that Eliot had, for the sermon of the Archbishop, used the King James version of the Holy Bible first, but, 'realising that Becket would have spoken the Vulgate text', later 'altered' a few words, translating them from Latin (Browne 78). Browne quotes the whole of paragraph 4 of Thomas' sermon from the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: June, 1935: Interlude: lines 59-86), commenting that 'the shorter version is by far the stronger; and it has stood the test of many thousands of performances' (Browne 79). He does not, however, specify the 'shorter version'.

9.4.30 Browne was actually referring to the Acting edition (Eliot: *Canterbury*: June, 1935). The 1935 Faber edition contains the following lines: (a) 'Ambition fortifies the will of man to become ruler over other men: it operates with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action of impurity upon impurity. Not so in Heaven'; and (b) 'not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God' (Eliot: London: June, 1935: Interlude: lines 69-72 and 78-79 respectively). These lines are not there in the Acting edition. That is why the Acting edition is shorter.

9.4.31 Browne has every right to prefer the text of the sermon in the Acting edition to that in the 1935 Faber edition; it is his choice. But how did he know that it had 'stood the test of many thousands of performances'? By his own admission, the 'special *Canterbury* edition was printed locally to be sold at the Festival only and then went out of print' (Browne 72). How did those responsible for 'many thousands of performances' get hold of this text? Even if they did, how does one know that they had used it in preference to the text of other editions? Browne does not put forward any evidence in support of his claim that the play was performed a thousand times or more in a period of thirty-five years from 1935 to 1970 when Browne's book was published, or that the text of the sermon used in these performances was the one taken from the Acting edition. When, in 1976, the Royal Shakespeare Company produced the play, the play 'had not been seen in London for 19 years' (Hands 1976).

9.4.32 The problem with Browne is that, more often than not, he is not trustworthy. He often fails to quote the texts he is comparing, or to refer to the particular edition he has in his mind, rendering his claims vague. He does not compare the text of the play edition by edition, with the consequence that the picture that emerges from his study remains incomplete.

9.4.33 Browne looks at the changes brought about in the text of the play from the point of view of the theatre. He is perfectly entitled to it. But that is not the only point of view from which the changes should be looked at.

## **10. Need for a Comparative Study**

10.1 That no one seems to have undertaken a full-length comparative study of the editions of *Murder in the Cathedral* is, to my mind, a good enough reason for undertaking such a study without any further delay.

10.2 Though rather improbable, the possibility that a comparative study of the editions of *Murder in the Cathedral* has already been made cannot be ruled out. If we do not know about it, we solely are responsible.

10.3 In such an event, what the proposed study and the one unknown to us would bring to light - if, of course, we get to know the latter - might, factually, be the same. It is, however, highly unlikely that the interpretation of the facts too would be the same. Our point of view is ours. This would make our study different from any other study and worthwhile in its own right.

## **11. Likely Gain**

11.1 A study like this might give a new insight into the play.

11.2 Or, it might not. Earlier views, thoughts and ideas about the play would stand confirmed if it does not.

11.3 Such confirmation may, by itself, be seen as a new insight.

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**Part II**  
**Editions Compared**

## 1. Scope

1.1 In this part, we would compare the texts of the editions of T. S. Eliot's verse play *Murder in the Cathedral*. The 1935 Faber edition would be compared with both the Acting edition and the 1936 edition; the 1936 edition with the 1937 edition; and the 1937 edition with the 1938 edition. The 1935 Faber edition would also be compared with the 1938 edition, to see how very different the final form was from the form at the beginning.

1.2 The changes brought about from edition to edition would be noted and examined.

1.3 Some of the changes brought about are, I think, major; others are not.

1.4 Major changes mean (i) difference caused by the dropping of lines and sentences; (ii) difference caused by the addition of lines and sentences; (iii) difference caused by changes in the syntax; (iv) reassignment of lines and sentences among the characters of the play; and (v) rearrangement, moving a part of the play from where it first belonged to some other place.

1.5 Minor changes mean (i) differences in the use of full stop, comma and other punctuation marks; (ii) routine substitution of words or substitution made for purely grammatical reasons; (iii) small difference in the way in which two or more lines are divided between characters; (iv) difference in the designation of a character; and (v) difference in stage-directions.

## 2. The 1935 Faber edition and the Acting edition

### (a) Basis for Comparison

2.1.1 In the 1935 Faber edition of *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot had written, 'This play was written for production (in an abbreviated form) at the Canterbury Festival, June 1935' (Eliot: London: June, 1935: 7). The words 'in an abbreviated form' indicate that the play performed at Canterbury is a shorter version of what Eliot had called 'This play', that is, the 1935 Faber edition of *Murder in the Cathedral*. The Acting edition was published on the basis of the play as produced at Canterbury, for the purpose of

making the text of the play available to those who had gone to watch the play there. The text of the 1935 Faber edition should, therefore, be taken as the main text. The text of the Acting edition is the text abridged from it. This is what the words 'in an abbreviated form' in Eliot's note can possibly mean. The text of the 1935 Faber edition may be compared with that of the Acting edition to see how the play was abridged and if there is any difference between the two apart from abridgment, that is, apart from lines or sections dropped.

### **(b) Characters, Time and Place**

2.2.1 In the 1935 Faber edition (Eliot: London: June, 1935), the characters, and the place and time of the events, of the play are not given at the beginning of the play. Instead, they are given, first, in Part I of the play, and then again in Part II. In the list of characters in Part I, 'A CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY' is named first, followed by 'THREE PRIESTS OF THE CATHEDRAL', 'A HERALD', 'ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET', 'FOUR TEMPTERS' and 'ATTENDANTS'. In the list of characters in Part II, 'THREE PRIESTS' are named first, followed by 'FOUR KNIGHTS', 'ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET', 'CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY' and 'ATTENDANTS'.

2.2.2 I suppose 'A CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY' is named first in Part I of the 1935 Faber edition, as they are the first to appear in the play. By the same logic, 'THREE PRIESTS' are named first in Part II, as they are the first to appear in Part II.

2.2.3 [This pattern is not, however, repeated in Part II of the 1936 edition (Eliot: January, 1936: page not numbered, presumably 51). In this edition, Part II begins with a Chorus. The Chorus should have been, therefore, named first in the list of 'Characters'. But it is not. The order of names in the list of 'Characters' in Part II of the 1936 edition is the same as that in Part II of the 1935 Faber edition. This is, I think, an oversight - Eliot had perhaps forgotten to change the order of names in the list of characters in Part II after introducing, in the 1936 edition, the Chorus with which Part II of the play now opens. I can think of no

other explanation for his failing to name the characters in order of their appearance, as was done in the 1935 Faber edition.]

2.2.4 In Part I of the 1935 Faber edition, the Chorus is introduced as 'A CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY'. In Part II, it is introduced as 'CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY' - it is no longer called 'A' Chorus. It is difficult to think of any reason for not calling it 'A Chorus'. It makes no difference, however, to the character of the Chorus itself.

2.2.5 There are two lists of characters in the 1935 edition for an obvious reason: the characters which do not appear in Part I - the Knights, for example - are not named in the list of characters in Part I; similarly, the characters which do not appear in Part II - the Herald and the Tempters, for example - are not named in the list of characters in Part II.

2.2.6 In the Acting edition (Eliot: *Canterbury*: June, 1935), however, the 'CHARACTERS' are named only once, at the beginning of the play. 'THOMAS, *Archbishop of Canterbury*' is named first, followed by 'THREE PRIESTS', 'A HERALD', 'FOUR TEMPTERS' 'THE FOUR KNIGHTS', 'ATTENDANTS IN THE CATHEDRAL' and 'CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY'.

2.2.7 The Acting edition, too, begins with a Chorus. The Chorus should, therefore, have been on the top of the list of characters in the Acting edition if the pattern of the 1935 Faber edition was followed. But it is not. A different logic seems to have been at work for determining the order in the list of characters in the Acting edition: the most important character of the play, the character around which the play revolves, is named first.

2.2.8 But, the Acting edition is no different from the 1935 Faber edition in so far as the basic structure of the play is concerned: it too has two parts, Part I and Part II. Here again some of the characters which appear in Part I do not appear in Part II. Why should the Acting edition, then, have a single list of characters? The question may be asked differently too: if a single list of characters was good enough for the Acting edition, why was it not so for the 1935 Faber edition?

2.2.9 It may be argued that there was no break between the two Parts when the play was performed at Canterbury and therefore there was no need for two lists of characters. But, whether or not there is a break between the two Parts when the play is performed is immaterial as far as the text of the play in print is concerned. The readers of the 1935 Faber edition might not even know that there was no such break at Canterbury. Even if they knew, they probably couldn't care less. Having a break between the two Parts of the play is a matter, solely, of the theatre and cannot dictate the form the play should take in print.

2.2.10 In the 1935 Faber edition, Thomas Becket is identified simply as 'ARCHBISHOP' (Eliot: London: June, 1935: page not numbered, but probably 9 and 51). In the Acting edition, however, he is identified as '*Archbishop of Canterbury*' (Eliot: Canterbury: June, 1935: 'CHARACTERS'). Whether Thomas is called 'ARCHBISHOP', or, 'Archbishop of Canterbury' makes no difference, but he should have been called either 'Archbishop', or, 'Archbishop of Canterbury' in both the editions for the sake of uniformity. Since the Acting edition was a shorter version of the 1935 Faber edition, there was, I think, no scope for departure from the 1935 Faber edition in this respect.

2.2.11 In the list of characters in the 1935 Faber edition, the Knights are identified as 'FOUR KNIGHTS' (Eliot: London: June, 1935: 51). In the list of characters in the Acting edition, the Knights are, however, identified as 'THE FOUR KNIGHTS' (Eliot: Canterbury: June, 1935: 'CHARACTERS'). In the Acting edition, the Tempters are called 'FOUR TEMPTERS', and not 'THE FOUR TEMPTERS' (Eliot: Canterbury: June, 1935: 'CHARACTERS'). I cannot think of any good reason why the Knights are called 'THE FOUR KNIGHTS' in the Acting edition.

2.2.12 In the 1935 Faber edition, neither Part I, nor Part II, is divided into scenes. In the Acting edition, Part II is. There are two scenes: 'SCENE 1 - THE CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS' and 'SCENE II - IN THE CATHEDRAL'. Part II begins with Scene 1 as the three Priests enter one after another with banners of saints borne before them. Scene II begins when the Priests bring Thomas in and the singing at vespers stops.

2.2.13 In Part I of the 1935 Faber edition, *'The Scene'* is given as *'the Archbishop's Hall'* and the time as *'December 2nd, 1170'* (Eliot: London: June, 1935: page not numbered, but probably 9). Below the list of characters in Part II of the 1935 Faber edition is written: *'The first scene is in the Archbishop's Hall, / the second scene is in the Cathedral, / on December 29th, 1170'* (Eliot: London: June, 1935: page not numbered, but probably 51). There is, however, no indication, either here or in the text, as to where the first scene ends and the second begins.

2.2.14 In the Acting edition, below the list of characters, 'TIME' is given as 'DECEMBER 2ND AND DECEMBER 29TH, 1170 A.D.' (Eliot: Canterbury: June, 1935: 'CHARACTERS'). The place of events is not given on this page.

2.2.15 The words 'IN THE PRECINCTS OF THE CATHEDRAL', however, appear at the beginning of Part I of the Acting edition. In Part II of the Acting edition, the place of events is indicated by the division of scenes.

2.2.16 The difference between the 1935 Faber edition and the Acting edition in the naming of characters (Thomas himself is, for example, named in one way in the 1935 Faber edition and differently in the Acting edition), the order in which these are named, the formal division of Part II into two scenes in the Acting edition, a single list of characters in the Acting edition instead of two in the 1935 Faber edition (which, I think, is logical, though not customary) and the way in which time and place are named might appear minor to some, but I don't think they really are.

2.2.17 These differences give rise to the suspicion that the 1935 Faber edition and the Acting edition are not the work of the same hand. We now know that E. Martin Browne, the Director of the play, was responsible for preparing the Acting edition (Browne 72). This was, presumably, known only to a few, or not known at all, during Eliot's lifetime, since Browne's book came out in 1970, five years' after Eliot's death (1965). That something was badly in need of explaining is evident from the discrepancies noted above.

### (c) Major Differences: Part I



2.3.1 Lines 22 to 39 of the 1935 Faber edition have been dropped in the Acting edition. These are lines from the opening speech of the Chorus. The lines are:

'King rules or barons rule;  
We have suffered various oppression,  
But mostly we are left to our own devices,  
And we are content if we are left alone.  
We try to keep our households in order;  
The merchant, shy and cautious, tries to compile a little  
fortune,  
And the labourer bends to his piece of earth, earth-colour,  
his own colour,  
Preferring to pass unobserved.  
Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons:  
Winter shall come bringing death from the sea,  
Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,  
Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears,  
Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams  
And the poor shall wait for another decaying October.  
Why should the summer bring consolation  
For autumn fires and winter fogs?  
What shall we do in the heat of summer  
But wait in barren orchards for another October?'

2.3.2 The words 'King rules or barons rule' are heard again a little later, in the speech of the Third Priest, in both the 1935 Faber and the Acting editions. Why do the women of the Chorus make it a point to say that the King rules or the barons rule? How does it matter to them? It does not. They say they have gone through 'various oppression'. They perhaps imply that it does not therefore matter whether they are ruled by the king or by the barons. The Third Priest, on the other hand, says this ('King rules or barons rule') to make a very different point: the 'strong man' rules 'strongly' 'and the weak man by caprice'. This change of context is lost in the Acting edition, since, in that edition, the women of the Chorus do not, in the first place, say anything at all about rule by the King or by the barons.

2.3.3 The women of the Chorus make two significant statements in the lines dropped. First, 'And we are content if we are left alone' (line 25) - this, however, is not going to happen; they are not going to be spared. Secondly, 'Winter shall come bringing death from the sea' (line 31) - this is, unmistakably, a hint about Thomas' fate. These points are made later too, in one form or the other. If they are not made in the opening speech of the Chorus, I don't think that much is lost.

2.3.4 Line 50 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'But only to wait and to witness'. The opening speech of the Chorus ends with this line. The line with which the opening speech of the Chorus ends in the Acting edition is as follows: 'But only to wait and to witness. Let us listen.' This is significant. It goes to show that, though the Acting edition was prepared basically by dropping lines from the 1935 Faber edition, a line or two were at times added too.

2.3.5 In the 1935 Faber edition, after the Herald's announcement that 'The Archbishop is in England, and is close outside the city' (line 72), the First Priest says:

'What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop  
Reunited with the King? what reconciliation  
Of two proud men? what peace can be found  
To grow between the hammer and the anvil? Tell us,  
Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast  
down  
That divided them? Is it peace or war? Does he come  
In full assurance, or only secure  
In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule,  
The assurance of right, and the love of people,  
Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?'  
(lines 76-85)

2.3.6 In the Acting edition, the First Priest says:

'What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop  
Reunited with the King? what reconciliation  
Of two proud men? what peace can be found  
To grow between the hammer and the anvil?'

The rest of the First Priest's speech in the 1935 Faber edition is dropped in the Acting edition. I see two advantages in this. First, it makes the First Priest's speech sharper. Secondly, in the 1935 Faber edition, as the First Priest speaks, the two other Priests do not say or do anything. The shorter an awkward situation like this, the better.

2.3.7 Lines 115 to 125 in the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Priest after the exit of the Herald, are as follows:

'I saw him as Chancellor, flattered by the King,  
Liked or feared by courtiers, in their overbearing fashion,  
Despised and despising, always isolated,  
Never one among them, always insecure;  
His pride always feeding upon his own virtues,  
Pride drawing sustenance from impartiality,  
Pride drawing sustenance from generosity,  
Loathing power given by temporal devolution,  
Wishing subjection to God alone.  
Had the King been greater, or had he been weaker  
Things had perhaps been different for Thomas.'

These lines, intended to show the kind of man Thomas was, are dropped in the Acting edition. Is it absolutely necessary to draw a picture of Thomas the Chancellor, as is done in the first seven of these lines? The audience at Canterbury did not hear these lines. May one come to the conclusion that it was, therefore, unable to appreciate the situation Thomas was placed in, or that it was not moved to see his fate? I don't think that it would be fair to come to such conclusions, for the play was widely acclaimed as soon as it was first performed (Behr 47). Thomas' past is not the theme of the play. His present and his future are. Any information given in the play about the past of Thomas must, therefore, be regarded as incidental, designed, perhaps, to sharpen the contrast between Thomas of the earlier times and Thomas of the later days.

2.3.8 In the 1935 Faber edition, the Second Priest says:

'Our Lord is at one with the Pope, and also the King of  
France.

We can lean on a rock, we can feel a firm foothold

Against the perpetual wash of tides of balance of forces of  
barons and landholders.'

(lines 130-132)

These lines are not there in the Acting edition. There, after speaking line 129 of the 1935 Faber edition ('He will tell us what we are to do, he will give us our orders, instruct us'), the Second Priest goes straight to line 133 ('The rock of God is beneath our feet. Let us meet him with cordial thanksgiving.'). Lines 134 and 135 of the Second Priest's speech in the 1935 Faber edition too are dropped in the Acting edition. These lines are:

'Our Lord, our Archbishop returns. And when the  
Archbishop returns  
Our doubts are dispelled. Let us therefore rejoice,'

2.3.9 Lines 170 to 176 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Chorus, are dropped in the Acting edition. The lines are:

'We have kept the feasts, heard the masses,  
We have brewed beer and cyder,  
Gathered wood against the winter,  
Talked at the corner of the fire,  
Talked at the corners of streets,  
Talked not always in whispers,  
Living and partly living.'

2.3.10 Eliot could have made the account the Chorus gives of its life longer if he had so wished. I don't think that would have helped him in attaining his purpose. The account is not important by itself. It is important because it is this life which the Chorus wishes to see undisturbed. That point has already been made in line 153 of the 1935 Faber edition ('We do not wish anything to happen.') and is going to be made again in line 191 of the same edition ('O Thomas our Lord, leave us and leave us be, in our humble and tarnished frame of existence, leave us;'), both lines remaining unchanged in the Acting edition. So, dropping a few lines from the account of the life of the Chorus does not make any difference.

2.3.11 Line 181 ('Some girls have disappeared') of the 1935 Faber edition remains unchanged in the Acting edition except for the full stop (.) added at the end of the line, but line 182 ('Unaccountably, and some not able to.') is dropped in the Acting edition. I would have preferred to see the line included in the Acting edition. For one thing, dropping one line does not save much time if the purpose of the abridgement is to save time. For another, line 182 provides an opportunity for laughter, which, being rare in a serious play like this, should not have been missed.

2.3.12 Lines 254-255 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows:

'Heavier the interval than the consummation.

All things prepare the event. Watch.'

The same lines in the Acting edition are as follows:

'Heavier the interval than the consummation:

All things must prepare the event.

I will show you. Watch.'

The word 'must' in the Acting edition ('All things must prepare the event') implies that there is actually a choice, but it should be ignored - instead, things should be done without question and without fail. In the line 'All things prepare the event.' in the 1935 Faber edition, there is no scope for making a choice at all - things are predetermined and inevitable. The word 'must' changes the meaning of the line, is unnecessary and weakens Thomas' stand.

2.3.13 'I will show you.' is another example of addition to the text of the 1935 Faber edition. Line 255 of the 1935 Faber edition ('All things prepare the event. Watch.') may be interpreted to mean that things would happen as they must and that there is nothing to do except keeping one's eyes opened. Since Thomas and the Priests are the only persons present when Thomas says this - apart, of course, from the women of the Chorus, who, not being characters of the play like the Priests or Thomas, do not count - it may be presumed that Thomas addresses the Priests and asks them to watch the events as they unfold. The Priests do not, however, watch as the women of the Chorus do. The women of the Chorus are outsiders; the Priests are not. It is for the women of the Chorus to bear witness; it is not for the Priests to do so. All this changes with the addition, in the Acting edition, of the sentence 'I will show

you.' 'I will show you' might mean that Thomas would conjure things up for the Priests to see. The rest of Part 1 of the play - Thomas' words with the Tempters and his rejection of their offer - then becomes unreal, like the show of a magician. It is not for Thomas to show anything at all - it is for him to see things, and to act. If the Tempters are figments of Thomas' imagination, as some think they are (Browne 43), they are unreal in any case. But if Thomas goes to 'show' things, they become unreal in a different sense. I doubt very much if Eliot ever intended this.

2.3.14 Lines 261-265 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Tempter, are as follows:

'Your Lordship won't despise an old friend out of favour?  
Old Tom, gay Tom, Becket of London,  
Your Lordship won't forget that evening on the river  
When the King, and you and I were all friends together?  
Friendship should be more than biting Time can sever.'

These lines are not there in the Acting edition.

2.3.15 Lines 279-282 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Tempter, are as follows:

'Spring has come in winter. Snow in the branches  
Shall float as sweet as blossoms. Ice along the ditches  
Mirror the sunlight. Love in the orchard  
Send the sap shooting. Mirth matches melancholy.'

These have been dropped in the Acting edition.

2.3.16 Lines 283-291 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Thomas, are as follows:

'We do not know very much of the future  
Except that from generation to generation  
The same things happen again and again.  
Men learn little from others' experience.  
But in the life of one man, never  
The same time returns. Sever  
The cord, shed the scale. Only  
The fool, fixed in his folly, may think  
He can turn the wheel on which he turns.'

These lines are not there in the Acting edition.

2.3.17 Lines 292-293 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Tempter, are as follows:

'My Lord, a nod is as good as a wink.

A man will often love what he spurns.'

These lines too have been dropped in the Acting edition.

2.3.18 Dropping lines 279-293, as shown above, seems to be in order. Lines about Thomas past and about what is happening in nature can both be dispensed with. There is hardly anything new in Thomas' speech either. He has already spoken of the wheel in his first speech (line 218 of the 1935 Faber edition). There is no need for reminding the audience of it again.

2.3.19 Line 302 ('This was not the way of the King our master!') and line 304 ('When they were your friends. Be easy, man!') of the 1935 Faber edition, both spoken by the First Tempter, are dropped in the Acting edition.

2.3.20 Lines 341-344 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Second Tempter, are as follows:

'Fare forward, shun two files of shadows:

Mirth merrymaking, melting strength in sweetness,

Fiddling to feebleness, doomed to disdain;

And godlovers' longings, lost in God.'

These lines do not occur in the Acting edition. There, after line 340 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Only to those giving love to God alone. '), the Second Tempter goes straight to lines 344-345 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Shall he who held the solid substance / Wander waking with deceitful shadows?'). E. Martin Browne, the director of the play, quotes the following:

'Fare forward between two files of shadows

Mirth and merrymaking, strength and sweetness

Fiddling to feebleness, doomed to disdain

And Godlovers' longings, lost in God.'

(Browne: 45)

These lines are not the same as lines 341-344 of the 1935 Faber edition, but very close to them.

2.3.21 Line 361 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Tempter, is as follows: 'Power is present, for him who will wield.'. This is not there in the Acting edition. Line 361 is followed, in the 1935 Faber edition, by the following exchange between Thomas and the Second Tempter:

THOMAS

Whose was it?

TEMPTER

His who is gone.

THOMAS

Who shall have it?

TEMPTER

He who will come.

THOMAS

What shall be the month?

TEMPTER

The last from the first.

THOMAS

What shall we give for it?

TEMPTER

Pretence of priestly power.

THOMAS

Why should we give it?

TEMPTER

For the power and the glory.

THOMAS

No!

TEMPTER

Yes! Or bravery will be broken,  
Cabined in Canterbury, realmless ruler,  
Self-bound servant of a powwerless Pope,  
The old stag, circled with hounds.'

The whole of this dialogue - lines 362-370 of the 1935 Faber edition - is dropped in the Acting edition. I do not think that the play suffers because of this deletion, but a trait of Eliot's character



- his love of detective stories and admiration for their writers - is lost to the readers of the Acting edition, for the portion deleted closely resembles a passage in an old document a client had given Sherlock Holmes in *The Musgrave Ritual* (Doyle 326).

2.3.22 The second part of line 418, lines 419-425 and the first part of line 426 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Third Tempter, are as follows:

'Purpose is plain.

Endurance of friendship does not depend  
Upon ourselves, but upon circumstance.  
But circumstance is not undetermined.  
Unreal friendship may turn real  
But real friendship, once ended, cannot be mended.  
Sooner shall enmity turn to alliance.  
The enmity that never knew friendship  
Can sooner know accord.'

These lines are dropped in the Acting edition.

2.3.23 The second part of line 426, line 427 and the first part of line 428 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

'For a countryman

You wrap your meaning in as dark generality  
As any courtier.'

These lines too are dropped in the Acting edition. In these lines (the second part of line 426, line 427 and the first part of line 428), Thomas gives his reaction to what the Third Tempter had said in lines 418-425 and the first part of line 426. Since lines 418-425 and the first part of line 426 are dropped, the second part of line 426, line 427 and the first part of line 428 had to be dropped too. In the lines dropped first - that is, lines 418-425 and the first part of line 426 - the Third Tempter makes certain observations, preparing ground for the offer he is going to make. The observations are very general in nature. Dropping them does not make any difference to the play.

2.3.24 Line 490 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'I always precede expectation.' - is dropped in the Acting edition. The Fourth

Tempter says this in response to Thomas' word that he 'expected / Three visitors, not four' (line 486-87 of the 1935 Faber edition). Since the Fourth Tempter is, unlike the other Tempters, an embodiment of the inner self of Thomas himself, 'tempting' him with his 'own desires' (line 584 of the 1935 Faber edition), he can, surely, take the view that there is no need for Thomas to expect him, meaning that he is already there and would always be so. This line does not, however, make any major point and may be easily forgotten.

2.3. 25 Lines 497-510 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows:

'Wantonness is weakness. As for the King,  
His hardened hatred shall have no end.  
You know truly, the King will never trust  
Twice, the man who has been his friend.  
Borrow use cautiously, employ  
Your services as long as you have to lend.  
You would wait for trap to snap  
Having served your turn, broken and crushed.  
As for barons, envy of lesser men  
Is still more stubborn than king's anger.  
Kings have public policy, barons private profit,  
Jealousy raging possession of the fiend.  
Barons are employable against each other;  
Greater enemies must kings destroy.'

These lines are dropped in the Acting edition - rightly, since Thomas has already rejected the Second Tempter's offer of regaining Chancellorship and the Third Tempter's one of alliance with the Barons. Thomas need not be told that 'the King will never trust' him again, or that the Barons are 'lesser men', hankering after 'private profit'.

2.3.26 At the end of the Fourth Tempter's conversation with Thomas, the Chorus speaks: 'There is no rest in the house. There is no rest in the street.' (line 610 of the 1935 Faber edition). The intervention by the Chorus at this point is very short. In the 1935 Faber edition, it ends with line 613, which is as follows: 'What is the sickly smell, the vapour? the dark green light from a cloud on a

withered tree? The earth is heaving to parturition of issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my hand?'. In the Acting edition, two more lines are added after this line:

'O Thomas Archbishop, leave us, leave us, and leave us be.  
That we may be well, but not too well: leave us, leave us  
for France.'

These lines echo what the Chorus had said earlier. The first line is almost the same as the second part of line 190 and the first part of line 191:

'O Thomas Archbishop,  
O Thomas our Lord, leave us and leave us be,'.

The second part of the second line is the same as the last part of line 196: 'Thomas Archbishop, set the white sail between the grey sky and the bitter sea, leave us, leave us for France.'. Listening to the Tempters for a long time and then to the Chorus, which, in line 613 of the 1935 Faber edition, speaks in a language difficult to understand, one may, for a while, lose sight of the difference the return of Thomas would make to the life of the women of Canterbury and also of what these women really want. These lines bring one back to their world, now ominously threatened.

2.3.27 Lines 617-622 of the 1935 Faber edition are omitted in the Acting edition. These are:

The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,  
The prizes given at the children's party,  
The prize awarded for the English Essay,  
The scholar's degree, the statesman's decoration,  
All things become less real, man passes  
From unreality to unreality.'

First, these are unnecessary details. Secondly, the Tempters have, in lines 614-616 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment; / All things are unreal, / Unreal or disappointing:'), already said what the last two of the lines omitted are supposed to bring to light ('All things become less real, man passes / From unreality to unreality.').

2.3.28 Lines 634-645 of the 1935 Faber edition are spoken alternately by the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters. These are:

- 'C. Is it the owl that calls, or a signal between the trees?  
P. Is the window-bar made fast, is the door under lock  
and bolt?  
T. Is it rain that taps at the window, is it wind that  
pokes at the door?  
C. Does the torch flame in the hall, the candle in the  
room?  
P. Does the watchman walk by the wall?  
T. Does the mastiff prowl by the gate?  
C. Death has a hundred hands and walks by a thousand  
ways.  
P. He may come in the sight of all, he may pass unseen  
unheard.  
T. Come whispering through the ear, or a sudden hock  
on the skull.  
C. A man may walk with a lamp at night, and yet be  
drowned in a ditch.  
P. A man may climb the stair in the day, and slip on a  
broken step.  
T. A man may sit at meat, and feel the cold in his  
groin.'

These lines are dropped in the Acting edition.

2.3.29 A number of objections may be raised against these lines. First, why should the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters speak of the same thing and in the same vein? They are distinct entities and have nothing in common. If they say the same thing or speak from the same platform, their identities get blurred. Secondly, the Chorus does not interact with any character at any other place in the whole of the play. Why should it do so now? Its job is to stand at a distance, aloof, and watch things as they develop. Its interaction with the Priests and the Tempters brings its very nature to question. Thirdly, if the Tempters are unreal, their interaction with the Chorus and the Priests may make the Chorus and the Priests appear unreal too, or the Tempters as real as the Chorus and the Priests. Fourthly, the lines give rise to a sense of doom. But this is already done by the Chorus. Moreover, it is none of the Priests' or the Tempters' business to give rise to it. Fifthly, the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters talk about death in general, not about death in any particular context, nor about death as the supreme sacrifice for a cause, nor about death in consequence of a crime, as



The raw nobility, whose manners matched their finger-  
nails.

While I ate out of the King's dish

To become servant of God was never my wish.

Servant of God has chance of greater sin

And sorrow, than the man who serves a king.

For those who serve the greater cause may make the cause  
serve them,

Still doing right: and striving with political men

May make that cause political, not by what they do

But by what they are. I know'

These lines (lines 679-704) occur in Thomas' statement before the end of Part 1 of the play.

2.3.32 Memoirs are generally goodread. Thomas' account is no exception. But it is neither poetry, nor necessary for taking the play forward, nor does it help him in making up his mind.

2.3.33 Why does Thomas find it necessary to talk about ambition? Does he have one? If it is his ambition to become a saint, he cannot, by his own definition of a saint, which he gives in his Christmas sermon a little later, ever become one. There is no need for Thomas to talk about politics at all. Why does he talk about it? A lot of what Thomas says in the lines dropped needs explaining. A verse play is no place to leave things unexplained.

#### (d) Minor Differences: Part I

2.4.1 In the 1935 Faber edition, no stage direction is given at the beginning of the play. The play simply starts with the speech of the Chorus. In the Acting edition, on the other hand, a stage direction is given before the speech of the Chorus: *'Enter a band of the women of Canterbury, who form the Chorus'*. The words *'who form the Chorus'* are unnecessary, since the women were already introduced as 'CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY' in the list of characters. Whether these women should enter the stage after the curtain is raised, or take their position before, is a matter of the theatre, to be decided by the director. That the 1935 Faber edition does not have this stage direction goes to show that Eliot had left these details to the director to work out. The addition of the stage direction in the Acting edition goes to show that the

Acting edition was prepared by one truly concerned with matters of the theatre.

2.4.2 In the opening speech of the Chorus in the 1935 Faber edition, 'cathedral' is spelt with a small 'c' (lines 3, 6 and 8) and 'women' with a small 'w' (line 4) whereas in the same lines in the Acting edition 'Cathedral' is spelt with a capital 'C' and 'Women' with a capital 'W'. In spite of its painful history, the cathedral at Canterbury is the same as any other cathedral; it is one of the many. And it is not the cathedral which is important - it is the events that take place that are. There is, therefore, hardly any reason why 'cathedral' should be spelt with a capital 'C'. The women of Canterbury are singularly unfortunate in watching a sad event. But that does not confer any particular distinction on them. Why should they be referred to as 'Women' with a capital 'W'?

2.4.3 The comma (,) after 'stored' in line 10 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'And the apples were gathered and stored, and the land became brown sharp points of death in a waste of water and mud,' - is replaced in the Acting edition by a semicolon (;). In the same line 'became' of the 1935 Faber edition is replaced by 'is' in the Acting edition. Line 12 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'While the labourer kicks off a muddy boot and stretches his hand to the fire,' - begins with 'While'; it is substituted by 'When' in the Acting edition. There is a full stop (.) at the end of line 13 of the 1935 Faber edition ('The New Year waits, destiny waits for the coming.'). Line 13 of the Acting edition, which is the same as line 13 of the 1935 Faber edition, ends with a semicolon (;). Line 15 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'Remembered the martyrs and saints who wait? and who shall' - begins with the word 'Remembered'. The same line in the Acting edition begins with the word 'And' ('And remembered').

2.4.4 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no punctuation mark at the end of line 18 ('Seven years and the summer is over') and there is a comma (,) at the end of line 19 ('Seven years since the Archbishop left us,'). In the Acting edition, however, there is a semicolon (;) at the end of line 18 ('Seven years and the summer is over;'), and there is a full stop (.) at the end of line 19 ('Seven years since the Archbishop left us.'). The colon (:) at the end of line 42 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping

the still unshapen:') is replaced in the Acting edition by a semi-colon (;).

2.4.5 In the 1935 Faber edition, the stage direction at the end of the opening speech of the Chorus is short: '[*Enter* PRIESTS.]'. In the Acting edition, it is a little elaborate: '[*Enter three* PRIESTS *of the Cathedral in their Monastic habit*]'. I don't think that the elaboration was necessary. First, it was said in the list of characters that the number of the Priests was 'THREE'. Any one in the audience could see how many of them were there on the stage. It wasn't, therefore, necessary to mention their number. Secondly, the priests were expected to put on their priestly dress, weren't they? If they didn't, how would one know that they were priests?

2.4.6 In the 1935 Faber edition, line 59 - the Third Priest's first line in the whole play ('I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,') - ends with a comma (,); this comma is dropped in the Acting edition.

2.4.7 The stage direction at the end of the First Priest's words in the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: '[*Enter* HERALD.]'. In the Acting edition the stage direction at the same place is a little different: '[*Enter Archbishop's Herald*]'. Since the Herald gives news of Thomas' return, it is obvious that he is sent by the Archbishop, or by someone on his behalf. It is not necessary, therefore, to introduce him particularly as '*Archbishop's Herald*'.

2.4.8 Lines 103-4 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: 'If you ask my opinion, I think that this peace / Is nothing like an end, or like a beginning'. In the Acting edition, the word 'like' is dropped from the last part of line 104 ('Is nothing like an end, or a beginning'). I do not know why. I prefer the line in the 1935 Faber edition. Repetition of the word 'like' makes the line more musical there.

2.4.9 In the 1935 Faber edition, after the exit of the Herald, the First Priest says:

'I fear for the Archbishop, I fear for the Church,  
I know that the pride bred of sudden prosperity  
Was but confirmed by bitter adversity.'

(lines 112-114)



The comma (,) after 'Archbishop' and also after 'Church' in line 112 of the 1935 Faber edition is replaced by a full stop (.) in the Acting edition ('I fear for the Archbishop. I fear for the Church.'). The words 'bred of' in line 113 of the 1935 Faber edition are replaced by the words 'created by' in the Acting edition ('I know that the pride created by sudden prosperity'). The word 'bitter' of line 114 of the 1935 Faber edition is replaced by the word 'utter' in the Acting edition ('Was but confirmed by utter adversity.').

2.4.10 In line 126 of the 1935 Faber edition, 'lord' is spelt with a small 'l' twice: 'Yet our lord is returned. Our lord has come back to his own again'. In the same line in the Acting edition, 'Lord' is spelt with a capital 'L' in both the places. Line 129 in the 1935 Faber edition ends with a full stop (.): 'He will tell us what we are to do, he will give us our orders, instruct us.' The same line in the Acting edition ends with a semi-colon (;). and is followed by the line 'The rock of God is beneath our feet. Let us meet him with cordial thanksgiving.' Line 133 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'The rock of God is beneath our feet. Let us meet the Archbishop with cordial thanksgiving:'. In the Acting edition, 'the Archbishop' is replaced by 'him' and the colon (: ) at the end of the line by a full stop (.) .

2.4.11 The question mark (?) at the end of line 141 of the 1935 Faber edition ('For who knows the end of good or evil?') is replaced by a comma (,) in the Acting edition. There is no punctuation mark at the end of line 142 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Until the grinders cease'). At the end of this line, there is a comma (,) in the Acting edition.

2.4.12 Line 151 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'You come with applause, you come with rejoicing, but you come bringing death into Canterbury:'. In the Acting edition, the comma (,) after 'rejoicing' is replaced by a semi-colon (;): 'You come with applause, you come with rejoicing; but you come bringing death into Canterbury:'. This is, I think, brilliant. The second part of the line ('but you come bringing death into Canterbury') is in direct contrast to the first ('You come with applause, you come with rejoicing'). There must be a break between the two. The use of a comma after both 'applause' and 'rejoicing' means that it is a continuous statement and that there is no break between the two parts of the statement. The comma after 'rejoicing' could have been

replaced by a full stop (.). In that case, the statement would not have remained a single statement any more and would have become two separate statements instead. The only choice was the use of a semi-colon if the statement was to remain a single statement with a break between its two contrasting parts. This is precisely what has been done in the Acting edition. Unfortunately, only the readers of the play are in a position to appreciate a change like this. The actress speaking the line as one of the women of the Chorus can hardly be expected to make a difference between a comma and a semi-colon at the time of delivering it. The audience may not, therefore, get to know ever that a semi-colon (;) has been used in place of a comma (,).

2.4.13 Line 179 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'We have been afflicted with taxes'. The same line in the Acting edition is a little different: 'We have sometimes been afflicted with taxes'. In the Acting edition, the word 'particular' of line 184 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Our particular shadows, our secret fears.') has been replaced by the word 'individual' ('Our individual shadows, our secret fears.'). Line 189 of the 1935 Faber edition reads: 'And our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost'. In the Acting edition, a comma (,) is inserted after the first 'lost' ('And our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the layers of an onion, our selves are lost, lost').

2.4.14 Line 193 of the 1935 Faber edition reads as follows: 'Archbishop, secure and assured of your fate, unaffrayed among the shades, do you realise what it means'. In the Acting edition, the word 'unaffrayed' is replaced by the word 'unafraid' ('Archbishop, secure and assured of your fate, unafraid among the shades, do you realise what it means'). 'Unaffrayed' is 'a word coined by Eliot, perhaps from an earlier *affrayed*, used by Keats in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, xxxiii, where it appears to mean *startled*' (Eliot: 1985: 103-104). Since Eliot had used the word in the 1935 Faber edition, there is no reason why he should not use it in the Acting edition too, especially when it is of his own coinage. This gives rise to the suspicion that Eliot did not change the word - someone else did. It is quite possible that the person, who brought about the change, being unfamiliar with the word, thought that Eliot had used it by mistake and that he actually had 'unafraid' in mind. By 'unaffrayed

among the shades', Eliot seems to have meant that Thomas was to remain unperturbed even in the face of a grave danger. This meaning is lost in the Acting edition.

2.4.15 In line 197 of the 1935 Faber edition, there is an exclamation mark (!) at the end: 'What a way to talk at such a juncture!'. This is replaced by a colon (:) in the Acting edition.

2.4.16 In the 1935 Faber edition, the stage direction for Thomas' entry is simply '[*Enter Thomas.*]'. It is different in the Acting edition: '[*Thomas has entered during this speech.*]'.

2.4.17 In the 1935 Faber edition, Thomas is named just as 'THOMAS' before he speaks for the first time. In the Acting edition, he is named as 'THOMAS Cantuar' at the same place. 'Cantuar (from the Latin for "Canterbury") is a title that the Archbishop of Canterbury is legally permitted, in England, to use to sign his name as a substitute for the surname' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantuar> - 25 October 2014). Since Eliot did not use the word in the 1935 Faber edition, why should he use it in the Acting edition? The use of the word goes, I think, to strengthen the suspicion that the Acting edition was prepared by someone else. I can think of only one reason for using the word: pleasing the readers of the play from Canterbury. I do not see why it was thought necessary to please them in particular.

2.4.18 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no punctuation mark at the end of line 227 ('However, I will have fires laid in all your rooms'), spoken by the Second Priest. In the Acting edition, a dash (—) has been put in at the end of the line. Line 229 of the Second Priest's same speech in the 1935 Faber edition reads as follows: 'Your Lordship now being used to a better climate.'. In the Acting edition, the word 'now' has been dropped from the line ('Your Lordship being used to a better climate.').

2.4.19 Line 236 of Thomas' speech in the 1935 Faber edition reads as follows: 'Would have intercepted our letters'. In the Acting edition, the word 'our' has been replaced by the word 'my' ('Would have intercepted my letters'). In line 241 of the 1935 Faber edition ('had fair crossing, found at Sandwich'), the word 'Sandwich' has been replaced by the word 'Dover' in the Acting edition. In line 244

of the 1935 Faber edition ('Only John, the Dean of Salisbury'), 'dean' has been spelt with a small 'd' in the Acting edition.

2.4.20 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction after the second part of line 247, spoken by the First Priest ('But do they follow after?'). In the Acting edition, there is one: '*[Enter the four Tempters, cloaked, to below the stage.]*'. This looks a little clumsy. I think it could have been written as: '*Enter four Tempters, cloaked, below the stage.*'

2.4.21 The full stop (.) at the end of line 254 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Heavier the interval than the consummation.') has been replaced by a colon (:) in the Acting edition.

2.4.22 In the 1935 Faber edition, the stage direction at the end of Thomas' speech beginning with line 248 ('For a little time the hungry hawk') is simple: '*[Enter FIRST TEMPTER.]*'. The stage direction at the same place in the Acting edition is as follows: '*[First Tempter uncovers himself.]*'. Eliot does not seem to have ever thought that the Tempters would first assemble covering themselves in cloaks and then uncover one by one as their turn came to speak to Thomas. That is why the stage direction in the 1935 Faber edition at this point is so short and simple. The director of the play has put on record his idea of how the Tempters should be presented: 'I had the Tempters enter in a body through the audience and stand at the foot of the steps, each going up in turn to confront Becket' (Browne 57). How close is this account to the stage direction given here and earlier ('*[Enter the four Tempters, cloaked, to below the stage.]*'), leaving one virtually in no doubt as to who had changed the stage directions in the Acting edition.

2.4.23 The first thing the First Tempter says in the 1935 Faber edition is: 'You see, my Lord, I do not wait upon ceremony:' (line 256). In the Acting edition, this line remains unchanged, but the colon (:) at the end of the line is replaced by a semi-colon (;). Line 270 of the 1935 Faber edition reads as follows: 'Laughter and apple-blossom floating on the water.'. In the Acting edition, 'apple-blossom' is written as 'apple blossom'. Line 273 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Eating up the darkness, with wit and wine and wisdom!'. In the Acting edition, the exclamation sign (!) at the end of the line is replaced by a colon (:). In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no punctuation mark at the end of line 277 ('You talk of

seasons that are past. I remember'. In the Acting edition, there is a dash (—) at the end of the line. At the end of line 294 of the 1935 Faber edition ('For the good times past, that are come again'), there is, again, no punctuation mark. In the Acting edition, there is a comma (,) at the end of the line. Line 300 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Your Lordship is too proud!'. In the Acting edition, the exclamation mark (!) at the end of the line is replaced by a semi-colon (;). The word 'most' in the next line, line 301 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'The safest beast is not the one that roars most loud.' - is replaced by the word 'too' in the Acting edition ('The safest beast is not the one that roars too loud.'). At the end of line 303 of the 1935 Faber edition ('You were not used to be so hard upon sinners'), there is no punctuation mark. In the Acting edition, there is a full stop (.) at the end of the line. Line 307 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Or your goose may be cooked and eaten to the bone.'. In the Acting edition, the word 'may' in this line is replaced by the word 'will'. In line 310 of the 1935 Faber edition ('I leave you to the pleasures of your higher vices, '), the comma at the end of the line is dropped in the Acting edition. In line 317 of the 1935 Faber edition ('I'll remember you at kissing-time below the stairs. '), the word 'kissing-time' is spelt as 'kissing time' in the Acting edition. In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction after this line. In the Acting edition, there is the following stage direction: '[*He retires*']. This means that, though the First Tempter's interaction with Thomas was over, Eliot, in the 1935 Faber edition, wanted him to remain on the stage, whereas, in the Acting edition, he is dismissed from the stage. Since the First Tempter has nothing more to do until all four of them appear together at a later point of time (lines 614-628 of the 1935 Faber edition), which they do long after the First Tempter's interaction with Thomas, the Acting edition's arrangement seems to be more convenient from the point of view of the theatre.

2.4.24 In the 1935 Faber edition, the following stage direction appears after line 323: '[*Enter SECOND TEMPTER.*']'. This stage direction is not there in the Acting edition. Instead, the Second Tempter is introduced in the following way: 'SECOND TEMPTER (*uncovering himself*)'. The First Tempter too was introduced similarly.

2.4.25 Line 324 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Your Lordship has forgotten me, perhaps. I will remind you.'. In the Acting edition, the full stop (.) at the end of the line has been replaced by a colon (:). The second part of line 332 and lines 333-334 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Second Tempter, are: 'The Chancellorship that you resigned / When you were made Archbishop—that was a mistake / On your part—still may be regained. Think, my Lord.'. In the Acting edition, the word 'regained' has been replaced by the words 'set right' ('On your part—still may beset right. Think, my Lord,'). Line 336 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Life lasting, a permanent possession,') has slightly been changed in the Acting edition: 'A life lasting, a permanent possession.'.

2.4.26 The second part of line 371 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Yes! men must manoeuvre. Monarchs also,.'. In the Acting edition, this line remains unchanged, but the word 'men' is spelt with a capital 'M'. Lines 383-384 of the 1935 Faber edition read as follows: 'No! shall I, who keep the keys / Of heaven and hell, supreme alone in England,.'. In the Acting edition, 'shall' has been spelt with a capital 'S' and a comma (,) has been put after 'supreme': 'No! Shall I, who keep the keys / Of heaven and hell, supreme, alone in England,.'. The full stop (.) at the end of line 390 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Then I leave you to your fate.')

is replaced by a dash (—) in the Acting edition. In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction after line 391. In the Acting edition, the following stage direction is given after line 391: '[*He retires.*']. There is a stage direction after line 401 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Would now be only mean descent.'): '[*Enter THIRD TEMPTER.*]. There is no stage direction in the Acting edition after this line. Instead, at this point in the Acting edition, the Third Tempter is introduced in the following manner: '*THIRD TEMPTER (uncovering himself.)*'.

2.4.27 Line 403 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Third Tempter, is as follows: 'But not in this guise, or for my present purpose.' In the Acting edition, the words 'my present' are replaced by the word 'this' ('But not in this guise, or for this purpose.'). The full stop (.) at the end of line 414 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'We are the backbone of the nation.' - is replaced by a semi-colon (;) in the Acting edition. The colon (:) at the end of line 416 of the 1935

Faber edition - 'About the King. Excuse my bluntness:' ' - is replaced by a full stop (.) in the Acting edition. In line 417 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'I am a rough straightforward Englishman.' - a comma (,) has been inserted after the word 'rough' in the Acting edition. The exclamation mark (!) at the end of line 428 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'This is the simple fact!' - has been replaced by a colon (:) in the Acting edition. Line 431 of the 1935 Faber edition begins with the word 'To'. This has been replaced by the word 'Into' in the Acting edition. In line 433 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'May be found in the present situation.' - a comma (,) been inserted after the word 'found' in the Acting edition. Line 442 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'He does not understand us, the English Barons.' This line is a little different in the Acting edition: 'He does not understand us. The English Barons,'. The dash (—) at the end of line 447 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Which has turned its eyes in your direction—') has been deleted in the Acting edition. There is no dash (—) at the beginning of line 448 of the 1935 Faber edition ('To gain from you, your Lordship asks.'). In the Acting edition a dash (—) has been put at the beginning of this line ('—To gain from you, your Lordship asks.'). Line 469 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'I ruled once as Chancellor'. In the Acting edition, there is a comma (,) after the word 'once'; there is another at the end of the line: 'I ruled once, as Chancellor,'. In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction after line 479. In the Acting edition, the following stage direction is given after line 479: '[*He retires.*']. There is a stage direction after line 483 of the 1935 Faber edition ('But if I break, I must break myself alone.'): '[*Enter THIRD TEMPTER.*']'. There is no stage direction in the Acting edition after this line. Instead, the Fourth Tempter is introduced in the Acting edition in the following manner: '*FOURTH TEMPTER (uncovering himself)*'.

2.4.28 Line 492 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Fourth Tempter, is as follows: 'And, as you know me, that is why I come.'. The comma (,) after the word 'And' is deleted in the Acting edition. The full stop (.) at the end of line 519 of the 1935 Faber edition ('You hold the keys of heaven and hell.') is replaced in the Acting edition by a comma (,). The colon (:) in the middle of line 520 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Power to bind and loose: bind, Thomas, bind,') is replaced by a semi-colon (;) in the Acting edition. The word 'bishop' in line 521 of the 1935 Faber edition ('King and

bishop under your heel.') becomes 'bishops' in the Acting edition. In lines 532 and 533 of the 1935 Faber edition, the first spoken by Thomas and the second by the Fourth Tempter - 'Supreme, in this land?' / 'Supreme, but for one.' - the comma (,) after the word 'Supreme' is deleted in both the places in the Acting edition. The semi-colon (;) at the end of line 534 of the 1935 Faber edition ('It is not for me to tell you how this may be so;') is replaced by a full stop (.) in the Acting edition. The colon (:) at the end of line 541 of the 1935 Faber edition ('King is forgotten, when another shall come:') is replaced by a semi-colon in the Acting edition. There is a comma (,) after the word 'glittering' in the Acting edition, though there is none in line 546 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Before the glittering jewelled shrine,'). The comma at the end of line 549 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Think of the miracles, by God's grace,') is replaced by a full stop in the Acting edition. In line 559 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'That the shrine shall be pillaged, and the gold spent,' - the word 'and' is deleted in the Acting edition. In line 560 of the 1935 Faber edition ('The jewels gone for light ladies' ornament,'), the word 'The' is dropped in the Acting edition and, consequently, 'jewels' spelt with a capital 'J' ('Jewels gone for light ladies' ornament,'). Line 563 of the 1935 Faber edition ('When miracles cease, and the faithful desert you,') ends with a comma (,); in the Acting edition, there is no punctuation mark at the end of the line. Line 568 of the 1935 Faber edition ends with a full stop (.) ('Will only try to find the historical fact.'). In the Acting edition, this line ends with a semi-colon (;). Line 571 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'But what is there to do? what is left to be done?'. In the Acting edition, the word 'what' in the second part of the line is written with a capital 'W' ('But what is there to do? What is left to be done?'). Line 576 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'What earthly glory, of king or emperor,.'. This line is slightly different in the Acting edition: 'What earthly glory, of kings and emperors,' - the words 'king' and 'emperor' have been replaced by the words 'kings' and 'emperors' respectively and the word 'or' by the word 'and'. In line 590 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Fourth Tempter - 'For such a vision of eternal grandeur?' - the words 'eternal grandeur' have been replaced by the words 'spiritual pride' in the Acting edition. In line 601 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Fourth Tempter, who does not miss the opportunity to use against Thomas words spoken by Thomas



earlier - 'You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.' - there is no punctuation mark after the first 'know'. In the Acting edition, there is a comma (,) after the word. In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction after line 609 ('Be forever still.'). In the Acting edition, the following stage direction is given after that line: [*He joins the other Tempters, who hover, cloaked, behind the Archbishop*].

2.4.29 In the 1935 Faber edition, the words 'THE FOUR TEMPTERS' are written on top of the passage which starts with line 614 ('Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment;'). In the Acting edition, the word 'FOUR' is omitted. The colon (:) at the end of line 616 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Unreal or disappointing:') is replaced in the Acting edition by a full stop (.). It was necessary to do so, since lines 617-622 of the 1935 Faber edition were dropped in the Acting edition. In the 1935 Faber edition, the speech of the four Tempters is followed by a speech by 'THE THREE PRIESTS', beginning with line 629 ('O Thomas my Lord do not fight the intractable tide,'). In the Acting edition, they are simply identified as 'PRIESTS'. The comma (,) at the end of line 630 of the 1935 Faber edition ('Do not sail the irresistible wind; in the storm,') is deleted in the Acting edition. In line 662 of the 1935 Faber edition ('For sleeping, and eating and drinking and laughter. '), a comma is inserted after the word 'drinking' in the Acting edition. In line 665 of the 1935 Faber edition ('God is leaving us, God is leaving us, more pang, more pain, than birth or death. '), the words 'more horror' are added after the word 'pain' in the Acting edition ('God is leaving us, God is leaving us, more pang, more pain, more horror than birth or death. '). The alliteration of the words 'pang' and 'pain' does not, in consequence, remain as effective as it was earlier. In line 668 of the 1935 Faber edition ('The forms take shape in the dark air: '), the word 'The' is replaced by the word 'Its' in the Acting edition. The full stop (.) at the end of the line 671 of the 1935 Faber edition ('For laughter, laughter, laughter. The Lords of Hell are here. ') is replaced by a semi-colon (;) in the Acting edition. In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction at the end of Thomas' speech - that is, after line 717 ('To be my guardian, hover over the swords' points. ') - which marks the end of Part 1 of the play. In the Acting edition, the following stage direction occurs at the end of Thomas' speech: [*The Tempters go out.*]. The Acting edition does not say what

happens to Thomas, the Priests and the Chorus. Presumably, they remain on the stage. Only the exit of the Tempters is indicated, since they have no more roles to play. The words '*End of Part I.*' appear at the bottom of the page. There are no such words in the 1935 Faber edition.

**(e) Major Differences: Interlude**

2.5.1 The third and the fourth sentences of Thomas' sermon in the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'For whenever Mass is said, / we re-enact the Passion and Death of Our Lord; and on / this Christmas Day we do this in celebration of His / Birth. So that at the same moment we rejoice in His / coming for the salvation of men, and offer again to God / His Body and Blood in sacrifice, oblation and satisfac- / tion for the sins of the whole world.' (the second part of line 4, lines 5-9 and the first part of line 10).

2.5.2 The whole of the third sentence (the second part of line 4, lines 5 and 6 and the first part of line 7 of the 1935 Faber edition) and a part of the fourth sentence (the second part of line 7 and line 8 up to the word 'offer') - 'For whenever Mass is said, / we re-enact the Passion and Death of Our Lord; and on / this Christmas Day we do this in celebration of His / Birth. So that at the same moment we rejoice in His / coming for the salvation of men, and offer' - are dropped in the Acting edition. In its place is written: 'For at the moment when we celebrate the Birth of our Lord we shall be re-enacting His Passion and Death; at the moment when we rejoice in His Coming for the salvation of men, we offer'. The rest of lines 8-10 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'again to God His Body and Blood in sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.' - remains unchanged in the Acting edition.

2.5.3 This portion of the sermon, taken as a whole, reads as follows in the Acting edition: 'For at the moment when we celebrate the Birth of our Lord we shall be re-enacting His Passion and Death; at the moment when we rejoice in His Coming for the salvation of men, we offer again to God His Body and Blood in sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.'

2.5.4 The second part of line 27 and lines 28-29 in the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: 'Does it seem to you that the angelic voices / were mistaken, and that the promise was a disappoint- /

ment and a cheat?'. This remains unchanged in the Acting edition. The last words of this sentence are remarkably close to what the Tempters say at one stage of their argument: 'Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment; / All things are unreal, / Unreal or disappointing:' (lines 614-616 of Part I of the 1935 Faber edition, which remain the same in the Acting edition). How is it that Thomas speaks in the language of the Tempters? Why does he find it necessary to comment on the 'angelic voices'? The point Thomas is trying to make – that the peace of God is different from the peace of man and that the divine word is infallible - could have been made without asking the kind of question which has been asked. It is surprising that this escaped the notice of the Director or whoever was responsible for preparing the Acting edition and that he did not cut it out.

2.5.5 The second part of line 69, lines 70-71 and the first part of line 71 are as follows in the 1935 Faber edition: 'Ambition fortifies the will / of man to become ruler over other men: it operates / with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action / of impurity upon impurity. Not so in Heaven.' These lines are dropped in the Acting edition.

2.5.6 The last part of line 76, lines 77-78 and the first part of line 79 in the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: 'for the true martyr is he who has / become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in / the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has / found freedom in submission to God.'. The words 'not lost it but found it, for he has / found freedom in submission to God.' are not there in the Acting edition.

2.5.7 The last part of line 95, line 96 and the first part of line 97 in the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: 'I would have you keep in your / hearts these words that I say, and think of them at / another time.'. This sentence in the Acting edition reads as follows: 'I would have you / ponder no longer on these things now, but at a later time.'. This is, I think, a minor change and therefore inconsequential.

#### **(f) Minor Differences: Interlude**

2.6.1 In the 1935 Faber edition, the following stage direction is given immediately after the word 'Interlude': 'THE ARCHBISHOP

*/ preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning, 1170*'. This is deleted in the Acting edition. In its place is written: 'CHRISTMAS DAY, IN THE CATHEDRAL.'. This is followed by the following: *'The Sermon preached by the Archbishop Thomas to the people.'*

2.6.2 Line 4 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'masses of Christmas Day. For whenever Mass is said,'. In the Acting edition, the word 'masses' of this line is changed into the word 'mass'.

2.6.3 The last part of line 13 and line 14 of the 1935 Faber edition read as follows: 'and on earth / peace, good will toward men'; at this time of all'. In the Acting edition, this portion is a little different: 'and on earth / peace to men of good will'; in the same night then,'. Eliot had used the King James version of the Bible while writing these lines, but 'realising that Becket would have spoken the Vulgate text', he changed it 'to a translation of the Latin' (Browne 78).

2.6.4 There is, in the 1935 Faber edition, no punctuation mark in the next line (line 15): 'the year that we celebrate at once the Birth of Our'. In the Acting edition, there is a comma (,) after the word 'year'.

2.6.5 Line 18 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'fashion: For who in the World will both mourn and rejoice'. In the Acting edition, the word 'for' is spelt with a small 'f'.

2.6.6 Line 37 of the 1935 Faber edition reads as follows: 'singing to the children? Those men His disciples knew'. In the Acting edition, the word 'Those' has been replaced by the word 'These'.

2.6.7 Line 46 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'never thought. Not only do we at the feast of Christmas'. The words 'at the feast of Christmas' are not there in the Acting edition. The words 'in this one night' have been inserted in their place. The word 'on' in line 48 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'but on the next day we celebrate the martyrdom of His' - is dropped in the Acting edition. The last part of line 49, line 50 and the first part of line 51 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: 'Is it an accident, do / you think, that the day of the first martyr follows im- / mediately the day of the Birth of Christ?'. In the Acting edition, the word

'follows' in this sentence has been replaced by the word 'comes' and the word 'after' has been added after the word 'immediately'.

2.6.8 Line 61 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Christian: for that would be solely to mourn. We do not'. Line 63 of the same edition is as follows: 'elevated to the company of Saints: for that would'. The colon (:) in both the lines is replaced by a semi-colon (;) in the Acting edition. The first part of line 65 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'rejoicing is as the world's is'. In the Acting edition, the word 'is' after the word 'rejoicing' is replaced by the words 'should be'. Line 82 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'and rejoices at once, in a fashion that the world cannot'. In the Acting edition, the word 'fashion' in this line has been replaced by the word 'way'.

2.6.9 Line 88 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'the martyrs of the past, asking you to remember especially'. In the Acting edition, the words 'whom we have had,' are used in place of the words 'of the past'. The word 'Peace' in line 91 of the 1935 Faber edition ('remember what is that Peace which He brought; and') has been spelt with a small 'p' in the Acting edition.

### **(g) Major Differences: Part II**

2.7.1 Lines 59-62 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘However certain our expectation  
The moment foreseen may be unexpected  
When it arrives. It comes when we are  
Engrossed with matters of other urgency.’

These lines are dropped in the Acting edition. If this is a general statement - that is, if Thomas says this without anything in particular in mind - this may certainly be dropped. But is this one? What does Thomas mean when he speaks of the ‘moment foreseen’? If this statement is read along with the statement which follows it immediately, as it should be, it acquires a new meaning. The statement that follows it is as follows: ‘On my table you will find / The papers in order, and the documents signed.’ (lines 63-64 of the 1935 Faber edition). This clearly indicates that Thomas foresees a time when he would not be available for signing papers

or for organizing them. In a context like this, dropping these lines cannot be said to be justified at all.

2.7.2 Lines 147-148 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘Let them go to him, upon whom redounds  
Their contempt towards me, their contempt towards the  
Church shown.’

These lines are dropped in the Acting edition. Thomas had made his point already when he said, a moment earlier, ‘But it is not I / Who can loose whom the Pope has bound’ (lines 145-146 of the 1935 Faber edition). Lines 147-148 are, therefore, unnecessary.

2.7.3 Lines 154-155 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘Seven years a mendicant on foreign charity  
I lingered abroad: seven years is no brevity.’

These lines are not there in the Acting edition. This is one rare occasion when Thomas speaks poetry. Cutting these lines out means depriving the audience from listening to poetry from Thomas’ mouth. These lines are necessary also from the point of view of drama. Recall what Thomas says in the immediately preceding lines: ‘seven years were my people without / My presence; seven years of misery and pain.’ (lines 152-153 the 1935 Faber edition). In these lines, Thomas speaks of the suffering his people had to undergo because of his absence. In the lines cut out in the Acting edition, Thomas speaks of his own suffering. The lines cut out are, therefore, complementary to the lines that precede them. They complete the circle and the picture.

2.7.4 Thomas speaks lines 163 and 164 of the 1935 Faber edition:

‘It is not I who insult the King,  
And there is higher than I or the King.’

There is another line in between these two lines in the Acting edition, with the comma (,) at the end of line 163 dropped and the word ‘And’ in line 164 replaced by the word ‘For’:

‘It is not I who insult the King

But those who would have him more than King.

For there is higher than I or the King.’

2.7.5 Again, in between lines 164 and 165 of the 1935 Faber edition (‘And there is higher than I or the King. / It is not I, Becket from Cheapside,’), spoken by Thomas, four new lines are added in the Acting edition:

‘I am no traitor, no enemy of the State;

The King is his own enemy, the State the State’s.

The law of God is above the law of man,

The Kingdom of God above the Kingdom of man.’

2.7.6 Is there, in the newly added line ‘But those who would have him more than King.’ (paragraph 2.7. 4 above), a hint that the King has gone beyond his limits and turned into a despot? If there is, it is strengthened by another line, which follows shortly: ‘The King is his own enemy, the State the State’s.’ The other lines added - ‘The law of God is above the law of man, / The law of God is above the law of man’ - are, unfortunately, far too commonplace.

2.7.7 Lines 169-172 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, are missing in the Acting edition:

‘Go then to Rome, or let Rome come

Here, to you, in the person of her most unworthy son.

Petty politicians in your endless adventure!

Rome alone can absolve those who break Christ’s  
indenture.’

I do not think that dropping these lines makes much of a difference to the play.

2.7.8 Lines 184-188 of the 1935 Faber edition are dropped in the Acting edition:

‘Pursue those who flee, track down those who evade;

Come for arrest, come with the sword,

Here, here, you shall find me ready, in the battle of the  
Lord.

At whatsoever time you are ready to come,

You will find me still more ready for martyrdom.’

It is good that these have been dropped, especially line 188 ('You will find me still more ready for martyrdom.'), which seriously damages Thomas' cause and compromises him beyond redemption. How can Thomas or anyone be 'ready for martyrdom'? Dying and becoming a martyr are two entirely different things. How does one know beforehand that one is going to be a martyr - treated differently from others, revered, perhaps elevated to the rank of the saints?

2.7.9 The second part of line 207 and lines 208-216 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Chorus, do not occur in the Acting edition. The lines are:

'It was here, in the kitchen, in the passage,  
In the mews in the barn in the byre in the market place  
In our veins our bowels our skulls as well  
As well as in the plottings of potentates  
As well as in the consultation of powers.  
What is woven on the loom of fate  
What is woven in the councils of princes  
Is woven also in our veins, our brains,  
Is woven like a pattern of living worms  
In the guts of the women of Canterbury.'

The last two lines (lines 215-216) - 'Is woven like a pattern of living worms / In the guts of the women of Canterbury.' - are revolting, as are some other lines in the same passage, preceding the lines dropped. One may recall the first part of line 195 ('Laughter in the noises of beasts that make strange noises: jackal, jackass, jackdaw'), or line 196 ('Grey necks twisting, rat tails twining, in the thick light of dawn') by way of illustration. Do lines 215-216 help the audience to understand the condition of the women of Canterbury any better? I don't think so. First, the audience had enough of a shock already. The Chorus has already 'smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened / by subtle forebodings' (line 189 and the first part of line 190 of the 1935 Faber edition). This is repeated immediately after the lines dropped in the Acting edition: 'I have smelt them, the death-bringers; now is too late / For action, too soon for contrition.' (lines 217-218 of the 1935 Faber edition). This alone should be good enough to show



the state these women are in. Secondly, the effectiveness of lines 215-216 is, I think, diminished by the fact that these are spoken by the women of Canterbury themselves. If these were spoken by anyone else - that is, if it were a view from outside - things would have been, perhaps, different. Thirdly, the words 'the plottings of potentates', 'the consultation of powers' and 'the councils of princes' seem a distant echo of what the Second Priest had said soon after the opening of the play: 'What does the Archbishop do, and our Sovereign Lord the Pope / With the stubborn King and the French King / In ceaseless intrigue, combinations, / In conference, meetings accepted, meetings refused, / Meetings unended or endless / At one place or another in France?' (lines 53-58 of Part I of the 1935 Faber edition). Finally, elaboration of the kind made in the lines dropped - 'In the mews in the barn in the byre in the market place / In our veins our bowels our skulls as well', for example - is a technique of poetry, aimed at highlighting certain things and at creating music. In a verse play, there is very little scope for elaboration, since things move fast and the audience has no time to concentrate on anything in particular. Again, in poetry, creating music may not only be very necessary, it may even be crucial at times. It may not be so in a verse play, since the audience is busy watching things on the stage.

2.7.10 Lines 236-241 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

'You shall forget these things, toiling in the household,  
You shall remember them, droning by the fire,  
When age and forgetfulness sweeten memory  
Only like a dream that has often been told  
And often been changed in the telling. They will seem  
unreal.

Human kind cannot bear very much reality.'

These lines are dropped in the Acting edition. For a number of reasons, they seem unnecessary. First, never before did Thomas address the Chorus. Why does he do so now? Secondly, how does it matter to Thomas if the story of his death is changed in the telling of the story? Thirdly, how are these lines related either to the theme or to the events of the play? My only regret is that a fine specimen of poetry is sacrificed. [Incidentally, the line 'Human

kind cannot bear very much reality.’ is repeated in *Burnt Norton* as ‘human kind / Cannot bear very much reality.’ (Eliot: 1963: 190), but the context is very different. Eliot had, obviously, a weakness for the line, though there is no evidence to show that he did anything to retain it in the Acting edition.]

2.7.11 Line 246 of the 1935 Faber edition, except the word ‘in’ with which it begins, and line 247 are as follows: ‘We can barricade the minster doors. You cannot / stay here. Force him to come. Seize him.’ These, spoken by the Priests trying to persuade Thomas to go to a safer place, are deleted in the Acting edition. In spite of the deletion, the feeling of danger remains as shattering as before. Lines 252 and 253 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken again by the Priests, too have been cut out in the Acting edition. These are: ‘My Lord, they are coming. They will break through presently. / You will be killed. Come to the altar.’

2.7.12 In between the lines cut out - lines 246-247 on the one hand and lines 252-253 on the other - lines 248-251 of the 1935 Faber edition remain unchanged in the Acting edition:

‘All my life they have been coming, these feet. All my  
life

I have waited. Death will come only when I am worthy,

And if I am worthy, there is no danger.

I have therefore only to make perfect my will.’

[Line 251 may remind one of *Choruses from ‘The Rock’* (Eliot: 1963: 163), where the Rock says:

‘I say to you: *Make perfect your will.*

I say: take no thought of the harvest,

But only of proper sowing.’]

2.7.13 Lines 259-264 of the 1935 Faber edition, dropped in the Acting edition, are as follows:

‘That again is another theme

To be developed and resolved in the pattern of time.

It is not for me to run from city to city;

To meet death gladly is only

The only way in which I can defend

The Law of God, the holy canons.’

Thomas says this in response to the Priests' lamentation: 'What shall become of us, my Lord, if you are killed; what shall become of us?' (line 258 of the 1935 Faber edition). That Thomas 'can defend / The Law of God' only by meeting 'death gladly' is his view. This need not necessarily be the view of others. Dropping the lines kills an unnecessary controversy.

2.7.14 Lines 328-345 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, are not there in the Acting edition. These are:

'Unbar the door!  
You think me reckless, desperate and mad.  
You argue by results, as this world does,  
To settle if an act be good or bad.  
You defer to the fact. For every life and every act  
Consequence of good and evil can be shown.  
And as in time results of many deeds are blended  
So good and evil in the end become confounded.  
It is not in time that my death shall be known;  
It is out of time that my decision is taken  
If you call that decision  
To which my whole being gives entire consent.  
I give my life  
To the Law of God above the Law of Man.  
Those who do not the same  
How should they know what I do?  
How should you know what I do? Yet how much more  
Should you know than these madmen beating on the door.'

2.7.15 The Knights have left, but threatened to return, this time to obtain 'the King's justice' (line 183 the 1935 Faber edition). The First Knight has said that Thomas had 'spoken in peril' of his 'life' (line 173 of the 1935 Faber edition). The Chorus has 'smelt / Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock, sweet pea, hyacinth, primrose and cowslip' (line 198-199 of the 1935 Faber edition). The Priests are trying desperately to save Thomas' life. The situation is tense, very tense. Is this the time to make a long speech and that, too, a philosophical one? The deletion of lines 328-345 under these

circumstances is perfectly understandable from the point of view of the theatre. No one is in a mood to listen to Thomas, neither the Priests, whom he addresses, nor, I suppose, the audience.

2.7.16 But the situation may be seen from a different point of view as well. Thomas had to make clear why he had taken the decision to keep the doors of the Church open - 'Unbar the door!' (line 328 of the 1935 Faber edition, which is deleted in the Acting edition), and 'Unbar the door! unbar the door!' (line 346 of the 1935 Faber edition, which remains unchanged in the Acting edition) - and this was his last chance to do so. Earlier also Thomas had asked the Priests to 'throw open the doors' (line 313 of the 1935 Faber edition), adding: 'The church shall be open, even to our enemies.' (line 319 of the 1935 Faber edition). But this is something that must be said about any place of worship at any time and everyone would say it. When the Knights return, Thomas tells them that he is 'No traitor to the King' (line 369 of the 1935 Faber edition); that he is a 'Christian, saved by the blood of Christ' (line 370 of the 1935 Faber edition); and that he is 'ready to die', so that the 'Church may have peace and liberty' (line 381-382 of the 1935 Faber edition). These do not explain his personal stand as his statement deleted in the Acting edition does: 'It is not in time that my death shall be known; / It is out of time that my decision is taken' (lines 336-337 of the 1935 Faber edition), and 'I give my life / To the Law of God above the Law of Man' (lines 340-341 of the 1935 Faber edition). However desirable from the point of view of the theatre, the lines deleted deprive the audience of a full view of Thomas.

2.7.17 Line 351 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: 'Now is the triumph of the Cross, now'. In the Acting edition, two words - 'and always!' - have been added to line 351 at the end. In the Acting edition, a new line has also been added after the line. The new line is as follows: 'Through suffering, persecution, our victory comes.'. These lines in the Acting edition read as follows:

'Now is the triumph of the Cross, now and always!  
Through suffering, persecution, our victory comes.'

2.7.18 Lines 406-420 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Chorus, are as follows:

‘We did not wish anything to happen.  
We understood the private catastrophe,  
The personal loss, the general misery,  
Living and partly living;  
The terror by night that ends in daily action,  
The terror by day that ends in sleep;  
But the talk in the market-place, the hand on the broom,  
The nighttime heaping of the ashes,  
The fuel laid on the fire at daybreak,  
These acts marked a limit to our suffering.  
Every horror had its definition,  
Every sorrow had a kind of end:  
In life there is not time to grieve long.  
But this, this is out of life, this is out of time,  
An instant eternity of evil and wrong.’

These are not there in the Acting edition.

2.7.19 Lines in Part I of the play similar to these - lines 22 to 29 (‘King rules or barons rule’ . . . ‘Preferring to pass unobserved’), or lines 170 to 176 (‘We have kept the feasts, heard the masses’ . . . ‘Living and partly living’), for example - were cut out in the Acting edition. In order to be consistent, lines 406-420 of Part II had to go too. Secondly, the women of the Chorus speak about ‘the talk in the market-place’, ‘the hand on the broom’, the ‘nighttime heaping of the ashes’ and the ‘fuel laid on the fire at daybreak’ at the very moment when Thomas is being killed right before their eyes. This is unbelievable. The women of the Chorus seem far too concerned with themselves to play the role of dispassionate witnesses. It may be argued that they speak in these terms in order to bring into sharp focus the contrast between their life before and after Thomas’ death. But this can be done even without recalling such details as they do. Simply saying that ‘The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood’ (line 400 of the 1935 Faber edition, which remains unchanged in the Acting edition) is good enough. This the Chorus says soon after the Knights proceed to implement their cruel design. In fact, the simpler the statement the greater the impact of the event, providing the audience with an opportunity to fully concentrate on the event

itself. Lastly, what *now* is the point in saying that the women of Canterbury ‘did not wish anything to happen’? What they feared might happen has happened. As they themselves say, ‘this is out of life, this is out of time, / An instant eternity of evil and wrong.’ (lines 419-420 of the 1935 Faber edition). These two lines should have been, I think, retained in the Acting edition, to show that the women of the Canterbury do not suffer from any illusion about the state they are in and that they understand its implications fully. They cannot change it. All that they can do now is to try to live with it. There is hardly any point in saying that they did not wish anything to happen.

2.7.20 Lines 437-439 and the first part of line 440 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: ‘For that reason I shall do no more than introduce the / other speakers, who, with their various abilities, and / different points of view, will be able to lay before you / the merits of this extremely complex problem.’ This is much shorter in the Acting edition: ‘For that reason I shall do no more than introduce the / other speakers.’.

2.7.21 The second part of line 471 and the first part of line 472 of the 1935 Faber edition - ‘you must have noticed / what a good show he put up at the end’ - are dropped in the Acting edition.

2.7.22 In the 1935 Faber edition, the First Knight, while introducing Hugh de Morville, says, ‘I think we will all agree that William de Traci has / spoken well and has made a very important point. The / gist of his argument is this: That we have been completely disinterested. But our act itself needs more / justification than that; and you must hear our other / speakers. I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville.’ (lines 478-483 of the 1935 Faber edition). The whole of this passage, except the last sentence - ‘I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville.’ - is dropped in the Acting edition.

2.7.23 The second part of line 501, lines 502-504 and the first part of line 506 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Hugh de Morville, are as follows: ‘Our King saw that the one thing need- / ful was to restore order: to curb the excessive powers of / local government, which were usually exercised for / selfish and often for seditious ends, and to systematize / the judiciary.’. The words ‘to curb the excessive powers of local government, which were usually exercised for selfish and often for seditious ends,’ are not

there in the Acting edition. The word ‘the’ before the word ‘judiciary’ is also dropped in the Acting edition. The sentence in the Acting edition reads as follows: ‘Our King saw that the one thing needful was to restore order and to systematize judiciary.’. The second part of line 505, lines 506-513 and the first part of line 514 of the 1935 Faber edition - ‘There was utter chaos: there were three / kinds of justice and three kinds of court: that of the / King, that of the Bishops, and that of the baronage. I / must repeat one point that the last speaker has made. / While the late Archbishop was the Chancellor, he whole- / heartedly supported the King’s designs: this is an im- / portant point, which, if necessary, I can substantiate. / Now the King intended that Becket, who had proved / himself an extremely able administrator–no one / denies that–’ - are dropped in the Acting edition. In place of the lines dropped, the following is added in the Acting edition: ‘With a view to assimilating the ecclesiastical jurisdiction to his own, the King designed that Becket’. The words ‘should unite the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop’ occur in the last part of line 514 and the first part of line 515 of the 1935 Faber edition, and also in the Acting edition. To these are added, in the Acting edition, the words, ‘and the latter post was conferred upon him at His Majesty’s instance.’. The line now reads as follows in the Acting edition: ‘With a view to assimilating the ecclesiastical jurisdiction to his own, the King designed that Becket should unite the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop and the latter post was conferred upon him at His Majesty’s instance.’.

2.7.24 The second part of line 515, lines 516-522 and the first part of line 523 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: ‘No one would have grudged him that; no / one than he was better qualified to fill at once these / two most important posts. Had Becket concurred with / the King’s wishes, we should have had an almost ideal / State: a union of spiritual and temporal administra- / tion, under the central government. I knew Becket / well, in various official relations; and I may say that I / have never known a man so well qualified for the / highest rank of the Civil Service.’ These lines are dropped in the Acting edition.

2.7.25 Lines 524-525 and the first part of line 526 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: ‘The moment that Becket, at the King’s instance, had / been made Archbishop, he resigned the

office of Chan- / cellor'. This is a little different in the Acting edition: 'Becket at once resigned the Chancellorship'. The last part of line 526 and lines 527-533 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Hugh de Morville, are not there in the Acting edition: 'he became more priestly than the priests, he / ostentatiously and offensively adopted an ascetic man- / ner of life, he openly abandoned every policy that he / had heretofore supported; he affirmed immediately / that there was a higher order than that which our / King, and he as the King's servant, had for so many / years striven to establish; and that—God knows why— / the two orders were incompatible.'. This is substituted in the Acting edition by the following: 'and adopted the most ascetic mode of life, affirming that he now belonged to a higher order which was—God knows why!—incompatible with that which he, as the King's servant, had for years striven to establish.'. The Acting edition version is, basically, the same as that of the 1935 Faber edition, but much shorter. This is true also of what the other Knights say later.

2.7.26 The whole of the last paragraph of Morville's speech in the 1935 Faber edition - that is, lines 534-554 - is dropped in the Acting edition, except for a few words in the last sentence. The lines are: 'You will agree with me that such interference by an / Archbishop offends the instincts of a people like ours. / So far, I know that I have your approval: I read it in / your faces. It is only with the measures we have had to / adopt, in order to set matters to rights, that you take / issue. No one regrets the necessity for violence more / than we do. Unhappily, there are times when violence / is the only way in which social justice can be secured. / At another time, you would condemn an Archbishop by / vote of Parliament and execute him formally as a / traitor, and no one would have to bear the burden of / being called murderer. And at a later time still, even / such temperate measures as these would become un- / necessary. But, if you have now arrived at a just sub- / ordination of the pretensions of the Church to the / welfare of the State, remember that it is we who took / the first step. We have been instrumental in bringing / about the state of affairs that you approve. We have / served your interests; we merit your applause; and if / there is any guilt whatever in the matter, you must / share it with us.' This was replaced, in the Acting edition, by the following: 'A thousand pities! for had we fallen in with the King's intentions, we should have had an almost ideal state, administered



by a man better qualified than any I have known for the highest position in the Civil Service. You all will, I am sure, agree with me, and understand that in removing him when he had become a stumbling block in the way of national unity, we have tried to act as your servants; and if we have any guilt in the matter, you must share it with us.'

2.7.27 As the Knights address the audience, one of them says that the audience must share their guilt, 'if there is any' at all (line 552-554 of the 1935 Faber edition). Why should it? The Knights are, after all, 'addressing an audience of people living eight hundred years after they themselves are dead' (Eliot: 2009: 86). Whether or not an audience like this agrees to share their guilt is immaterial. The question of sharing guilt would, however, assume an entirely different dimension, turning relevant, if it is said that the Knights are actually addressing contemporary people though pretending not to.

2.7.28 The last word of line 555, lines 556-557 and the first word of line 558 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: 'It / seems to me that he has said almost the last word, for / those who have been able to follow his very subtle / reasoning.' This is deleted in the Acting edition. Similarly, the last part of 559, line 560 and the first part of line 561 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'If there / are any who are still unconvinced, I think that Richard / Brito will be able to convince them.' - are deleted in the Acting edition.

2.7.29 Lines 562-564 and the first part of line 565 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, are as follows: 'The speakers who have preceded me, to say nothing / of our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse, have all spoken very / much to the point. I have nothing to add along their / particular lines of argument.' This is deleted in the Acting edition. The last part of line 569, lines 570-581 and the first part of line 582 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: 'I am / obliged, very briefly, to go over the ground traversed / by the last speaker. While the late Archbishop was / Chancellor, no one, under the King, did more to weld / the country together, to give it the unity, the stability, / order, tranquility, and justice that it so badly needed. / From the moment he became Archbishop, he com- / pletely reversed his policy; he showed himself to be / utterly indifferent to the fate of the country, to be, in

/ fact, a monster of egotism, a menace to society. This / egotism grew upon him, until it became at last an un- / doubted mania. Every means that had been tried to / conciliate him, to restore him to reason, had failed. / Now'. This is not there in the Acting edition.

2.7.30 In the 1935 Faber edition, the First Priest is the first person to speak when the Knights finish speaking in self defence. In the Acting edition, however, it is the Third Priest who speaks first. The first three lines of the First Priest's words (lines 608-610 of the 1935 Faber edition) are as follows:

'O father, father, gone from us, lost to us,  
How shall we find you, from what far place  
Do you look down on us? You now in Heaven,'.

The Third Priest speaks the same lines in the Acting edition.

2.7.31 The Third Priest is followed by the Second Priest in the Acting edition. The first thing the Second Priest says is:

'Go, weak, sad men, lost erring souls, homeless in earth  
or heaven.'

In the 1935 Faber edition, this line (line 620) is spoken by the Third Priest.

2.7.32 Lines 621-632 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows:

'Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock  
Of Brittany, or the Gates of Hercules.  
Go venture shipwreck on the sullen costs  
Where blackamoors make captive Christian men;  
Go to the northern seas confined with ice  
Where the dead breath makes numb the hand, makes dull  
the brain;  
Find an oasis in the desert sun,  
Go seek alliance with the heathen Saracen,  
To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch  
Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,  
Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;  
Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.'

These are the words of an angry Third Priest, showing, in the process, how he lacks the Christian virtue of tolerance and forgiveness. There is no reason why should the audience be interested in what kind of a person the Third Priest is. The lines do not take the play forward in any way and are rightly deleted in the Acting edition.

2.7.33 The Second Priest goes on to say:

‘In the small circle of pain within the skull  
You till shall tramp and tread one endless round  
Of thought, to justify your action to yourselves,  
Weaving a fiction which unravels as you weave,  
Pacing forever in the hell of make-believe  
Which never is belief: this is your fate on earth’

These are lines 633-638 in the 1935 Faber edition, spoken there by the Third Priest.

2.7.34 In the Acting edition, the Second Priest is followed by the First Priest, who says:

‘Who shall now guide us, protect us, direct us?’

This is line 611 in the 1935 Faber edition, there too spoken by the First Priest. Line 612-613 and the first part of line 614 of the 1935 Faber edition are dropped in the Acting edition. These are:

‘After what journey through what further dread  
Shall we recover your presence? When inherit  
Your strength?’

The rest of line 614 and lines 615-616 of the 1935 Faber edition are also spoken by the First Priest in the Acting edition:

‘The Church lies bereft,  
Alone, desecrated, desolated, and the heathen shall build on  
the ruins,  
Their world without God. I see it. I see it.’

2.7.35 In the Acting edition, the Second Priest speaks again, following the First Priest:

‘No. For the Church is stronger for this action,  
Triumphant in adversity. It is fortified  
By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it.’

These are lines 617-619 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken there by the Third Priest.

2.7.36 The Second Priest concludes his speech in the Acting edition by saying what, in the 1935 Faber edition, constitutes the last part of line 639 and lines 640-644, spoken there by the Third Priest:

‘O my lord  
The glory of whose new state is hidden from us,  
Pray for us of your charity; now in the sight of God  
Conjoined with all the saints and martyrs gone before you,  
Remember us. Let our thanks ascend  
To God, who has given us another Saint in Canterbury.’

2.7.37 The last lines pave the way for the final Chorus.

#### **(h) Minor Differences: Part II**

2.8.1 In Part II of the 1935 Faber edition, the following stage direction is given after the list of characters: ‘*The first scene is in the Archbishop’s Hall, / the second scene is in the Cathedral, / on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1170*’. This is not there in the Acting edition. The following is written instead: ‘SCENE 1 - THE CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS’. This is followed by: ‘*Enter the First Priest, with a banner of St. Stephen borne before him.*’ In the 1935 Faber edition, this stage direction appears in italics on the top of the opening statement by the First Priest; the words ‘FIRST PRIEST’ are not, however, written in italics.

2.8.2 Line 1 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Priest, is as follows: ‘Since Christmas a day: and the day of St. Stephen, First Martyr.’. In the Acting edition, ‘St.’ has been written as ‘S.’, the word ‘First’ has been replaced by the word ‘the’ and the word ‘Martyr’ has been spelt with a small ‘m’.

2.8.3 In the 1935 Faber edition, the following stage direction is given before the entry of the Second Priest: ‘[*Enter the SECOND PRIEST, with a banner of St. John / the Apostle borne before him.*]’. The same stage direction occurs in the Acting edition, but without the words ‘*borne before him*’ and with a full stop (.) after the word ‘*Apostle.*’.

2.8.4 Line 7 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Second Priest, is as follows: ‘Since St. Stephen a day: and the day of St. John the Apostle.’. In the Acting edition, ‘St.’ has been written as ‘S.’ before both ‘Stephen’ and ‘John’: ‘Since S. Stephen a day: and the day of S. John the Apostle.’. Line 9 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken again by the Second Priest, is as follows: ‘Which was from the beginning, which we have heard.’. In the Acting edition, the word ‘Which’ at the beginning of the line has been replaced by the word ‘What’: ‘What was from the beginning, which we have heard.’.

2.8.5 In the 1935 Faber edition, the following stage direction occurs after line 14: ‘[*Introit of St. John is heard.*]’. The stage direction at this point in the Acting edition is as follows: ‘[*Introit of St. John sung.*’]. In the 1935 Faber edition, this is followed by another stage direction: ‘[*Enter the THIRD PRIEST, with a banner of the Holy Innocents borne before him.*]’. The same stage direction is given in the Acting edition, with a full stop (.) after the word ‘*Innocents*’. The words ‘*borne before him*’ along with the full stop (.) and the third bracket (]) are dropped: ‘[*Enter the THIRD PRIEST, with a banner of the Holy Innocents.*’.

2.8.6 Line 15 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Third Priest, reads as follows: ‘Since St. John the Apostle a day: and the day of the Holy Innocents.’ In the Acting edition, the line remains unchanged, though the word ‘St.’ is spelt as ‘S.’. Line 21 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken again by the Third Priest, is as follows: ‘The bloods of thy saints. In Rama, a voice heard, weeping.’. The line is the same in the Acting edition, but the comma (,) after the word ‘Rama’ is dropped there. The exclamation mark (!) at the end of line 22 of the 1935 Faber edition - ‘Out of the mouth of very babes, O God!’ – is replaced by a full stop (.) in the Acting edition. This line is followed by the following stage direction in the 1935 Faber edition: ‘[*THE PRIESTS stand together with the banners*

*behind them.】*. In the Acting edition, there is no bracket (]) at the end of the sentence.

2.8.7 Line 24 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Priest, is as follows: ‘Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping feast day.’. The line remains unchanged in the Acting edition, except for the words ‘in the Lord’, which are dropped. Line 29 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Second Priest, is as follows: ‘To-day, what is to-day? For the day is half gone.’. In the Acting edition, the word ‘For’ in this line is spelt with a small ‘f’ (‘for’).

2.8.8 Line 49 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First priest, is as follows: ‘If we did not offer you entertainment.’ In the Acting edition, the word ‘offer’ in this line has been substituted by the word ‘give’. In the second part of line 55 of the 1935 Faber edition – ‘Go, tell the Archbishop’ – there is a comma (,) after the word ‘Go’. In the Acting edition, the comma in this line is dropped. There is a stage direction after line 58 of the 1935 Faber edition: [*Enter THOMAS.*]. In the Acting edition, the third bracket (]) at the end of the stage direction is not there. This practice of not using the third bracket at the end of a stage direction is followed throughout the Acting edition.

2.8.9 No stage direction is given at the end of line 67 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas (‘Leave us then alone.’). In the Acting edition, a stage direction is given at this point: ‘The PRIESTS *retire.*’. This is followed, in the Acting edition, by another stage direction before line 68 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas (‘Now what is the matter?’), which remains unchanged in the Acting edition. This stage direction is as follows: ‘(*To KNIGHTS.*)’.

2.8.10 Line 70 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the four Knights, is as follows: ‘You are the Archbishop who was made by the King; whom he set in your place to carry out his command.’. In the Acting edition, the words ‘carry out’ in this line have been replaced by the word ‘enforce’. Line 73 of the 1935 Faber edition reads as follows: ‘You had your honours all from his hand; from him you had the power, the seal and the ring.’. This line is slightly different in the Acting edition; the words ‘from him you had’ are replaced there by the words ‘he gave you’: ‘You had your honours all from his hand; he gave you the power, the seal and the ring.’.

2.8.11 Line 91 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'Yes, we'll pray that God may help you!' - is spoken by 'THE FOUR KNIGHTS'. In the Acting edition, the words 'THE FOUR' do not occur. It simply says that the line is spoken by the 'KNIGHTS'. Line 92 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: 'But, gentlemen, your business'. The comma (,) after the word 'But' is dropped in the Acting edition. The first part of line 96 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: 'Loyal? to whom?'. In the Acting edition, the word 'to' is spelt with a capital 'T' ('To'): 'Loyal? To whom?'. Line 99 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Carefully, so it get not soiled or torn.' In the Acting edition, the word 'or' is replaced by the word 'and'. Thomas says that whatever the Knights have to say must be said 'Now and here!' (line 106 of the 1935 Faber edition). The words 'and here' are dropped in the Acting edition, and the exclamation mark (!) at the end of the sentence replaced by a full stop (.). I suppose this change is brought about for the actor to deliver the line quietly, taking the heat off. This might have been done to meet the demand of the theatre.

2.8.12 Line 119 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Seconds Knight, reads as follows: 'Made a pact of peace, and all dispute ended'. In the Acting edition, the comma (,) after the word 'peace' is replaced by a semi-colon (;). Line 127 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, is as follows: 'Binding with the chains of anathema,'. In the Acting edition, the word 'chains' has been replaced by the word 'chain'. Line 139 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: 'I would wish him three crowns rather than one,'. In the Acting edition, the comma (,) at the end of the line is replaced by a full stop (.).

2.8.13 Line 228 of the 1935 Faber edition reads as follows: 'O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop, forgive us, forgive us, pray for us that we may pray for you, out of our shame.' In the Acting edition, the words 'out of' are replaced by the word 'in': 'O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop, forgive us, forgive us, pray for us that we may pray for you, in our shame.'. Line 234 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy'. In the Acting edition, there is a comma (,) after the word 'sudden' in this line.

2.8.14 Line 254 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: ‘Peace! Be quiet! remember where you are, and what is happening;’. In this line, the comma (,) after the word ‘are’ is deleted in the Acting edition, and the semi-colon (;) at the end of the line replaced by a full stop (.). The Priests speak line 265 of the 1935 Faber edition: ‘My Lord, to vespers! You must not be absent from vespers. You must not be absent from the divine office. To vespers. Into the cathedral.’. The line remains unchanged in the Acting edition, but the word ‘divine’ is spelt with a capital ‘D’ (‘Divine’).

2.8.15 A stage direction is given after line 273 of the 1935 Faber edition (‘To vespers! Take his feet! Up with him! Hurry.’): ‘*[They drag him off. While the CHORUS speak, the scene is changed to the cathedral.]*’. The second sentence of this stage direction (‘*While the CHORUS speak, the scene is changed to the cathedral.*’) is not there in the Acting edition.

2.8.16 In the 1935 Faber edition, line 273 is followed by another stage direction after the word ‘Chorus’: ‘*[while a Dies Iræ is sung in Latin by a choir in the distance]*’. This stage direction is a little different in the Acting edition: ‘*[against a Dies Iræ in the distance.]*’.

2.8.17 Line 286 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Chorus, is as follows: ‘And behind the face of Death the Judgement’. There is no punctuation mark at the end of this line in the 1935 Faber edition. In the Acting edition, however, there is a comma (,) at the end of the line: ‘And behind the face of Death the Judgement,’. Line 295 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Chorus, is as follows: ‘From seeing itself, foully united forever, nothing with nothing,’. In the Acting edition, the comma (,) at the end of the line is replaced by a full stop (.). The next line (line 296) of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: ‘Not what we call death, but what beyond death is not death,’. The comma (,) at the end of the line is not there in the Acting edition.

2.8.18 There is, in the 1935 Faber edition, a stage direction after line 304 (‘Help me, Lord, for death is near.’): ‘*In the cathedral. THOMAS and PRIESTS.*’. This stage direction is not there in the Acting edition. Instead, in the Acting edition, the beginning of the second scene is indicated at this point:



‘SCENE II. IN THE CATHEDRAL.

*Vespers heard sung. The Priests bring Thomas in. Singing ceases and other monks enter.’*

There is a stage direction after The ‘PRIESTS’ speak the opening lines of the scene: ‘Bar the door. Bar the door’. There is, in the Acting edition, a stage direction on top of this line ‘[*Some go down and fasten the door.*’.

2.8.19 Line 327 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: ‘Who would damn themselves to beasts. My Lord! My Lord!’. In the Acting edition, the second ‘My’ is spelt with a small ‘m’: ‘Who would damn themselves to beasts. My Lord! my Lord!’.

2.8.20 Line 349 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: ‘And have conquered. We have only to conquer’. In the Acting edition, the words ‘the beast’ have been added after the word ‘conquered’: ‘And have conquered the beast. We have only to conquer’. Line 350 of the 1935 Faber edition, again spoken by Thomas, is as follows: ‘Now, by suffering. This is the easier victory.’. In the Acting edition, the full stop (.) after the word ‘suffering’ is replaced by a comma (,), the words ‘not by resisting’ added after the word ‘suffering’, a colon (:) added after the words ‘not by resisting’, the word ‘This’ replaced by the word ‘now’ and the full stop (.) after the word ‘victory’ at the end of the line is replaced by a comma (,)The line is thus changed into the following: ‘Now, by suffering, not by resisting: now is the easier victory.’. Thomas goes on to say: ‘Now is the triumph of the Cross, now’ (line 351 of the 1935 Faber edition). In the Acting edition, the words ‘and always’ have been added at the end of the line: ‘Now is the triumph of the Cross, now and always!’.

2.8.21 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction after line 365 (‘Come down Daniel and join in the feast.’). In the Acting edition, the following stage direction occurs at this point: ‘[*They have reached the foot of the stage.*’ ‘They’ means the Knights. In the 1935 Faber edition, nothing is written after the word ‘KNIGHTS’, or by its side, following line 376. In the Acting edition, the word ‘alternately’ appears here within first bracket after the word ‘KNIGHTS’: ‘KNIGHTS (alternately)’.

2.8.22 Line 386 in the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: ‘This I forbid.’ In the Acting edition, this line stands a little modified: ‘This I forbid you.’.

2.8.23 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction after line 393 (‘And what I owe shall now be paid.’). In the Acting edition, the following stage direction is given after this line: ‘*[All the Knights mount the stage]*’

2.8.24 Line 393 is followed, in both the 1935 Faber edition and the Acting edition, by Thomas’ last words. No stage direction is given at this point in the 1935 Faber edition. The following stage direction, however, occurs in the Acting edition: ‘THOMAS ( *bowed in prayer.*)’.

In the 1935 Faber edition, Thomas’ last words are followed by a stage direction: ‘*While the KNIGHTS kill him, we hear the / CHORUS*’.

This is a little different in the Acting edition: ‘CHORUS (*while the KNIGHTS kill him*)’.

2.8.25 Line 424 in the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: ‘Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take the stone from the stone, take the skin from the arm, take the muscle from the bone, and wash them. Wash the stone, wash the bone, wash the brain, wash the soul, wash them wash them!’ This remains unchanged in the Acting edition.

In the 1935 Faber edition, this line is followed by the following stage direction: ‘*[The KNIGHTS, having completed the murder, advance to the front of the stage and address the audience.]*’.

In the Acting edition, this stage direction is different: ‘*[The KNIGHTS come forward, hiding the body and the priests who weep over it, and address the audience.]*’.

2.8.26 The second part of line 426 and the first part of line 427 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: ‘We know that you may be disposed to judge / unfavourably of our action.’.

In the Acting edition, the word ‘know’ is replaced by the word ‘feel’.

The first part of line 463 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Second Knight, begins with the word ‘we’ in italics: ‘*we* are not getting a penny out of this.’.

The word is not written in italics in the Acting edition. This seems a little difficult to explain. Why shouldn’t the word ‘we’ be emphasized, as was done in the 1935 Faber edition? The word ‘state’ of line 465 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Second

Knight - 'God bless him—will have to say, for reasons of state,' - has been spelt with a capital 'S' ('State') in the Acting edition.

2.8.27 Lines 491-492 and the first part of line 493 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by Hugh de Morville, are as follows: 'I am going to appeal not to your emotions but to your / reason. You are hard-headed sensible people, as I can / see, and not to be taken in by emotional clap-trap.' In this line in the Acting edition, a semi-colon (;) is put after the word 'appeal', and another after the word 'reason'. The words 'You are hard-headed sensible people,' are dropped. In their place, the words 'for you are not,' are added. The words 'and not' are replaced by the word 'people'. This sentence finally reads as follows in the Acting edition: 'I am going to appeal; not to your emotions but to your reason; for you are not, as I can see, people to be taken in by emotional clap-trap.'

2.8.28 In the 1935 Faber edition, a new paragraph starts after lines 496-497: 'In the answer to these questions lies the key to the / problem.' The first sentence of the new paragraph is as follows: 'The King's aim has been perfectly consistent.' In the Acting edition, both the sentences are there, but as parts of the same paragraph. In other words, no new paragraph begins in the Acting edition with the sentence 'The King's aim has been perfectly consistent.'

2.8.29 The last part of line 523 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'And what happened?'. In the Acting edition, the word 'And' is replaced by the word 'But'. The last part of line 558 and the first part of line 559 of the 1935 Faber edition are as follows: 'We have, however, one more speaker, who / has I think another point of view to express.' In the Acting edition, there is, in this sentence, a comma (,) after the word 'has' and another after the word 'think': 'We have, however, one more speaker, who / has, I think, another point of view to express.' The first part of line 600 of the 1935 Faber edition is as follows: 'Suicide while of Unsound Mind.' In the Acting edition, this is written differently: ' "Suicide while of unsound mind" '.

2.8.30 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is the following stage direction after line 607 ('public outbreak.'): '[*Exeunt* KNIGHTS.]'. This stage direction is not there in the Acting edition. I would have preferred to see the stage direction of the 1935 Faber edition at this

point retained in the Acting edition: the Knights had no business to linger once their mission was accomplished. Moreover, it was very natural for them to leave the place of murder as soon as possible, looking for safety. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the Director had no choice but to let them stay. In the chapter house at Canterbury, where the play was performed, the 'only door to the building was at the back of the auditorium, ninety feet from the stage', making no entrance or exit possible except 'through the narrow central aisle between the seats' (Browne 56-57). Maybe the Director did not want the Knights to go down this narrow passage in full view of the audience, distracting its attention and disturbing the mood of the play.

2.8.31 The comma (,) at the end of line 610 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'Do you look down on us? You now in Heaven,' - is replaced in the Acting edition by an exclamation mark (!): 'Do you look down on us? You now in Heaven!'. There is a stage direction given in the Acting edition to show the contempt of the Second Priest when he speaks for the first time after Thomas' death: 'SECOND PRIEST (*looking after the Knights*)'. It is not there in the 1935 Faber edition.

2.8.32 In line 638 of the 1935 Faber edition, there is no punctuation mark at the end of the line: 'Which never is belief: this is your fate on earth'. When this line is spoken by the Second Priest in the Acting edition, a full stop (.) is put at the end of the line.

2.8.33 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is no stage direction at the end of the play. In the Acting edition, the following stage direction occurs when the play comes to an end: '[*The Saint's body is borne out, all following*']. The word *FINIS* appears in the Acting edition at the bottom of the page.

### **3. The 1935 Faber edition and the 1936 edition**

#### **(a) Major Differences: Part I**

3.1.1 None.

**(b) Minor Differences: Part 1**

3.2.1 None.

**(c) Major Differences: Interlude**

3.3.1 None.

**(d) Minor Differences: Interlude**

3.4.1 None.

**(e) Major Differences: Part II**

3.5.1 Lines 1-6 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Priest, are as follows:

‘Since Christmas a day: and the day of St. Stephen, First  
Martyr.

Princes moreover did sit, and did witness falsely against  
me.

A day that was always most dear to the Archbishop  
Thomas.

And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice:

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

Princes did sit and did witness.’

These lines are deleted in the 1936 edition.

3.5.2 Lines 7-14 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Second Priest, are as follows:

‘Since St. Stephen a day: and the day of St. John the  
Apostle.

In the midst of the congregation he opened his mouth.

Which was from the beginning, which we have heard,

Which we have seen with our own eyes, and our hands  
have handled

Of the word of life; that which we have seen and heard

Declare we unto you. There went this saying abroad

Yet Jesus said not unto him: He shall not die.

In the midst of the congregation.’

These lines too are deleted in the 1936 edition.

3.5.3 Lines 15-22 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the Third Priest, are as follows:

‘Since St. John the Apostle a day: and the day of the Holy  
Innocents.  
Out of the mouth of very babes, O God, and of sucklings,  
hast thou.  
As the voice of many waters, of thunder, of harps,  
They sung as it were a new song.  
The blood of thy saints have they shed like water,  
And there was no man to bury them. Avenge, O Lord,  
The blood of thy saints. In Rama, a voice heard, weeping.  
Out of the mouth of very babes, O God!’

These lines, again, are deleted in the 1936 edition.

3.5.4 Lines 23-28 of the 1935 Faber edition, spoken by the First Priest, are as follows:

‘Since the Holy Innocents a day: the fourth day from  
Christmas.  
Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping feast day.  
As for the people, so also for himself, he offereth for sins.  
He lays down his life for the sheep.  
He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him.  
Rejoice we all in the Lord. To-day?’

These lines are not there in the 1936 edition.

3.5.5 After line 28 of the 1935 Faber edition, the Second Priest, the First Priest and again the Second Priest speak a line each. These are lines 29, 30 and 31 respectively and are as follows:

‘SECOND PRIEST  
To-day, what is to-day? For the day is half gone.  
FIRST PRIEST  
To-day, what is to-day? but another day, the dusk of the  
year.  
SECOND PRIEST  
To-day, what is to-day? Another night, and another dawn.’

These lines are dropped in the 1936 edition.

3.5.6 Lines 32-37 in the 1935 Faber edition are spoken by the Third Priest. These are as follows:

‘What day is the day that we know that we hope for or fear  
for?’

Every day is the day we should fear from or hope from.  
One moment

Weighs like another. Only in retrospection, selection,  
We say, that was the day. The critical moment

That is always now, and here. Even now, in sordid  
particulars

The eternal design may appear.’

These lines, too, are deleted in the 1936 edition.

3.5.7 Dropping lines 1-37 of the 1935 Faber edition in the 1936 edition means that the entire section of the Priests’ dialogue before the arrival of the Knights on the scene is dispensed with.

3.5.8 In the 1936 edition, the following lines (lines 1-27), spoken by the Chorus, replace lines 1-37 that marked the beginning of Part II in the 1935 Faber edition, making the first scene of Part II - the scene before the Knights appear - shorter by ten lines:

‘Does the bird sing in the South?’

Only the sea-bird cries, driven inland by the storm.

What sign of the spring of the year?

Only the death of the old: not a stir, not a shoot, not a  
breath.

Do the days begin to lengthen?

Longer and darker the day, shorter and colder the night.

Still and stifling the air: but a wind is stored up in the East.

The starved crow sits in the field, attentive; and in the wood

The owl rehearses the hollow note of death.

What signs of a bitter spring?

The wind stored up in the East.

What, at the time of the birth of Our Lord, at Christmastide,

Is there not peace upon earth, goodwill among men?’

The peace of this world is always uncertain, unless men  
keep the peace of God.  
And war among men defiles this world, but death in the  
Lord renews it,  
And the world must be cleaned in the winter, or we shall  
have only  
A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest.  
Between Christmas and Easter what work shall be done?  
The ploughman shall go out in March and turn the same  
earth  
He has turned before, the bird shall sing the same song.  
When the leaf is out on the tree, when the elder and may  
Burst over the stream, and the air is clear and high,  
And voices trill at windows, and children tumble in front of  
the door,  
What work shall have been done, what wrong  
Shall the bird's song cover, the green tree cover, what  
wrong  
Shall the fresh earth cover? We wait, and the time is short  
But waiting is long.'

3.5.9 Since the lines dropped - lines 1-37 of the 1935 Faber edition - follow Thomas' sermon immediately, they may be seen in the light of what Thomas had said in his sermon. This is important also because the sermon of the 1935 Faber edition remains unchanged in the 1936 edition. Thomas basically makes three points in the sermon: first, he might not be able to 'preach' to his people ever 'again'; secondly, his people might have 'yet another martyr' in Canterbury - that is, one beside Archbishop Elphege; and, finally, this might happen 'in a short time'. These are the three points that make Thomas' sermon relevant to the play. The rest of it - rejoicing and mourning at one and the same time, or the peace Jesus gave his disciples is not 'peace as the world gives', or saints 'are not made by accident', for example - seems conventional, without much of a direct bearing on the play.

3.5.10 Thomas drops a clear enough hint in the first two of the three points he makes: he hopes to be a martyr. But how does one attain such heights? Recalling martyrs of the past might help one to remember, more closely than before, what they did and what they had to face by way of torture. This precisely is what the Priests do



in the first 22 of the lines dropped - from 'Since St. Stephen a day: and the day of St. John the Apostle' to 'Out of the mouth of very babes, O God!'. Whether or not Thomas would become a martyr is still uncertain. But these lines, along with the banners of St. Stephen, St. John and the Holy Innocents displayed and the introit sung, pave the way for one. All this is lost with the deletion of the lines in the 1936 edition.

3.5.11 How short is the time for Canterbury to get a new martyr? By counting days since Christmas the Priests show that it is really short. The Second Priest says, 'To-day, what is to-day?'. The First Priest echoes it. This sounds ominous. Something sad had happened on each of the days following Christmas. Why should this day be an exception? The Third Priest says, 'Even now, in sordid particulars / The eternal design may appear.' He does not specify the nature of the 'eternal design', since he does not know. But remembering the martyrs of the past, coupled with Thomas' apprehension that Canterbury is going to have another martyr soon, might lead one to believe that martyrdom is a part of the 'eternal design', if not the 'eternal design' itself. All this is lost with the deletion of the lines in the 1936 edition.

3.5.12 On the other hand, the inclusion of a new chorus at the beginning of Part II brings about a balance between Part I and Part II of the play. But this is unnecessary. There is no need for two parts, or for two or more acts, of a play to begin in the same way. I cannot at the moment recall any play in which this has happened, not even in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, where the second Act is, in a way, a repetition of the first, carefully so designed. Whether or not any two Act of a play should begin in the same way would depend on the nature of the play itself and on what is required of it to become a work of art, or a success on the stage, or both.

3.5.13 The chorus which marks the beginning of Part II in the 1936 edition can clearly and unmistakably be divided into two parts, the first containing lines 1-17 (from 'Does the bird sing in the South?' to 'A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest') and the second lines 18-27 (from 'Between Christmas and Easter what work shall be done?' to 'But waiting is long.'). In the first part, a general statement is made about 'the sea-bird' crying, 'driven inland by the storm'; 'the death of the old: not a

stir, not a shoot, not a breath'; longer 'and darker' days, 'shorter and colder' nights; the owl rehearsing 'the hollow note of death'; a lack of 'peace upon earth' and a lack of 'goodwill among men' at the time of the birth of Jesus; and the need for cleaning the world 'in the winter', in order to be spared a 'sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest.' In the second part, a question is asked about what is going to happen between 'Christmas and Easter', and about what wrong is going to be covered by 'the bird's song', 'the green tree' and 'the fresh earth'. It ends with the statement that 'the time is short', but the 'waiting is long', but does not say why the time is short and why the waiting long. The second part clearly shows that something is going to happen and that what would happen is going to be very wrong. No hint of such a catastrophe is given in the first part. The first part cannot, therefore, be said to lead to the second. The relation between the two, if any at all, is very thin.

3.5.14 It is not, therefore, surprising that the first seventeen lines of the chorus may be read independently, without any reference to the play at all. They would remain as moving as they are now even when so read. They have, unfortunately, no relation to what has gone before in the play, or to what is going to follow. They create a sense of doom, but this is a task the Chorus has already performed in Part I of the play, and performed very ably. The chorus is excellent poetry, both part one and part two, but poetry can have no place in a verse play unless dramatically necessary.

3.5.15 In the 1935 Faber edition, the Third Priest says that the 'eternal design may appear' 'even now' and do so 'in sordid particulars' (lines 36-37). As soon as he says this, the four Knights enter, 'briskly' (the stage direction after line 37 of the 1935 Faber edition). There is a direct link between what the Third Priest says and the appearance of the Knights - one may, in a way, be said to lead to another. This link is snapped in the 1936 edition. There the Knights appear immediately the Chorus. The last words of the Chorus are: 'We wait, and the time is short / But waiting is long.' This is far too philosophical a statement to relate to the circumstances obtaining in the cathedral at that time. The audience might not be prepared for the arrival of the Knights right at that moment, or, for that matter, so soon.

**(f) Minor Differences: Part II**

3.6.1 In Part II of the 1935 Faber edition, the following stage direction appears at the very beginning: ‘[Enter the FIRST PRIEST *with a banner of St. Stephen / borne before him.*]’. In between lines 6 and 7, the following stage direction is given: ‘[*Introit of St. Stephen is heard.*]’. This is followed by another stage direction at the same place: ‘[Enter the SECOND PRIEST, *with a banner of St. John / the Apostle borne before him.*]’. In between lines 14 and 15, the following stage direction is given: ‘[*Introit of St. John is heard.*]’. This is followed by another stage direction at the same place: ‘[Enter the THIRD PRIEST, *with a banner of the Holy / Innocents borne before him.*]’. Line 22 is followed by the following stage direction: ‘[THE PRIESTS *stand together with the banners behind / them.*]’. The stage direction after line 37 is as follows: ‘[Enter the FOUR KNIGHTS, *briskly. The banners dis- / appear.*]’. All these stage directions are deleted in the 1936 edition along with the deletion of the scene of the Priests’ conversation (lines 1-37 of the 1935 Faber edition).

3.6.2 In the 1935 Faber edition, there is a full stop (.) at the end of line 49: ‘If we did not offer you entertainment.’. This full stop is deleted in the 1936 edition: ‘If we did not offer you entertainment’.

**4. The 1936 edition and the 1937 edition****(a) Major Differences: Part I**

4.1.1 None.

**(b) Minor Differences: Part 1**

4.2.1 None.

**(c) Major Differences: Interlude**

4.3.1 None.

**(d) Minor Differences: Interlude**

4.4.1 None.

**(e) Major Differences: Part II**

4.5.1 Lines 115-120 of the 1936 edition are as follows:

‘Suspending those who had crowned the young prince,  
Denying the legality of his coronation;  
Binding with the chains of anathema,  
Using every means in your power to evince  
The King’s faithful servants, every one who transacts  
His business in his absence, the business of the nation.’

These lines are spoken by the Fourth Knight in the 1936 edition.

4.5.2 The lines remain unchanged in the 1937 edition, but are spoken by the First Knight, the Second Knight and the Third Knight in place of the Fourth Knight in the following manner:

‘FIRST KNIGHT

‘Suspending those who had crowned the young prince,  
Denying the legality of his coronation.’

SECOND KNIGHT

Binding with the chains of anathema.

THIRD KNIGHT

Using every means in your power to evince  
The King’s faithful servants, every one who transacts  
His business in his absence, the business of the nation.’

4.5.3 Lines 367-370 in the 1936 edition are spoken by the Knights and are as follows:

‘Absolve all those you have excommunicated.  
Resign the powers you have arrogated.  
Restore to the King the money you appropriated.  
Renew the obedience you have violated.’

The Knights may speak these lines together, or one by one. The 1936 edition does not give any further details as to how these lines should be delivered.

4.5.4 In the 1937 edition, the lines are assigned to different Priests in the following manner:

‘FIRST KNIGHT

Absolve all those you have excommunicated.

SECOND KNIGHT

Resign the powers you have arrogated.

THIRD KNIGHT

Restore to the King the money you appropriated.

FIRST KNIGHT

Renew the obedience you have violated.’

4.5.5 Such redistribution of lines is perhaps necessary, even good, from the point of view of the theatre, but whether or not it is so also from the point of view of drama is, to say the least, very doubtful.

#### **(f) Minor Differences: Part II**

4.6.1 Line 376 of the 1936 edition, spoken by the Knights, is as follows: ‘Traitor! traitor! traitor! traitor!’. The line remains unchanged in the 1937 edition, except for the repetition of the word ‘traitor’ twice instead of three times: ‘Traitor! traitor! traitor!’.

#### **(g) Appendix: 1937 edition**

4.7.1 There is an ‘Appendix’ in the 1937 edition. The word ‘Appendix’ is written on page 87. Page 88 is blank. On top of page 89, the word ‘Appendix’ is written again. This is followed by the following inscription: ‘OPRIGINAL OPENING OF PART II’. There is no appendix in any other edition of *Murder in the Cathedral*. This makes the Appendix in the 1937 edition unique.

4.7.2 The first 37 lines of the 1935 Faber edition are reproduced in this Appendix. This is the scene in which the Priests carry banners of various saints and explain their significance in the 1935 Faber edition. Since this scene marks the beginning of Part II of the 1935 Faber edition, it has rightly been described as the ‘OPRIGINAL OPENING OF PART II’. This scene remains unchanged also in the Acting edition. It was dropped in the 1936 edition.

4.7.3 An appendix is no part of a play. It would be absurd to ask for a performance of the Appendix after the play comes to an end. The Appendix of the 1937 edition, therefore, serves no purpose as far as the audience is concerned. In fact, the audience might not even know that there is such an Appendix. The readers of the 1937 edition might not be interested in the Appendix either. Why should they bother as to how Part II of the play had begun in some other edition? The Appendix of the 1937 edition is meant neither for the audience, nor for the readers, but for the director of the play. This offers him a choice. But the choice is short lived, for the Appendix is dropped in the fourth edition, which came out in September 1938, a little more than a year after the publication of the third edition in August 1937. I do not know if any director had taken advantage of the choice.

## **5. The 1937 edition and the 1938 edition**

### **(a) Major Differences: Part I**

5.1.1 Lines 76 to 85 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the First Priest, are as follows:

‘What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop  
Reunited with the King? What reconciliation  
Of two proud men? What peace can be found  
To grow between the hammer and the anvil? Tell us,  
Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast  
down  
That divided them? Is it peace or war? Does he come  
In full assurance, or only secure  
In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule,  
The assurance of right, and the love of the people,  
Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?’

5.1.2 In the 1938 edition, these lines, except the last one, are distributed among the First, the Second and the Third priests in the following manner:

‘FIRST PRIEST

What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop  
Reunited with the King? What reconciliation

Of two proud men?

THIRD PRIEST

What peace can be found

To grow between the hammer and the anvil?

SECOND PRIEST

Tell us,

Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast  
down

That divided them? Is it peace or war?

FIRST PRIEST

Does he come

In full assurance, or only secure

In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule,

The assurance of right, and the love of the people?

Line 85 of the 1937 edition - 'Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?' - is deleted in the 1938 edition.

5.1.3 Lines 210-211 and the first part of line 212 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

'They know and do not know, that acting is suffering  
And suffering is action. Neither does the actor suffer  
Nor the patient act.'

5.1.4 Since line 85 of the 1937 edition does not appear in the 1938 edition, these lines become lines 209-210 and the first part of line 211 in the 1938 edition. In the 1938 edition, the word 'acting' of the 1937 edition is replaced by the word 'action' and the word 'actor' of the 1937 edition by the word 'agent'. The lines in the 1938 edition read as follows:

'They know and do not know, that action is suffering  
And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer  
Nor the patient act.'

5.1.5 These are difficult lines and might mean different things to different persons. Even then, the change brought about in the 1938 edition seems to be an improvement. The concept of 'action' is equated with that of 'suffering'. They are thought to be the same.

The use of the word 'action' in both the lines - 'action is suffering' and 'suffering is action' - instead of 'acting' in one line and 'action' in another removes confusion and puts 'action' and 'suffering' at one and the same level. Again, an 'actor' and an 'agent' are not the same. One may act even on one's own, but an agent is a representative of someone else, someone usually higher. The idea of an 'agent' seems more in conformity with the idea of 'eternal action' and 'eternal patience' (line 212 of the 1938 edition) than that of an 'actor'.

5.1.6 Lines 341-344 of the 1937 edition are as follows:

'Fare forward, shun two files of shadows:  
Mirth merrymaking, melting strength in sweetness,  
Fiddling to feebleness, doomed to disdain;  
And godlovers' longings, lost in God.'

These lines are dropped in the 1938 edition. Browne, the director of the play, claims that Eliot agreed with him that the lines were 'over-obscure' (Browne: 45). It may be so, but if these lines were cut in consideration of their obscurity, many other lines had to be cut too. They were not. Whether the first speech of Thomas - lines 206-217 of the 1938 edition - was necessary to take the play forward, or to show what kind of a man Thomas was, is, I think, highly debatable. But it is very much there, in spite of its obscurity. It is not the speech which draws the attention of the audience; it is the return of Thomas which does. There is hardly any room in a verse play for the kind of ambiguity Empson finds in *A Game of Chess* or *The Waste Land* (Empson 77-74) - ambiguity that arises 'when two or more meanings are resolved into one' (Empson 48). For one thing, the playwright should be able to communicate with the audience at once, without any delay. For another, things move fast on the stage. The attention of the audience is diverted often. The reader of a poem can give the poem as much time as it needs. The audience of a play cannot give that kind of time to what it listens. The audience might not be able to take in the meaning of all the lines or passages immediately. They, nonetheless, make a general impression on it. It is this which enables the audience to follow the play, in spite of difficulties. This, I think, happens quite often in *Murder in the Cathedral*.



5.1.7 The first part of line 362 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: ‘Whose was it?’. The second part of the same line of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Second Tempter, is as follows: ‘His who is gone.’. Both the parts are deleted in the 1938 edition. This means that the whole line is dropped. This is the section which Eliot borrowed from *The Musgrave Ritual*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s short story. These are the very sentences with which the riddle in that short story begins. Since Eliot makes use of the rest of the riddle, deletion of these two lines makes no difference to the play.

5.1.8 Lines 466-468 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas, read as follows:

‘It is not better to be thrown  
To a thousand hungry appetites than to one.  
At a future time this may be shown.’

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition. Thomas argues that he would not have any one say that he had ‘betrayed a king’. The deletion does not affect the argument.

5.1.9 Lines 601-609 of the 1937 edition are a repetition of Thomas’ first speech - that is, lines 207-218 of the 1937 edition - but now spoken by the Fourth Tempter. These lines remain unchanged in the 1938 edition, except for the words ‘acting’ and ‘actor’, which are replaced by the words ‘action’ and ‘agent’\ respectively.

### **(b) Minor Differences: Part 1**

5.2.1 None.

### **(c) Major Differences: Interlude**

5.3.1 In the 1937 edition, the following appears in small letters after the stage direction ‘THE ARCHBISHOP / *preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning, 1170*’ and before the text of the sermon:

‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ *The fourteenth verse of the second chapter of the Gospel*

*according to Saint Luke. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.'*

The same passage occurs in the same place in the 1938 edition too, but the quotation from the Holy Bible is a little different. It reads as follow: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.'. The difference is explained by Eliot's use of a different text of the Holy Bible for the 1938 edition (Browne 78).

5.3.2 The second part of line 13 and the first part of line 14 of the 1937 edition are as follows: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth / peace, good will toward men'. These two lines in the 1938 edition are as follows: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth / peace to men of good will'. This change is in conformity with the change brought about in the quotation from the Holy Bible on top of the sermon.

5.3.3 The second part of line 69, lines 70-72 and the first part of line 73 of the 1937 edition are as follows: 'Ambition fortifies the will / of man to become ruler over other men: it operates / with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action / of impurity upon impurity. Not so in Heaven.'. This portion is deleted in the 1938 edition. Details such as these are unnecessary. They only serve to divert the attention from the main point.

5.3.4 The last part of line 72, lines 73-74 and the first part of line 75 of the 1937 edition read as follows: ' A mar-/ tyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God, for / His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to / bring them back to His ways.'. The words 'A martyr, a saint' in lines 72-73 are replaced by the words 'A martyrdom' and the words 'made by' dropped in the 1938 edition. These lines in the 1938 edition read as: 'A martyrdom is / always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn / them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways.'.

5.3.5 Lines 77-80 and the first part of line 81 of the 1937 edition are as follows: 'become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in / the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has / found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no / longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory / of martyrdom.'. In the 1938 edition, the words 'not lost it but found it, for he has / found freedom in submission to God. The martyr' are dropped.

The words 'The martyr' are replaced by the words 'and who', and the word 'martyrdom' by the words 'being a martyr'. In the 1938 edition, the section reads as follows: 'become the instrument of God, who has / lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer / longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory / of being a martyr.'

**(d) Minor Differences: Interlude**

5.4.1 In the 1937 edition, the very first sentence of Thomas' sermon on the Christmas morning of 1170 is as follows: 'Dear children of God, my sermon this morning will / be a very short one.' In the 1938 edition, the word 'Christmas' is inserted in between the words 'this' and 'morning': 'Dear children of God, my sermon this Christmas / morning will be a very short one.' Thomas refers to Christmas a number of times in his sermon. But references to Christmas need not be made only at the time of Christmas. They can be made at any time. The insertion of the word 'Christmas' makes one sure of the time of the sermon. The audience had no way of knowing this in the 1937 edition. In Part II of the 1938 edition, the Priests mark the passage of time immediately after the opening Chorus, covering the days after Christmas. Time assumes a crucial importance in the life of Thomas from the very moment the sermon is delivered.

5.4.2 The last part of line 2 and line 3 of the 1937 edition are as follows: 'I wish only that you should ponder / and mediate the deep meaning and mystery of our'. This is a little different in the 1938 edition: 'I wish only that you / should mediate in your hearts the deep meaning and'. The words 'ponder and' have been dropped and the words 'in your hearts' added in the 1938 edition.

5.4.3 The second part of line 23 of the 1937 edition is as follows: 'But think for a while on the meaning'. In the 1938 edition, the word 'But' is replaced by the word 'Now', the word 'while' by the word 'moment' and the word 'on' by the word 'about'. This part of the line in the 1938 edition is as follows: 'Now think for a moment about the meaning'.

5.4.4 The last part of line 65 and the first two parts of line 66 are as follows in the 1937 edition: 'A Christian martyrdom is / no accident. Saints are not made by accident.'. In the 1938 edition, the

word ‘no’ has been replaced by the word ‘never’ and the full stop (.) after the word ‘accident’ by a comma (,). The word ‘an’ is added before the word ‘accident’ and the word ‘for’ after the comma (,). The lines in the 1938 edition read as follows: ‘A Christian martyrdom is / never an accident, for Saints are not made by accident.’.

5.4.5 The last part of line 75 and the first part of line 76 of the 1937 edition are as follows: ‘A martyrdom is never / the design of man;’. The words ‘A martyrdom’ are replaced by the word ‘It’ in the 1938 edition: ‘It is never the design of man;’.

5.4.6 [‘It’ seems to be a better word in place of ‘A martyrdom’. Martyrdom cannot be quantified. Martyrdom can therefore hardly be described as ‘a’ martyrdom.]

5.4.7 The last part of line 84 and the first part of line 85 of the 1937 edition are as follows: ‘seeing themselves / not as we see them;’. In the 1938 edition, the words ‘seeing themselves’ are replaced by the words ‘and are seen’. In that edition, this part of the sentence reads as follows: ‘and are seen, not as / we see them;’.

### **(e) Major Differences: Part II**

5.5.1 The dialogue of the Priests, introduced in the 1935 Faber edition (lines 1-37), retained in the Acting edition, dropped in the 1936 edition, brought back as Appendix in the 1937 edition, is finally restored, in a slightly different form, to the main body of the play in the 1938 edition. The Appendix of the 1937 edition is done away with in the 1938 edition.

5.5.2 In the 1938 edition, Part II of the play opens with the Chorus beginning with the line ‘Does the bird sing in the South?’, as it does in the 1936 and the 1937 editions too. In the 1937 edition, this Chorus is followed by the arrival of the Knights. In the 1938 edition, it is followed by the dialogue of the Priests.

5.5.3 In the 1938 edition, the Priests seem to take up the theme of the Chorus and to take it to its logical conclusion. The last words of the Chorus are: ‘. . . what wrong / Shall the bird’s song

cover, the green tree cover, what wrong / Shall the fresh earth cover? We wait, and the time is short / But waiting is long.’ (lines 24-27 of the 1938 edition). That something wrong is going to happen, and to happen soon, is clear enough. The Chorus does not, however, spell out the nature of the wrong that is going to happen. It does not speak of martyrdom, not even of death. On the other hand, the Priests recall the martyrs of the past and the wrong done to them, and do so immediately after the Chorus has spoken. They recall how the princes ‘did witness falsely’ against a saint; how the First Martyr ‘kneeled down and cried with a loud voice: / Lord, lay not this sin to their charge’; and how the ‘blood of thy saints have they shed like water, / And there was no man to bury them’. All on a sudden a link is established between the wrong the Chorus speaks of, on the one hand, and martyrdom and the wrong done to martyrs, on the other. What the Chorus says is independent of what the Priests say. What the Priests say is independent of what the Chorus says. And yet the two appear, suddenly, to have some sort of a connection between them.

5.5.4 Lines 12-13 of the Appendix of the 1937 edition are as follows: ‘Declare we unto you. There went this saying abroad / Yet Jesus said not unto him: He shall not die.’. In the 1938 edition, the last part of line 12 and the whole of line 13 of the Appendix of the 1937 edition are deleted. In the 1938 edition, the line reads as follows: ‘Declare we unto you.’.

5.5.5 Lines 23-28 of the Appendix of the 1937 edition, spoken by the First Priest, are as follows:

‘Since the Holy Innocents a day: the fourth day from  
Christmas.

Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping feast day.

As for the people, so also for himself, he offereth for sins.

He lays down his life for the sheep.

He asked like of thee, and thou givest him.

Rejoice we all in the Lord. To-day?’

These lines are a little modified and distributed among the Priests in the following manner in the 1938 edition:

‘FIRST PRIEST

Since the Holy Innocents a day: the fourth day from  
Christmas.

THE THREE PRIESTS

*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day.*

FIRST PRIEST

As for the people, so also for himself, he offereth for sins.  
He lays down his life for the sheep.

THE THREE PRIESTS

*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day.*

FIRST PRIEST

To-day?’

Line 27 (‘He asked like of thee, and thou givest him.’) and the first part of line 28 (‘Rejoice we all in the Lord.’) of the Appendix of the 1937 edition are deleted in the 1938 edition. The words ‘*Rejoice we all*’ are repeated, and the words ‘keeping feast day’ replaced by the words ‘*keeping holy day*’, in the 1938 edition. ‘*Rejoice we all*’ may remind one of Thomas’ sermon. In the sermon, Thomas spoke of rejoicing and mourning at one and the same time, and for the same reason. The Priests now speak only of rejoicing. But mourning is implicit in their rejoicing, since, in the Christian context, rejoicing and mourning go together. The words ‘*keeping holy day*’ are better than the words ‘keeping feast day’, since the holy nature of the day is more important than any other thing. Any day can be a feast day. Any day cannot be a holy day.

5.5.6 Lines 159-162 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘Go then to Rome, or let Rome come  
Here, to you, in the person of her most unworthy son.  
Petty politicians in your endless adventure!  
Rome alone can absolve those who break Christ’s  
indenture.’

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition. Thomas had already made his point in the first six lines of this passage (lines 153-158 of the 1937 edition). Since this part of the passage remains unchanged in the 1938 edition, there is no need for any further elaboration.

5.5.7 Lines 165 and 166 of the 1937 edition are as follows: ‘Priest, you have spoken treachery and treason. / I submit my cause to the judgement of Rome.’. The first is spoken by the Third Knight; the second by Thomas. In the 1938 edition, a new line is inserted in between these two: ‘Priest! Traitor, confirmed in malfeasance.’ This is spoken by the Three Knights. This line reinforces what the Knights have spoken earlier.

5.5.8 Lines 169-172 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Knights, are as follows:

‘Priest! Monk! And servant! Take, hold, detain,  
Restrain this man, in the King’s name;  
Or answer with your bodies, if he escape before we come,  
We come for the King’s justice, we come again.’

In the 1938 edition, these lines are distributed among the Knights in the following manner:

‘FOURTH KNIGHT

Priest! Monk! And servant! Take, hold, detain,  
Restrain this man, in the King’s name.

FIRST KNIGHT

Or answer with your bodies.

SECOND KNIGHT

Enough of words.

THE FOUR KNIGHTS

We come for the King’s justice, we come swords.’

A few changes too have been brought about in the lines. The last part of line 171 of the 1937 edition - ‘Or answer with your bodies, if he escape before we come,’ – is deleted in the 1938 edition, making the line shorter: ‘Or answer with your bodies.’. A new line, spoken by the Second Knight, is added in the 1938 edition: ‘Enough of words.’. The word ‘again’ in line 172 of the 1937 edition is replaced by the word ‘swords’ in the 1938 edition: ‘We come for the King’s justice, we come swords.’ I prefer the line in the 1937 edition. Since the Knights threaten Thomas and the priests, their word that they would come back is good enough. It is not necessary to say that they would come back armed.

5.5.9 Lines 173-177 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘Pursue those who flee, track down those who evade;  
Come for arrest, come with the sword,  
Here, here, you shall find me ready, in the battle of the  
Lord.

At whatsoever time you are ready to come,  
You will find me still more ready for martyrdom.’

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition.

5.5.10 Lines 231-236 of the 1937 edition are as follows:

‘My Lord, you must not stop here. To the minster.  
Through the cloister. No time to waste. They are  
coming back, armed. To the altar, to the altar. They  
are here already. To the sanctuary. They are breaking  
in. We can barricade the minster doors. You cannot  
stay here. Force him to come. Seize him.’

In the 1938 edition, the last word of line 233 and lines 234-236 are deleted. The deleted portion is as follows:

‘They  
are here already. To the sanctuary. They are breaking  
in. We can barricade the minster doors. You cannot  
stay here. Force him to come. Seize him.’

The deletion gets rid of unnecessary details.

5.5.11 Lines 241-247 of the 1937 edition are as follows:

‘PRIESTS

My Lord, they are coming. They will break through  
presently.

You will be killed. Come to the altar.

THOMAS

Peace! be quiet! remember where you are, and what is  
happening;

No life here is sought for but mine,

And I am not in danger: only near to death.



PRIESTS

Make haste, my Lord. Don't stop here talking. It is not  
right.

What shall become of us, my Lord, if you are killed;  
what shall become of us?'

The lines remain unchanged in the 1938 edition, but the  
arrangement is altered:

'PRIESTS

My Lord, they are coming. They will break through  
presently.

You will be killed. Come to the altar.

Make haste, my Lord. Don't stop here talking. It is not  
right.

What shall become of us, my Lord, if you are killed;  
what shall become of us?'

THOMAS

Peace! be quiet! remember where you are, and what is  
happening;

No life here is sought for but mine,

And I am not in danger: only near to death.'

5.5.12 Lines 248-253 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas,  
are as follows:

'That again is another theme

To be developed and resolved in the pattern of time.

It is not for me to run from city to city;

To meet death gladly is only

The only way in which I can defend

The Law of God, the holy canons.'

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition.

5.5.13 Lines 298-299 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Priests,  
are as follows:

'The enemy may rage outside, he will tire

In vain. They cannot break in.'

These lines are not there in the 1938 edition.

5.5.14 Line 318 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: 'Unbar the door!' This line is dropped in the 1938 edition. A little later, Thomas says: 'Unbar the door! unbar the door!' (line 335 of the 1937 edition). This line remains unchanged in the 1938 edition. In this passage, Thomas explains his stand, and, having explained it, asks the Priests to unbar the door. This is the logical conclusion of Thomas' argument. Line 318 is not so. It is abrupt. Deleting the line seems therefore to be in order.

5.5.15 Lines 331-334 of the 1937 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

'Those who do not the same  
How should they know what I do?

How should you know what I do? Yet how much more  
Should you know than these madmen beating on the door.'

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition. They do not make any point absolutely necessary to understand Thomas' stand.

5.5.16 The second part of line 494, lines 495-500 and the first part of line 501 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Second Knight, are as follows: 'There was utter chaos: there were three / kinds of justice and three kinds of court: that of the / King, that of the Bishops, and that of the baronage. I / must repeat one point that the last speaker has made. / While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, he whole- / heartedly supported the King's designs: this is an im- / portent point, which, if necessary, I can substitute. / Now the King'. These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition, presumably for being unnecessary. The words 'Now the King intended that Becket', of the 1937 edition, are replaced in the 1938 edition by the words, 'He therefore intended that Becket'.

5.5.17 The last part of line 504, line 505 and the first part of line 506 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Second Knight, are as follows: 'No one would have grudged him that; no / one than he was better qualified to fill at once these / two most important posts.'. These are deleted in the 1938 edition. Earlier the Third Knight had said that 'personally' he had 'a tremendous admiration' for Thomas (line 459-460 of the 1937 edition, unchanged in the 1938 edition). The Second Knight, too, had said that Becket 'had



To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch  
Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,  
Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;  
Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.  
In the small circle of pain within the skull  
You still shall tramp and tread one endless round  
Of thought, to justify your action to yourselves,  
Weaving a fiction which unravels as you weave,  
Pacing 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. O my lord  
The glory of whose new state is hidden from us,  
Pray for us of your charity; now in the sight of God  
Conjoined with all the saints and martyr gone before you,  
Remember us. Let our thanks ascend  
To God, who has given us another Saint in Canterbury.’

5.5.21 These lines remain unchanged in the 1938 edition, but are divided among the Priests in the following manner:

‘THIRD PRIEST

No. For the Church is stronger for this action,  
Triumphant in adversity. It is fortified  
By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it.  
Go, weak sad men, lost erring souls, homeless in earth or  
heaven,  
Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock  
Of Brittany, or the Gates of Hercules.  
Go venture shipwreck on the sullen coasts  
Where blackamoors make captive Christian men;  
Go to the northern seas confined with ice  
Where the dead breath makes numb the hand, makes dull  
the brain;  
Find an oasis in the desert sun,  
Go seek alliance with the heathen Saracen,  
To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch  
Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,

Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;  
Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.  
In the small circle of pain within the skull  
You still shall tramp and tread one endless round  
Of thought, to justify your action to yourselves,  
Weaving a fiction which unravels as you weave,  
Pacing 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.

FIRST PRIEST

O my lord

The glory of whose new state is hidden from us,  
Pray for us of your charity.

SECOND PRIEST

Now in the sight of God

Conjoined with all the saints and martyr gone before you,  
Remember us.

THIRD PRIEST

Let our thanks ascend

To God, who has given us another Saint in Canterbury.’

This division is, undoubtedly, made in the interest of the theatre. I do not see much point in it, though. In the 1937 edition, the speech of the Third Priest runs to 28 lines. Out of these 28 lines, the First Priest speaks a total of two lines (1/2+1+1/2) in the 1938 edition. The Second Priest too speaks two lines (1/2+1+1/2) in the 1938 edition. The rest is left, in the 1938 edition, to the Third Priest to deliver. If, in the 1938 edition, the Third Priest speaks 24 lines in place of 28 in the 1937 edition, I don’t think that the lines can be said to have been well distributed among the Priests in that edition.

#### (f) Minor Differences: Part II

5.6.1 The first stage direction in the Appendix of the 1937 edition is as follows: ‘*[Enter the FIRST PRIEST with a banner of St. Stephen / borne before him.]*’. A sentence is added to this stage direction in the 1938 edition: ‘*[Enter the FIRST PRIEST with a*

*banner of St. Stephen / borne before him. The lines sung are in italics.}]’.*

5.6.2 Lines 2 (‘Princes moreover did sit, and did witness falsely against me.’), 8 (‘In the midst of the congregation he opened his mouth.’) and 14 (‘In the midst of the congregation.’) of the Appendix of the 1937 edition are reproduced in the 1938 edition without any change. In the 1937 edition, these lines are not written in italics. In the 1938 edition, they are.

5.6.3 Line 6 of the Appendix of the 1937 edition is as follows: ‘Princes did sit and did witness.’. In the 1938 edition, this line is a little different: ‘*Princes moreover did sit.*’ It is written in italics. Line 6 of the Appendix of the 1937 edition was not. Line 16 of the Appendix of the 1937 edition is as follows: ‘Out of the mouth of very babes, O God, and of sucklings, hast thou.’. The words ‘and of sucklings, hast thou’ are dropped in the 1938 edition. The line is written in italics in the 1938 edition. In the 1937 edition, it was not.

5.6.4 Line 9 of the Appendix of the 1937 edition is as follows: ‘Which was from the beginning, which we have heard.’. In the 1938 edition, the word ‘That’ is added in the beginning of the line: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard.’.

5.6.5 The semi-colon (;) at the end of the line ‘Restrain this man, in the King’s name;’ (line 170 of the 1937 edition) is replaced in the 1938 edition by a full stop (.). There is a comma (,) in the last part of line 171 of the 1937 edition - ‘Or answer with your bodies, if he escape before we come.’. The comma (,) after the word ‘bodies’ is replaced with a full stop in the 1938 edition. (.)

5.6.6 In the 1937 edition, there is no stage direction after line 217 (‘O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop, forgive us, forgive us, pray for us that we may pray for you, out of our shame.’). In the 1938 edition, the following stage direction is given after this line: ‘*[Enter THOMAS.]*’. Similarly, in the 1937 edition, there is no stage direction after line 230 (‘Human kind cannot bear very much reality.’). In the 1938 edition, the following stage direction is given after this line: ‘*[Enter PRIESTS.]*’.

5.6.7 Line 263 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Priests, is as follows: ‘To vespers! Take his feet! Up with him! Hurry.’. The line

is shorter in the 1938 edition: 'To vespers! Hurry.' Cutting the words 'Take his feet! Up with him!' out hardly makes any difference. The line in the 1937 edition is, however, more vivid and therefore more appealing.

5.6.8 The last part of line 429, line 430 and line 431 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: 'I shall / call upon our youngest member to speak first. William / de Traci.'. In the 1938 edition, these lines remain virtually unchanged, though the word 'youngest' is replaced by the word 'eldest', and the words 'my neighbour in the country: Baron' added: 'I shall / call upon our eldest member to speak first, my neigh- / bour in the country: Baron William / de Traci.'. Since the person who is to speak next remains the same in both the editions, it is surprising that he is the youngest in one edition and the eldest in another. I do not know why this change was brought about and what did Eliot gain by it. Whether the Third Knight is a neighbour of the First Knight and a Baron are also unnecessary details.

5.6.9 The last part of line 440, line 441 and line 442 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Third Knight, are as follows: 'I dare say that / we didn't make a very good impression when we came / in.'. The sentence remains the same in the 1938 edition, except for the addition of the words 'just now' at the end: 'I dare say that we didn't / make a very good impression when we came in just / now.'. The Knights met Thomas twice, for the first time when they came to say that the King wished Thomas and his men to leave the land, and for the second time when they came back armed and killed Thomas. The words 'just now' make sure that the Third Knight is referring to the latter occasion.

5.6.10 When, in the 1937 edition, the First Knight calls upon the Second Knight to speak, he says: 'I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville.' (the last part of line 472).

5.6.11 In the 1938 edition, a few words - 'who / has made a special study of statecraft and constitutional / law' - are added at the end of the sentence by way of introducing the Second Knight and the Second Knight addressed as 'Sir': 'I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville, who / has made a special study of statecraft and constitutional / law. Sir Hugh de Morville'. Whether or not Morville is an expert on 'statecraft and constitutional law' is quite

irrelevant. It does not help one to follow his argument any better at all.

5.6.12 The last part of line 493 and the first part of line 494 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Second Knight, are as follows: 'and to systematize / the judiciary.'. In the 1938 edition, the words are: 'and to reform the / legal system.'. A legal system is more comprehensive than the judiciary. The change goes to show that the reforms the King wished to bring about were wide-ranging.

5.6.13 The last part line 549 and line 550 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: 'I think that Richard / Brito will be able to convince them. Richard Brito.'. In the 1938 edition, a few words are added to it: 'I think that Richard / Brito, coming as he does of a family distinguished for its loyalty to the Church, will be able to convince them. Richard Brito.'. I don't think that Brito's family background is of any consequence to the audience.

5.6.14 The first part of line 567 of the 1937 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, is as follows: 'fact, a monster of egotism, a menace to society.'. In the 1938 edition, the words 'a menace to society' are dropped.

5.6.15 In line 630 of the 1937 edition, the semi-colon (;) after the word 'charity' - 'Pray for us of your charity; now in the sight of God' - is replaced by a full stop (.) in the 1938 edition. The word 'now' is spelt with a capital 'N' in the 1938 edition: 'Now in the sight of God'.

## **6. The 1935 edition and the 1938 edition**

### **(a) Major Differences: Part I**

6.1.1 Lines 76 to 85 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the First Priest, are as follows:

'What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop  
Reunited with the King? what reconciliation  
Of two proud men? what peace can be found  
To grow between the hammer and the anvil? Tell us,



Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast  
down

That divided them? Is it peace or war? Does he come  
In full assurance, or only secure  
In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule,  
The assurance of right, and the love of the people,  
Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?’

In the 1938 edition, the lines remain unchanged, but are distributed among the Priests in the following manner:

‘FIRST PRIEST

What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop  
Reunited with the King? what reconciliation  
Of two proud men?

THIRD PRIEST

What peace can be found  
To grow between the hammer and the anvil?

SECOND PRIEST

Tell us,  
Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast  
down  
That divided them? Is it peace or war?

FIRST PRIEST

Does he come  
In full assurance, or only secure  
In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule,  
The assurance of right, and the love of the people?’

Line 85 of the 1935 edition - ‘Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?’ - is deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.1.2 Lines 210-211 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘They know and do not know, that acting is suffering  
And suffering is action. Nether does the actor suffer’.

In the 1938 edition, the word ‘acting’ is replaced by the word ‘action’ and the word ‘actor’ by the word ‘agent’:

‘They know and do not know, that action is suffering  
And suffering is action. Nether does the agent suffer’.

6.1.3 Lines 341-344 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Second Tempter, are as follows:

Fare forward, shun two files of shadows:  
Mirth merrymaking, melting strength in sweetness,  
Fiddling to feebleness, doomed to disdain;  
And godlovers' longings, lost in God.'

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.1.4 Line 362 of the 1935 edition is as follows:

‘THOMAS

Whose was it?

TEMPTER

His who is gone.’

This line is deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.1.5 Lines 466-468 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘It is not better to be thrown  
To a thousand hungry appetites than to one.  
At a future time this may be shown.’

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.1.6 Lines 602-603 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Tempter, are as follows:

‘You know and do not know, that acting is suffering  
And suffering is action. Nether does the actor suffer’.

6.1.7 In the 1938 edition, the word ‘acting’ is replaced by the word ‘action’ and the word ‘actor’ by the word ‘agent’:

‘You know and do not know, that action is suffering  
And suffering is action. Nether does the agent suffer’.

**(b) Minor Differences: Part 1**

6.2.1 In the 1935 edition, the stage direction after line 69 is as follows: '[Enter HERALD.]'. In the 1938 edition, the stage direction at the same place is as follows: '[Enter MESSENGER.]'. The character named as a Herald in the 1935 edition is named as a Messenger in the 1938 edition, the words spoken by him remaining the same in both the editions.

6.2.2 The second part of line 78 of the 1935 edition is as follows: 'what peace can be found'. Since this part of the line is assigned, in the 1938 edition, to a different character, 'what' is spelt with a capital 'W': 'What peace can be found'. In the 1935 edition, lines 76-78 are spoken by the First Priest. In the 19328 edition, the second part of line 78 is spoken by the Third Priest.

6.2.3 Line 244 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: 'Those who had sworn to have my head from me.'. The line remains unchanged in the 1938 edition. But the full stop (.) at the end of the line is deleted in Eliot's *The Complete Poems and Plays* (Eliot: 1969: 246).

6.2.4 The last part of line 330 and line 331 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Second Tempter, are as follows: 'The master of policy / Whom all acknowledged, should guide the state again.'. In the 1938 edition, the word 'You' is added at the beginning of the sentence and the word 'The' before the word 'master' deleted: 'You, master of policy / Whom all acknowledged, should guide the state again.'. In these lines, a Tempter pays a tribute to Thomas for his administrative ability. Ironically, the Knights, in Part II of the play, pay the same tribute to Thomas time and again.

6.2.5 Line 336 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Second Tempter, is as follows: 'Life lasting, a permanent possession,.'. In the 1938 edition, the comma (,) at the end of the line is replaced by a full stop (.).

6.2.6 Line 612 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Chorus, is as follows: 'Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up beneath my feet.'. In the 1938 edition, the words 'beneath my' are replaced by 'against our'. In the 1938 edition, the line reads as

follows: 'Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up against our feet.'

**(c) Major Differences: Interlude**

6.3.1 The quotation from the Holy Bible on top of Thomas' sermon is as follows in the 1935 edition:

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' *The fourteenth verse of the second chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke.*

In the 1938 edition, the latter part of this line from the Holy Bible is presented differently:

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. *The fourteenth verse of the second chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke.*

6.3.2 The quotation from the Bible is repeated in the sermon in both the 1935 and the 1938 editions. In the first, it is: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth / peace, good will toward men' (lines 13-14). In the 1938 edition, it reads: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth / peace to men of good will'.

6.3.3 The second part of line 69, lines 70-72 and the first part of line 73 of the 1935 edition are as follows: 'Ambition fortifies the will / of man to become ruler over other men: it operates / with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action / of impurity upon impurity. Not so in Heaven.' These sentences are deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.3.4 The last part of line 72, lines 73-74 and the first part of line 75 of the 1935 edition read as follows: 'A mar-/ tyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God, for / His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to / bring them back to His ways.' The words 'A martyr, a saint' in lines 72-73 are replaced by the words 'A martyrdom' and the words 'made by' dropped in the 1938 edition. These lines in the 1938 edition read as: 'A martyrdom is / always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn / them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways.'

6.3.5 The last part of line 75, lines 76-80 and the first part of line 81 of the 1935 edition are as follows: 'A martyrdom is never / the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has / become the

instrument of God, who has lost his will in / the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has / found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no / longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory / of martyrdom.’ In the 1938 edition, (a) the words ‘A martyrdom’ are replaced by ‘It’; (b) the words ‘not lost it but found it, for he has / found freedom in submission to God.’ are deleted; (c) the words ‘The martyr’ are replaced by the words ‘and who’; and (d) the word ‘martyrdom’ is replaced by the words ‘being a martyr’. This portion reads as follows in the 1938 edition: ‘It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is / he who has become the instrument of God, who has / lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer / desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being / a martyr.’.

**(d) Minor Differences: Interlude**

6.4.1 In the 1935 edition, Thomas begins his sermon with the words: ‘Dear children of God, my sermon this morning will / be a very short one.’ In the 1938 edition, he specifically mentions that the sermon is being delivered on the Christmas morning: ‘Dear children of God, my sermon this Christmas / morning will be a very short one.’

6.4.2 In the 1935 edition, after the opening sentence Thomas proceeds to say: ‘I wish only that you should ponder / and mediate the deep meaning and mystery of our / masses of Christmas Day.’. The words ‘ponder and’ are dropped and the words ‘in your hearts’ added in the 1938 edition: ‘I wish only that you / should mediate in your hearts the deep meaning and / mystery of our masses of Christmas Day.’.

6.4.3 The last part of line 17 and the first part of line 18 of the 1935 edition are as follows: ‘this is to behave in a strange / fashion:’. In the 1938 edition, the colon (:) after the word ‘fashion’ is replaced by a full stop (.)

6.4.4 The second part of line 23 and the first part of line 24 of the 1935 edition are as follows: ‘But think for a while on the meaning / of this word ‘peace’.’. This sentence in the 1938 edition is as follows: ‘Now think for a moment about the / meaning of this word ‘peace’.’, the word ‘But’ being replaced by the word ‘Now’,

the word 'while' by the word 'moment' and the word 'on' by the word 'about'.

6.4.5 The second part of line 40 and the first part of line 41 of the 1935 edition are as follows: 'What / then did he mean?'. In the 1938 edition, the word 'he' of this sentence is spelt with a capital 'H': 'What / then did He mean?'.

6.4.6 Lines 43-44 of the 1935 edition are as follows: 'So then, he gave to His disciples, but not peace as the / world gives.'. In the 1938 edition, the word 'he' is spelt with a capital 'H' and the word 'peace' added after the word 'disciples': 'So then, He gave to His disciples peace, but not peace / as the world gives.'.

6.4.7 Two sentences in the 1935 edition (lines 65 and 66) are as follows: 'A Christian martyrdom is / no accident. Saints are not made by accident.'. These two sentences are joined together in the 1938 edition, by replacing the word 'no' by the word 'never' and the full stop (.) after the word 'accident' by a comma (,), and by adding the word 'an' before the word 'accident' and the word 'for' after the comma (,). The lines in the 1938 edition read as follows: 'A Christian martyrdom is / never an accident, for Saints are not made by accident.'.

6.4.8 The last part of line 83 and lines 84-86 of the 1935 edition are as follows: 'so in Heaven the Saints are most high, / having made themselves most low, seeing themselves / not as we see them, but in the light of the Godhead / from which they draw their being.'. In the 1938 edition, the words 'seeing themselves' are replaced by the words 'and are seen', followed by a comma.

6.4.9 In the 1938 edition, this part of the sentence reads as follows: 'so in Heaven the Saints are most high, / having made themselves most low, and are seen, not as / we see them, but in the light of the Godhead from / which they draw their being.'.

### **(e) Major Differences: Part II**

6.5.1 Part II of the 1935 edition begins with the dialogue of the Priests, the First Priest saying, 'Since Christmas a day: and the day of St. Stephen, First Martyr.'. Part II of the 1938 edition begins with a Chorus, the first line being 'Does the bird sing in the

South?'. The Chorus was introduced in the 1936 edition and remained at the head of Part II ever since. The dialogue of the Priests follows the Chorus in the 1938 edition.

6.5.2 The second part of line 12 and line 13 of the 1935 edition are as follows: 'There went this saying abroad / Yet Jesus said not unto him: He shall not die.'. In the 1938 edition, these are deleted. In the 1938 edition, the line reads as follows: 'Declare we unto you.'. This is the first part of line 12 of the 1935 edition.

6.5.3 Lines 23-28 of the 1935 edition are spoken by the First Priest. These are as follows:

'Since the Holy Innocents a day: the fourth day from  
Christmas.

Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping feast day.

As for the people, so also for himself, he offereth for sins.

He lays down his life for the sheep.

He asked like of thee, and thou givest him.

Rejoice we all in the Lord. To-day?'

In the 1938 edition, these lines are not spoken by the First Priest alone, but assigned to all the Priests, with changes at places:

FIRST PRIEST

Since the Holy Innocents a day: the fourth day from  
Christmas.

THE THREE PRIESTS

*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day.*

FIRST PRIEST

As for the people, so also for himself, he offereth for sins.

He lays down his life for the sheep.

THE THREE PRIESTS

*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day.*

FIRST PRIEST

To-day?'

The changes brought about are: (a) the words 'in the Lord' in line 24 of the 1935 edition - 'Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping feast day.' - are deleted in the 1938 edition; (b) the word 'feast' in the same line is replaced by the word 'holy' in the 1938 edition; (c) the

line is written in italics in the 1938 edition - '*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day.*', which means that, in the 1938 edition, the line is meant to be sung; in the 1935 edition, it wasn't; (d) line 27 of the 1935 edition ('He asked like of thee, and thou givest him.') is deleted in the 1938 edition; (e) the words 'in the Lord' in the first part of line 28 of the 1935 edition ('Rejoice we all in the Lord.') are deleted in the 1938 edition; (f) the words '*keeping holy day*' are added in the same line in the 1938 edition - '*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day.*'; and (g) the line is written in italics in the 1938 edition. In the 1935 edition, the line 'Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping feast day.' and the first part of line 28 ('Rejoice we all in the Lord.') are spoken by the First Priest. In the 1938 edition, these are sung by the three Priests together. When the three Priests finish singing the line, the First Priest says, 'To-day?'. This is, originally, the last part of line 28 of the 1935 edition.

6.5.4 In the 1935 edition, the first part of line 45 - 'By the King's order.' - is spoken by the Fourth Knight. In the 1938 edition, it is spoken by the Second Knight.

6.5.5 Lines 69-78 of the 1935 edition are as follows:

'You are the Archbishop in revolt against the King; in  
rebellion to the King and the law of the land;  
You are the Archbishop who was made by the King; whom  
he set in your place to carry out his command.  
You are his servant, his tool, and his jack,  
You wore his favours on your back,  
You had your honours all from his hand; from him you had  
the power, the seal and the ring.  
This is the man who was the tradesman's son: the  
backstairs brat who was born in Cheapside;  
This is the creature that crawled upon the King; swollen  
with blood and swollen with pride.  
Creeping out of the London dirt,  
Crawling up like a louse on your shirt,  
The man who cheated, swindled, lied; broke his oath and  
betrayed his King.'

This remains unchanged in the 1938 edition. But whereas in the 1935 edition these lines are spoken by four Knights, they are spoken by three in the 1938 edition. I am afraid I do not know how



to explain this change. When the three Knights speak the lines, what does the other Knight do? Why doesn't he join the other Knights? After all, the mission of all the four Knights is the same; they form a group; and no member of the group is different from the other three as far as their mission is concerned. Why should one then have a lesser role to play?

6.5.6 The second part of line 90 of the 1935 edition is as follows: 'Yes, we'll pray for you!'. In the 1935 edition, this line is spoken by the Fourth Knight. In the 1938 edition, however, the line is spoken by the First Knight. In the 1935 edition, line 91 - 'Yes, we'll pray that God may help you!' - is spoken by all the four Knights. In the 1938 edition, the line is spoken by three Knights. Since in the 1938 edition this line follows a line spoken by the First Knight - 'Yes, we'll pray for you!' - the three Knights who speak the line, are, presumably, the Second, the Third and the Fourth Knight.

6.5.7 The second part of line 97 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, is as follows: 'God bless him!'. In the 1938 edition, this line is spoken by three Knights in place of one. This is understandable. Since the Knights are all King's men, they would naturally wish him well. But why is the line spoken by only three Knights? Why is the other Knight left out?

6.5.8 Lines 125-130 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, are as follows:

'Suspending those who had crowned the young prince,  
Denying the legality of his coronation;  
Binding with the chains of anathema,  
Using every means in your power to evince  
The King's faithful servants, every one who transacts  
His business in his absence, the business of the nation.'

These lines are not altered in any way in the 1938 edition, but are reassigned among the First, the Second and the Third Knights in the following manner:

'FIRST KNIGHT

Suspending those who had crowned the young prince,  
Denying the legality of his coronation.

SECOND KNIGHT

Binding with the chains of anathema,

THIRD KNIGHT

Using every means in your power to evince

The King's faithful servants, every one who transacts

His business in his absence, the business of the nation.'

This is, I suppose, done to provide an opportunity to speak to as many priests as possible and to break the monotony of speech by a single person. Again, the question arises: why are the lines divided only among three priests and not among all the four?

6.5.9 The first part of line 144 of the 1935 edition is the spoken by the Third Knight; the second part by the Fourth Knight. Both say the same thing: 'Absolve them.'. The line remains unchanged in the 1938 edition; here again the first part is spoken by the Third Knight; but the second part is spoken by the First Knight instead of the Fourth.

6.5.10 Lines 169-172 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

'Go then to Rome, or let Rome come

Here, to you, in the person of her most unworthy son.

Petty politicians in your endless adventure!

Rome alone can absolve those who break Christ's  
indenture.'

These lines are not there in the 1938 edition.

6.5.11 Line 167 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, is as follows: 'Priest! traitor confirmed in malfeasance.'. In the 1938 edition, it is not one person - the Fourth Knight - who speaks this line. There it is spoken by three persons, that is, the three Knights. Who these three Knights are is not, however, specified.

6.5.12 Lines 180-183 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Knights, are as follows:

'Priest! monk! and servant! take, hold, detain,

Restrain this man, in the King's name;

Or answer with your bodies, if he escape before we come,

We come for the King's justice, we come again.'

In the 1938 edition, (a) the words ‘if he escape before we come’ in the third line are dropped; (b) the word ‘again’ in the fourth line replaced by the words ‘with swords’; and (c) the words ‘Enough of words’, spoken by the Second Knight, added in the third line. In the 1938 edition, the lines are divided among the Knights in the following manner:

‘FOURTH KNIGHT

Priest! monk! and servant! take, hold, detain,  
Restrain this man, in the King’s name.

FIRST KNIGHT

Or answer with your bodies.

SECOND KNIGHT

Enough of words.

THE FOUR KNIGHTS

We come for the King’s justice, we come with swords.’

6.5.13 Lines 184-188 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas, are as follows:

‘Pursue those who flee, track down those who evade;  
Come for arrest, come with the sword,  
Here, here, you shall find me ready, in the battle of the  
Lord.

At whatsoever time you are ready to come,  
You will find me still more ready for martyrdom.’

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.5.14 Lines 242-247 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Priests ‘*severally*’, are as follows:

‘My Lord, you must not stop here. To the minster.  
Through the cloister. No time to waste. They are  
coming back, armed. To the altar, to the altar. They  
are here already. To the sanctuary. They are breaking  
in. We can barricade the minster doors. You cannot  
stay here. Force him to come. Seize him.’

In the 1938 edition, only the first two lines and the third line except the last word (‘They’) are retained. The rest - that is, the last word

of line 244 and lines 245-247 - is deleted. The deleted portion is as follows:

‘They

are here already. To the sanctuary. They are breaking  
in. We can barricade the minster doors. You cannot  
stay here. Force him to come. Seize him.’

6.5.15 Lines 252-258 of the 1935 edition are as follows:

‘PRIESTS

My Lord, they are coming. They will break through  
presently.

You will be killed. Come to the altar.

THOMAS

Peace! be quiet! remember where you are, and what is  
happening;

No life here is sought for but mine,

And I am not in danger: only near to death.

PRIESTS

Make haste, my Lord. Don’t stop here talking. It is not  
right.

What shall become of us, my Lord, if you are killed;  
what shall become of us?’

In this section of the 1935 edition, the Priests speak first; they are followed by Thomas; the Priests speak for the second time after Thomas has spoken. What the Priests say for the second time is added, in the 1938 edition, after their earlier speech, that is, as a continuation of what they have said first. In the 1935 edition, Thomas’ words were placed in between the Priests’ first and second speech. Since the Priests speak only for one time in the 1938 edition, this arrangement had to be altered. In the 1938 edition, Thomas speaks after the Priests have finished speaking. What the Priests and Thomas say in this part of the play remains, however, unchanged in both the editions. This part, in the 1938 edition, is as follows:

‘PRIESTS

My Lord, they are coming. They will break through  
presently.

You will be killed. Come to the altar.

Make haste, my Lord. Don't stop here talking. It is not  
right.

What shall become of us, my Lord, if you are killed;  
what shall become of us?

THOMAS

Peace! be quiet! remember where you are, and what is  
happening;

No life here is sought for but mine,  
And I am not in danger: only near to death.'

6.5.16 Lines 259-264 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas,  
are as follows:

'That again is another theme  
To be developed and resolved in the pattern of time.  
It is not for me to run from city to city;  
To meet death gladly is only  
The only way in which I can defend  
The Law of God, the holy canons.'

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.5.17 Lines 308-309 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Priests,  
are as follows:

'The enemy may rage outside, he will tire  
In vain. They cannot break in.'

These lines are deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.5.18 Lines 342-345 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas,  
are as follows:

'Those who do not the same  
How should they know what I do?  
How should you know what I do? Yet how much more  
Should you know than these madmen beating on the door.'

These lines are dropped in the 1938 edition.

6.5.19 In the 1935 edition, lines 377-380, spoken by the  
Knights, are as follows:

'Absolve all those you have excommunicated.

Resign the powers you have arrogated.

Restore to the King the money you appropriated.

Renew the obedience you have violated.'

In the 1938 edition, these lines are assigned among the Knights in the following manner:

‘FIRST KNIGHT

Absolve all those you have excommunicated.

SECOND KNIGHT

Resign the powers you have arrogated.

THIRD KNIGHT

Restore to the King the money you appropriated.

FIRST KNIGHT

Renew the obedience you have violated.'

I see no point in such reassignment. As long as the lines are spoken by the Knights, it is immaterial whether or not the first line is spoken by the First Knight, the second by the Second, or the third by the Third. The Director of the play can work this out easily and he should.

6.5.20 The speech of the Second Knight in the 1935 edition, which begins with the sentence ‘I am afraid I am not anything like such an experienced speaker as Reginald Fitz Urse would lead you to believe.’ (lines 443-445), is made by the Third Knight in the 1938 edition. I am afraid I do not see how this makes the speech more appealing or the play more effective.

6.5.21 The speech of the Third Knight in the 1935 edition, beginning with the sentence ‘I should like first to recur to a point that was very well put by our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse: that you are Englishmen, and therefore your sympathies are always with the under dog.’, is made by the Second Knight in the 1938 edition. Shouldn’t the words ‘under dog’ be rather spelt as ‘underdog’ (Hornby 1679)?

6.5.22 The second part of line 505, lines 506-511 and the first part of line 512 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Third Knight, are as follows: ‘There was utter chaos: there were three kinds of justice and three kinds of court: that of the King, that of the

Bishops, and that of the baronage. I / must repeat one point that the last speaker has made. / While the late Archbishop was the Chancellor, he whole- / heartedly supported the King's designs: this is an im- / portant point, which, if necessary, I can substantiate. / Now the King'. This is deleted in the 1938 edition. In that edition, the words 'Now the King' are replaced by the words 'He therefore': 'He therefore intended that Becket . . . '. There the Second Knight says this.

6.5.23 The second part of line 515, line 516 and the first part of line 517 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Third Knight, are as follows: 'No one would have grudged him that; no / one than he was better qualified to fill at once these / two most important posts.'. This is deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.5.24 Lines 524-533 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Third Knight, are as follows: 'The moment that Becket, at the King's instance, had / been made Archbishop, he resigned the office of Chan- / cellor, he became more priestly than the priests, he / ostentatiously and offensively adopted an ascetic man- / ner of life, he openly abandoned every policy that he / had heretofore supported; he affirmed immediately / that there was a higher order than that which our / King, and he as the King's servant, had for so many / years striven to establish; and that—God knows why— / the two orders were incompatible.'. In the 1938 edition, the words 'he openly abandoned every policy that he had heretofore supported' are deleted.

6.5.25 The last part of line 580, line 581 and the first word of line 582 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, are as follows: 'Every means that had been tried to / conciliate him, to restore him to reason, had failed. / Now'. This is deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.5.26 The last word of line 588, line 589 and the first word of line 590 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight again, are as follows: 'This / man, formerly a great public servant, had become a / wrecker.'. This sentence is deleted in the 1938 edition.

6.5.27 Lines 617-644 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Third Priest, are as follows:

'No. For the Church is stronger for this action,





By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it.  
Go, weak sad men, lost erring souls, homeless in earth or  
  heaven,  
Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock  
Of Brittany, or the Gates of Hercules.  
Go venture shipwreck on the sullen coasts  
Where blackamoors make captive Christian men;  
Go to the northern seas confined with ice  
Where the dead breath makes numb the hand, makes dull  
  the brain;

Find an oasis in the desert sun,  
Go seek alliance with the heathen Saracen,  
To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch  
Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,  
Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;  
Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.  
In the small circle of pain within the skull  
You still shall tramp and tread one endless round  
Of thought, to justify your action to yourselves,  
Weaving a fiction which unravels as you weave,  
Pacing 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.

FIRST PRIEST

O my lord

The glory of whose new state is hidden from us,  
Pray for us of your charity.

SECOND PRIEST

Now in the sight of God

Conjoined with all the saints and martyr gone before you,  
Remember us.

THIRD PRIEST

Let our thanks ascend

To God, who has given us another Saint in Canterbury.?’.

6.5.29 Since most of the speech is still delivered by one priest, the reassignment seems hardly justified.

**(f) Minor Differences: Part II**

6.6.1 The stage direction before the entry of the First Priest in the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘*[Enter the FIRST PRIEST with a banner of St. Stephen / borne before him.]*’. In the 1938 edition, the stage direction at the same place is as follows: ‘*[Enter the FIRST PRIEST with a banner of St. Stephen / borne before him. The lines sung are in italics.]*’. The same stage direction was given in the Appendix of the 1937 edition. It is quite possible that it occurred to Eliot later - that is, long after the 1935 edition was published - that some of the lines spoken by the Priests would have a greater effect if sung.

6.6.2 Line 2 of the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘Princes moreover did sit, and did witness falsely against me.’. In the 1938 edition, this line is written in italics: ‘*Princes moreover did sit, and did witness falsely against me.*’. This means that this line is meant to be sung.

6.6.3 Line 6 of the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘Princes did sit and did witness.’. In the 1938 edition, this line is a little shorter: ‘*Princes moreover did sit.*’. Maybe the words ‘and did witness’ are dropped since, in line 2, it has already been said that the Princes ‘did witness falsely’. In the 1938 edition this line is written in italics. This, then, is meant for singing.

6.6.4 Line 8 of the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘In the midst of the congregation he opened his mouth.’ In the 1938 edition, this line is written in italics: ‘*In the midst of the congregation he opened his mouth.*’ This means that the line is to be sung.

6.6.5 Line 9 of the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘Which was from the beginning, which we have heard,’. The word ‘That’ is added at the beginning of the line in the 1938 edition: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard,’.

6.6.6 Line 14 of the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘In the midst of the congregation.’ In the 1938 edition, this line is meant for

singing and is therefore written in italics: *'In the midst of the congregation.'* This is a fragment of an earlier line: *'In the midst of the congregation he opened his mouth.'*

6.6.7 Line 16 of the 1935 edition is as follows: 'Out of the mouth of very babes, O God, and of sucklings, hast thou.'. The words 'and of sucklings, hast thou' are deleted in the 1938 edition, and the comma (,) after the word 'God' replaced by a full stop (.). The line in the 1938 edition, written in italics, is as follows: *'Out of the mouth of very babes, O God'*. This line is repeated in both the 1935 and the 1938 editions as the last line of the Third Priest's first speech in Part II. It is, however, not written in italics there. This means that the line there is not meant for singing, though earlier it was.

6.6.8 The stage direction after line 37 of the 1935 edition - that is, the last line spoken by the Third Priest in the Priests' scene - is as follows: *'[Enter the FOUR KNIGHTS, briskly. The banners disappear.]'* The word 'briskly' is dropped in the stage direction at the same place in the 1938 edition: *'[Enter the FOUR KNIGHTS. The banners disappear.]'* The First Knight says, in both the 1935 and the 1938 editions, that 'matters urgent / Have brought us from France.' (lines 40-41 of the 1935 edition). The Second Knight, too, says that their business is 'Urgent' (line 44 of the 1935 edition). If so, it is only natural that their entry would be brisk.

6.6.9 The full stop at the end of line 49 of the 1935 edition - 'If we did not offer you entertainment.' - is dropped at the end of the same line in the 1938 edition: 'If we did not offer you entertainment'.

6.6.10 Line 81 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas, is as follows: 'I have been a loyal vassal to the King.'. In the 1938 edition, the word 'vassal' is replaced by the word 'subject': 'I have been a loyal subject to the King.'. The word 'vassal' in line 83 of the 1935 edition, spoken by Thomas, remains, however, unchanged in the 1938 edition: 'As his most faithful vassal in the land.'.

6.6.11 The semi-colon (;) at the end of line 126 - 'Denying the legality of his coronation;' - is replaced in the 1938 edition by a full stop (.). The comma (,) at the end of line 127 - 'Binding with

the chains of anathema,’ - is replaced in the 1938 edition by a full stop (.).

6.6.12 Line 167 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, is as follows: ‘Priest! traitor confirmed in malfeasance.’. In the 1938 edition, a comma (,) is added after the word ‘traitor’: ‘Priest! traitor, confirmed in malfeasance.’.

6.6.13 In the 1935 edition, there is no stage direction after line 170, spoken by Thomas: ‘To submit my cause before God’s throne.’. In the 1938 edition, the following stage direction is given after the line: ‘[Exit.]’.

6.6.14 Line 181 of the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘Restrain this man, in the King’s name;’. In the 1938 edition, the semi-colon (;) at the end of the line is replaced by a full stop (.). The first part of line 182 of the 1935 edition is as follows: ‘Or answer with your bodies,’. In the 1938 edition, the comma (,) at the end of the line is replaced by a full stop (.).

6.6.15 Line 205 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Chorus, is as follows: ‘Rings of light coiling downwards, leading’. In the 1938 edition, the word ‘leading’ is replaced by the word ‘descending’.

6.6.16 In the 1935 edition, there is no stage direction after line 228, spoken by the Chorus (‘O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop, forgive us, forgive us, pray for us that we may pray for you, out of our shame.’). In the 1938 edition, the following stage direction is given after the line: ‘[Enter THOMAS.]’.

6.6.17 In the 1935 edition, there is no stage direction after line 241, spoken by Thomas (‘Human kind cannot bear very much reality.’). In the 1938 edition, the following stage direction is given after the line: ‘[Enter PRIESTS.]’. Incidentally, this line is used in *Burnt Norton* of *Four Quartets* in the following manner: ‘Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind / Cannot bear very much reality.’ (Eliot: 1963: 190). Incidentally, again, in both *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Burnt Norton*, Eliot writes the words as ‘human kind’, though a well known English dictionary would rather have it written as a single word, that is, ‘humankind’ (Hornby 760).

6.6.18 Line 273 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Priests, is as follows: ‘To vespers! Take his feet! Up with him! Hurry.’. In the 1938 edition, this line is shorter: ‘To vespers! Hurry.’.

6.6.19 In the 1935 edition, there is the following stage direction after line 304, spoken by the Chorus (‘Help me, Lord, for death is near.’): ‘*In the cathedral.* THOMAS and PRIESTS.’. In the 1938 edition, the same stage direction is given, but within third bracket: ‘*[In the cathedral.* THOMAS and PRIESTS.]’.

6.6.20 The stage direction on top of line 341, spoken by Knights (‘Where is Becket, the traitor to the King?’), is as follows: ‘KNIGHTS [*one line each*]’. In the 1938 edition, the stage direction ‘*[one line each]*’ is dropped.

6.6.21 Line 374 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Knights, is as follows: ‘Traitor! traitor! traitor! traitor!’. In the 1938 edition, the word is spoken three times instead of four: ‘Traitor! traitor! traitor!’.

6.6.22 Line 413 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Chorus, is as follows: ‘The nighttime heaping of the ashes,’. In the 1938 edition, the word ‘nighttime’ is spelt as ‘night-time’.

6.6.23 Line 434 and the first part of line 435 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: ‘That is in accordance with our long established prin- / ciple of Trial by Jury.’. In the 1938 edition, there is a hyphen (-) between the words ‘long’ and ‘established’: ‘That is in accordance with our long-established prin- / ciple of Trial by Jury.’.

6.6.24 The last part of line 440 and lines 441-442 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: ‘I shall / call upon our youngest member to speak first. William / de Traci.’. In the 1938 edition, the word ‘youngest’ is replaced by the word ‘eldest’ and the full stop (.) after the word ‘first’ by a comma (,). The words ‘my neighbour in the country: Baron’ are added before the name of the speaker: ‘I shall / call upon our eldest member to speak first, my neigh- / bour in the country: Baron William de Traci.’.

6.6.25 Lines 443-444 and the first part of line 45 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Second Knight, are as follows: ‘I am afraid I

am not anything like such an exper- / ienced speaker as Reginald Fitz Urse would lead you to / believe.’. In the 1938 edition, the words ‘my old friend’ are added before the name Reginald Fitz Urse: ‘I am afraid I am not anything like such an exper- / ienced speaker as my old friend Reginald Fitz Urse / would lead you to believe.’. This statement, though made by the Second Knight in the 1935 edition, is made by the Third Knight in the 1938 edition.

6.6.26 The last part of line 451, line 452 and the first part of line 452 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Second Knight, are as follows: ‘I dare say that / we didn’t make a very good impression when we came / in.’. In the 1938 edition, the words ‘just now’ are added at the end of the sentence: ‘I dare say that we didn’t / make a very good impression when we came in just / now.’.

6.6.27 The last part of line 483 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the First Knight, is as follows: ‘I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville.’ In the 1938 edition, the full stop (.) at the end of the sentence is replaced by a comma (,) and the words ‘who / has made a special study of statecraft and constitutional / law’ added at the end of the sentence. The Second Knight is addressed as ‘Sir’: ‘I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville, who / has made a special study of statecraft and constitutional / law. Sir Hugh de Morville’.

6.6.28 The last part of line 501, lines 502-504 and the first part of line 505 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Third Knight, are as follows: ‘Our King saw that the one thing need- / ful was to restore order: to curb the excessive powers of / local government, which were usually exercised for / selfish and often for seditious ends, and to systematise / the judiciary.’. In the 1938 edition, (a) the Second Knight says this; and (b) the words ‘systematise the judiciary’ are replaced by the words ‘reform the legal system’.

6.6.29 In the 1935 edition, the last part of line 560 and the first part of line 561, spoken by the First Knight, are as follows: ‘. . . I think that Richard / Brito will be able to convince them.’. In the 1938 edition, a comma (,) is added after the word ‘Brito’, the words ‘coming as he does of a family distinguished for its loyalty to the Church’ added after the comma (,) and a comma (,) added after the word ‘Church’: ‘. . . I think that Richard / Brito, coming as he does of a family distinguished for its loyalty to the Church, will be able to convince them.’.

6.6.30 Lines 575-577 and the first part of line 578 of the 1935 edition, spoken by the Fourth Knight, are as follows: 'From the moment he became Archbishop, he com- / pletely reversed his policy; he showed himself to be / utterly indifferent to the fate of the country, to be, in / fact, a monster of egotism, a menace to society.'

6.6.31 In the 1938 edition, the comma (,) after the word 'egotism' is replaced by a full stop (.) and the words 'a monster of egotism' deleted. In the 1938 edition, too, the line is spoken by the Fourth Knight.

## **7. A Second Look**

### **(a) The Dramatis Personae**

7.1.1 In all the editions except the 1938, there is a character called 'A Herald'. In the 1938 edition, this character is called 'A Messenger', his role remaining the same as in other editions.

7.1.2 In the past, a 'herald' used to mean 'a person who carried messages from a ruler' (Hornby 727). A 'messenger' is, on the other hand, 'a person who gives a message to sb or who delivers messages to people as a job' (Hornby 964).

7.1.3 The Herald, as he was called in the earlier editions, did not deliver any message from Thomas. And, in any case, Thomas was not a ruler. There is therefore no reason why should this man be called a herald. His only task was to inform the Priests that Thomas was already in England and was due in Canterbury shortly. A 'messenger' is, surely, a better name of the character and a better description of his role.

7.1.4 [I think the Herald oversteps his limit. Who is he to say that the Priests were 'right to express a certain incredulity', or that Thomas 'comes in pride and sorrow' (lines 86-87 of the 1935 Faber edition)? How does he know that Thomas is 'one with the Pope, and with the King of France' (line 95 of the 1935 Faber edition)? The First Priest asks, 'is it war or peace?'. The Herald says, 'Peace, but not the kiss of peace' (line 98 of the 1935 Faber edition). This is a diplomatic answer - the Herald does not say if it is war or

peace. Finally, the Herald says, 'I think that this peace / Is nothing like an end, or like a beginning' (lines 103-104 of the 1935 Faber edition). This sounds like a philosophical statement and can hardly be expected to be made by an ordinary person.]

7.1.5 In the Acting edition, the chorus is named last, after 'ATTENDANTS IN THE CATHEDRAL'. The placing of the Chorus at the bottom of the list of the Dramatis Personae does not diminish its importance. A lot of time is given to the Chorus. It may equal the time given to Thomas, or come very close to it, especially if the Interlude, where Thomas is the only speaker and there is no scope for the Chorus to speak, is left out.

7.1.6 Thomas is the only person with a name in the play. The First Knight introduces other Knights by name when he invites them to speak in self-defence. The First Knight's name we get to know from the Third Knight; Thomas too addresses him by name once - 'You, Reginald, three times traitor you' (Eliot: 1938: Part II: line 387). The names of the killers of Thomas can also be found from historical accounts (Hutton 255; Knowles 143-148; Robertson and Sheppard [eds.]; Giles). Eliot does not, however, use their names. For him, the Priests are Priests; the Tempters are Tempters; the Knights are Knights. They have no other identity and no other life to lead. They are, in short, abstractions.

7.1.7 But, then, why? Some might find it be easier, in poetry, to deal with abstraction rather than with real life. Or, Eliot might have wished to keep the attention of the audience focused on Thomas all the time and not to distract it by making other characters as real as Thomas. Even Thomas is, in a way, a symbol and therefore an abstraction. Since he is so, the details of how he was killed are not important to Eliot. Thomas' murder is disposed of in a short stage direction: '*While the KNIGHTS kill him, we hear the CHORUS*' (on top of line 399 of the 1935 Faber edition). Edward Grim, a priest, tried to defend Thomas when he was attacked and was, in the process, wounded in the arm (Robertson: 437). Eliot didn't show this. He meticulously avoided anything likely to distract attention from the main theme.

7.1.8 Thomas could have been easily identified only as the Archbishop, as the Priests and the Knights were identified only as Priests and Knights. Why was he not? Why was he given a name?



7.1.9 One can think of two reasons for this. First, Thomas' past had to be shown to convince the audience that the conflict between the King and the Church was real and continuing, justifying the anger of the Knights. Secondly, only a person can be a martyr, not the incumbent of an office, however high, on the strength, merely, of his holding it.

**(b) Dialogue of the Priests? Introits?**

7.2.1 In his prefatory notes to the play, Eliot writes 'the dialogue of the three Priests' in the 1936 edition (Eliot: January 1936: 7) and 'the introits' in the 1937 edition (Eliot: August 1937: 7) to mean one and the same thing.

7.2.2 *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1994. Print) gives the meaning of 'introit' as (1) [in Roman Catholic Church] 'a part of a psalm with antiphon recited by the celebrant of the Mass at the foot of the altar and, at High Mass, sung by the choir when the priest begins the Mass'; (2) [in Anglican Church, Lutheran Church] 'a psalm or anthem sung as the celebrant of the Holy Communion enters the sanctuary'; and (3) 'a choral response sung at the beginning of a religious service' (page 747).

7.2.3 If the dialogue of the priests at the beginning of Part II of the 1935 edition (Eliot: London: June 1935: Part II: lines 01 to 38) and the 'appendix' of the 1937 edition (Eliot: August 1937: Appendix: lines 01 to 38) are the same, why call these lines 'the dialogue of the three priests' in one edition (1936) and 'the introits' in another (1937)? That they are the same is confirmed by the words 'ORIGINAL OPENING OF PART II' immediately after the heading 'Appendix' in the 1937 edition (Eliot: August 1937: 89).

7.2.4 The 'dialogue of the three priests' is a secular expression; 'the introits', unmistakably, a religious. By substituting the words 'the dialogue of the three Priests' by the words 'the introits', Eliot wished, I think, to emphasize the religious aspect of the Priests' words at the beginning of Part II.

7.2.5 The Priests' words at the beginning of Part II of the 1935 edition are very different from, say, their words before the arrival of Thomas in Part I (Eliot: London: June 1935: Part I: lines 51 to 69) or after his murder in Part II (Eliot: London: June 1935: Part II:

lines 608 to 644). Shortly before the return of Thomas, the Second Priest says,

'What does the Archbishop do, and our Sovereign Lord the  
Pope  
With the stubborn King and the French King  
In ceaseless intrigue, combinations,  
In conference, meetings accepted, meetings refused,  
Meetings unended or endless  
At one place or another in France?'

(Eliot: London: June 1935: Part I: lines 53 to 58)

Shortly after the murder of Thomas, the Third Priest says,

'No. For the Church is stronger for this action,  
Triumphant in adversity. It is fortified  
By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it.'

(Eliot: London: June 1935: Part II: lines 617 to 619)

In the first instance, the tone is conversational; in the second, rhetorical. There is nothing particularly religious in any of these statements.

7.2.6 The dialogue of the priests at the beginning of Part II of the 1935 edition (Eliot: London: June 1935: Part II: lines 01 to 38) is, on the other hand, highly religious both in its content and in the mood it helps to create.

7.2.7 First, the 'Introit of St. Stephen' and the 'Introit of St. John' are heard. Secondly, the banners of St. Stephen, St. John and the Holy Innocents are seen. These give rise to an atmosphere very different from one a person experiences everyday. A word like 'dialogue', used every day, can hardly be expected to capture the spirit of the words spoken on an occasion like this.

7.2.8 The language in which the Priests speak at this point of time, too, is different from ordinary speech. The First Priest, for example, says, 'To-day, what is to-day? but another day, the dusk of the year' (line 30 of the 1935 Faber edition). The Second Priest says, 'To-day, what is to-day? Another night, and another dawn' (line 31 of the 1935 Faber edition). They are asking a very

ordinary question, but they ask it in a way that makes it different from an ordinary one. The Third Priest makes a philosophical statement in response to a simple question like this:

'Every day is the day we should fear from or hope from.  
One moment  
Weighs like another. Only in retrospection, selection,  
We say, that was the day.'

(lines 33 to 35 of the 1935 Faber edition)

7.2.9 The Priests sing too. The lines they sing are not specifically marked in the 1935 Faber, or the 1936, or the 1937 edition. A stage direction at the end of the first Chorus of Part II in the 1938 edition (Eliot: September 1938) - '*The lines sung are in italics*' - makes it clear that the Priests are expected to sing some of the lines assigned to them.

7.2.10 These lines are: '*Princes moreover did sit, and did witness falsely against me*' (line 29); '*Princes moreover did sit*' (line 33); '*In the midst of the congregation he opened his mouth*' (line 35); '*In the midst of the congregation*' (line 40); '*Out of the mouth of very babes, O God*' (line 42); and '*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day*' (lines 50 and 53). Except for the line '*Rejoice we all, keeping holy day*', other lines occur in the 1935 Faber edition as well, though at times slightly differently. The music of the introits provides the background for the Priests' singing.

7.2.11 A word like 'dialogue' may aptly describe the exchange between the Priests in a situation like the absence or the murder of Thomas, but not here. When the religious connotation of the words spoken and the music are taken into account, 'the introits' seems to describe the situation much better.

### (c) Reassigning lines

7.3.1 Since the Priests and the Knights are abstractions, their lines are easily reassigned. Both the First Priest and the Second Priest are, for example, without any personality of their own. They are only priests and nothing more than a priest. How does it matter, then, if one line spoken by the First Priest in one edition is spoken by the Second Priest in another? The same is true of the Knights. What the 'youngest' member of the team of the Knights - that is,

the Second Knight - says in defence of their action in the 1935 Faber edition is said by the 'eldest' member - that is, the Third Knight - in the 1938 edition. It follows that the play itself does not demand such reassignment. It is made for some other purpose.

7.3.2 The Tempters too are abstractions. Lines are not, however, reassigned among them. That is because, though abstractions, each Tempter represents a distinct group, or only himself, as is the case with the Fourth Tempter, and their interests differ. One Priest may take the place of another. One Knight may take the place of another. But one Tempter cannot take the place of another.

7.3.3 In the 1938 edition, the Fourth Knight is a very silent Knight. Apart from the speech he makes asking the question '*Who killed the Archbishop?*', he speaks only twice. On the first occasion, he says: 'How much longer will you keep us waiting?' (line 83 of the 1938 edition). And on the second: 'Priest! monk! and servant! take, hold, detain, / Restrain this man, in the King's name.' (lines 201-202 of the 1938 edition). These lines cannot be said to be particularly important and could have been assigned to some other Knight. They were not. Other lines were.

7.3.4 In the 1935 Faber edition, the Fourth Knight says, 'By the King's order.' (line 45). In the 1938 edition, this line is spoken by the Second Knight. In the 1935 Faber edition, the Fourth Knight says, 'Yes, we'll pray for you!' (line 91). In the 1938 edition, this line is spoken by the First Knight. In the 1935 Faber edition, the Fourth Knight says, 'God bless him!' (line 97). In the 1938 edition, three Knights speak this line. In the 1935 Faber edition, the passage beginning with the line 'Suspending those who had crowned the young prince' (line 125) was assigned to the Fourth Knight. In the 1938 edition, the Fourth Knight does not speak even a single line of the passage. The passage is distributed among the First, the Second and the Third Knights. In the 1935 Faber edition, the Fourth Knight says, echoing the Third Knight, 'Absolve them' (line 144). In the 1938 edition, this line is spoken by the First Knight. In the 1935 Faber edition, the Fourth Knight says, 'Priest! traitor confirmed in malfeasance' (line 167). In the 1938 edition, this line is spoken by three Knights. The only real contribution the Fourth Knight makes is his speech in defence of the Knights. Though, in the 1938 edition, a line or two is deleted from the text

of the 1935 Faber edition, the speech is basically the same in both. But how does one explain the systematic deprivation of the Fourth Knight of his original lines? Why were his lines reassigned? By giving the Fourth Knight so little to speak until he was called upon to make his speech, Eliot created, I think, a problem for the theatre, for the actor playing the role had to devise his own means to make the best possible use of the seemingly endless time at his disposal.

7.3.5 There is no relation between the First Tempter and the First Knight or any other Knight. The same is true of other Tempters and other Knights. There is no parallel, and I don't think that a parallel can be established by merely having the two roles played by the same actor. For one thing, the audience might not even notice it. For another, even if it did, it might not consider this to be of any significance. Reassigning lines for establishing a relation between the Tempters and the Knights, as Eliot appears to have done, seems, therefore, to be pointless.

#### (d) The Chorus

7.4.1 Why is the Chorus composed of women only? It might, for a moment, appear that Eliot had followed a Greek tradition: 'the women of Mycenae' constitute the Chorus of Sophocles' *Electra* (Sophocles: 2008: 135). But, then, this is, by no means, the universal pattern of the Chorus in the Greek plays of the ancient times. The Chorus in *Antigone*, another play by Sophocles, is, for example, composed of 'old Theban citizens and their LEADER' (Sophocles: 1992: 701). It wouldn't be fair, therefore, to say that Eliot had borrowed, from his Greek predecessors, the idea of having women only in the Chorus, though he might have very well had a play like *Electra* in his mind. What the Chorus says in *Murder in the Cathedral* could have been said by the old men of Canterbury as well. If so, there would have been no women in the play at all. Women are, I think, introduced in the Chorus in order to avoid such a dismal consequence.

7.4.2 There are four choruses in Part I. The opening lines of these are: (1) 'Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait.'; (2) 'Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay.'; (3) 'There is no rest in the house. There is no rest in the street.'; and (4) 'We have not been happy, my Lord, we have not been too happy.'. In the 1935 Faber edition, there were four choruses in Part II too.

Their opening lines are: (1) 'I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened'; (2) 'Numb the hand and dry the eyelid'; (3) 'Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them.'; and (4) 'We praise Thee, O God, for Thy glory displayed in all the creatures of the earth'. In the 1936 edition, the chorus beginning with the line 'Does the bird sing in the South?' was added in Part II, bringing the number of choruses in that Part to five and the total number of choruses in the play to nine. This remained unchanged in the 1937 and the 1938 editions.

7.4.3 The choruses are the same in the 1935 Faber, the 1936 and the 1937 editions. In the 1938 edition, changes were brought about in two choruses, one in Part I and the other in Part II.

7.4.4 A number of lines were, of course, dropped from the choruses in the Acting edition. This was done, presumably, to keep the performance of the play within the time limit set by the sponsors of the play at Canterbury. These would have been dropped from other editions too if Eliot had found such deletion necessary from the point of view of the play itself. They were not. The Acting edition may, therefore, be kept out of consideration for the purpose of examining the choruses.

7.4.5 The chorus beginning with the line 'There is no rest in the house. There is no rest in the street.' in Part I is the one in which the first change occurs. The words 'beneath my' in line 612 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up beneath my feet.' - are replaced by the words 'against our' in the 1938 edition: 'Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up against our feet.'

7.4.6 The other change occurs in the chorus beginning with the line 'I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened' in Part II. In the 1938 edition, the word 'leading' in line 205 of the 1935 Faber edition - 'Rings of light coiling downwards, leading' - is replaced by the word 'descending': 'Rings of light coiling downwards, descending'.

7.4.7 These are the only two changes brought about in the choruses. And these are very minor changes. Why are the changes made in the choruses so very insignificant and so very few?

7.4.8 There is, I think, a very good reason for that: changing poetry is difficult, especially once it is given a final shape, and the Chorus speaks poetry all the time.

7.4.9 In fact, the Chorus never speaks verse, which is not poetry. Consider, for example, the following passage from *Electra*, spoken by the Chorus:

'You're not the only one,  
Daughter, to know bereavement's pain.  
Others are in your house. Your grief exceeds theirs,  
The ones who share your father's blood, who still live,  
Yes, your sisters, Chrysothemis and Iphianassa.  
He lives who is sheltered from sorrow,  
Happily coming to manhood.  
The famous land of Mycenae  
Soon will welcome him back to his heritage.  
  
The hand of Zeus will guide him home - Orestes!'

(Sophocles: 2008: 141)

This is verse, but not poetry. The Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* never speaks verse like this.

7.4.10 Consider also the following from Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, spoken by Hamlet himself:

'O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!'

(Act I, Scene II, lines 129-134)  
(Shakespeare: 1032)

I do not think it is possible to change a single word of these lines without compromising their beauty.

7.4.11 Recall the following from *Murder in the Cathedral*, spoken by the Chorus:

'Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay.

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the  
danger.

O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the  
year;

Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey  
grey grey.'

(Part I, lines 144-147)

(Eliot: September 1938: 18)

I do not think it is possible to change a single word of these lines either, without compromising their beauty.

7.4.12 These lines, the lines from Shakespeare and the lines from Eliot, are poetry of a high order, rendered so by their imagery, which is clear and closely linked to the situation of the play; by their music, which is moving; by their thought, which is profound; and by the deep emotion which gives rise to these, making it impossible to bring about any changes in them.

7.4.13 Poetry must arise from emotion and, in a verse play, emotion from the situation of the play. As Eliot put it, verse, in a verse play, 'will not be 'poetry' all the time. It will only be 'poetry' when the dramatic situation has reached such intensity that poetry becomes the natural utterance, because it is the only language in which the emotions can be expressed at all' (Eliot: 2009: 78). Now, in order to reach a point of intensity, the dramatic situation must go through a process of development. The point of intensity must be *reached*; it cannot be had as something given. There can therefore be no point of intensity right at the beginning of a play. It follows that there can be no poetry right at the beginning of a verse play.

7.4.14 No play of Eliot's begins with poetry except *Murder in the Cathedral*. *The Family Reunion* begins with the words of Amy, as Denman 'enters to draw the curtains': 'Not yet! I will ring for you. It is still quite light.'; *The Cocktail Party* begins with the words of Alex: 'You've missed the point completely, Julia: / There



were no tigers. *That was the point.*'; *The Confidential Clerk* begins with the words of Sir Claude: 'Ah, there you are, Eggerson! Punctual as always.'; and *The Elder Statesman* begins with the words of Charles: 'Is your father at home to-day?' (Eliot: 1969: page 285, 353, 445 and 524). But *Murder in the Cathedral* begins with a Chorus, which speaks poetry right from the beginning of the play. How should this be explained?

7.4.15 The only way out of this problem is to see the Chorus as outsiders, which it really is. The very first thing the women of the Chorus do is to define their position and to say what they are going to do in the play:

'Some presage of an act  
Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our  
feet  
Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness.'

(Eliot: September, 1938: Part I: lines 6-8)

Let us not forget that these women are *compelled* to *bear witness* and that something beyond their control has *forced* them to come to the cathedral. The women say the same thing again at the end of the first chorus:

'For us, the poor, there is no action.  
But only to wait and to witness.'

(Eliot: September, 1938: Part I: lines 49-50)

These lines occur in all the editions of the play, including the Acting. These women suffer more than they had before, because of Thomas' return. But their position does not change. In a play, there can be no character without something or other to do. If the women of the Chorus have nothing to do - 'For us, the poor, there is no action' - they are no part of the events of the play. They are complete outsiders. It does not, therefore, matter whether they speak in verse, which is not poetry, or in verse, which is.

7.4.16 ['The use [in *Murder in the Cathedral*] of a chorus strengthened the power, and concealed the defects', wrote Eliot, 'of my theatrical technique. For this reason I decided that next time I would try to integrate the chorus more closely into the play']

(Eliot: 2009: 86). This Eliot did in *The Family Reunion* (Eliot: 1939), where the chorus is made up of some of the characters of the play itself - Ivy, Violet, Gerald and Charles - and not by outsiders (Eliot: 1962: 62). They play two roles each, one as an individual character, and the other as a member of the Chorus. The women of the Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* play only one.]

7.4.17 It is to these outsiders that Eliot left most of the poetry of the play to deliver.

7.4.18 Thomas does not speak poetry at all except on two occasions. When the First Knight tells Thomas that the King's command is that he should leave England, Thomas says,

'If that *is* the King's command, I will be bold  
To say: seven years were my people without  
My presence; seven years of misery and pain.  
Seven years a mendicant on foreign charity  
I lingered abroad : seven years is no brevity.  
I shall not get those seven years back again.  
Never again, you must make no doubt,  
Shall the sea run between the shepherd and his fold.'

(Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 181-183)

The other time Thomas speaks poetry is when he talks to the women of the Chorus, assuring them that 'things' will seem 'unreal' one day:

'You shall forget these things, toiling in the household,  
You shall remember them, droning by the fire,  
When age and forgetfulness sweeten memory  
Only like a dream that has often been told  
And often been changed in the telling. They will seem unreal.  
Human kind cannot bear very much reality.'

(Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 252-257)

Thomas is busy arguing most of the time, first with the Tempters, then with the Knights, then with the Priests and finally with the Knights again. In an argument, there is little room for emotion and, therefore, for poetry.

7.4.19 The priests do not speak poetry, except (i) when they note the passage of time after Christmas and before Thomas is killed (Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 28-48), and (ii) when the Third Priest spells out the significance and the meaning of Thomas' death shortly before the play comes to an end (Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 590-612). The Tempters do not speak poetry, nor do the Knights. But the Chorus never ceases to speak poetry, except, perhaps, in the short passage where the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters speak alternately (Eliot: 1938: Part I: lines 624-635). If there can be no verse play without poetry, it is the Chorus which turns *Murder in the Cathedral* into one.

7.4.20 Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, speaks a lot of poetry. He is by no means an outsider. To give a more recent example, Perpetua, in *Venus Observed*, faced with the grim possibility of her father being consigned to prison for defalcation, sees the Duke, the only person who can save him, approaching. Her brother asks her to be 'cheerful' 'if she 'can'. She says,

'My smile

Will be like the glint of handcuffs, but he's very  
Welcome to it.'

(Fry 186)

This is good, dramatic poetry. Fry did not have to depend on outsiders to make *Venus Observed* a verse play. Why had Eliot?

7.4.21 Unfortunately, the Chorus is not consistent. As it witnesses the murder of Thomas, it calls the moment 'An instant eternity of evil and wrong', adding

'We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean, united to  
supernatural vermin,  
It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is  
defiled,  
But the world that is wholly foul.'

(Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 419-421)

This is its last statement before the final one at the end of the play. This is followed by the defence of the Knights and the lament of the Priests, which means that nothing particularly significant happens after this, nothing that could alter its position and its

thought. And yet when the Chorus makes its final statement, it is a new Chorus, transformed and reborn:

'We praise Thee, O God, for Thy glory displayed in all the  
creatures of the earth,  
In the snow, in the rain, in the wind, in the storm; in all of  
Thy creatures, both the hunters and the hunted.'

(Eliot: 1938: Part II: lines 618-619)

The image is repeated a little later:

'They affirm Thee in living; all things affirm Thee in living;  
the bird in the air, both the hawk and the finch; the beast on  
earth, both the wolf and the lamb; the worm in the soil and  
the worm in the belly.'

(Eliot: 1938: Part II: line 623)

In the context of the play, the Knights are the hunters and Thomas the hunted. The Chorus may very well see the glory of God displayed in the Knights, since without them Thomas would not have been a martyr. But this has to be logically established and dramatically arrived at.

7.4.22 Incidentally, seeing forces of evil at times as a part of God's will, necessary for completing His design, is nothing new. In a note written for his play *Kejser og Galilæer* - rendered into English as *Emperor and Galilean* - Henrik Ibsen had written, 'If the Lord had said to Judas, I need you to betray my son so that the Creation may be perfected, and Judas went forth and betrayed his master and lost his soul in the act of obedience - what then?' (Ferguson 172). A similar view is taken in one of Bob Dylan's songs:

Through many dark hour  
I've been thinkin' about this  
That Jesus Christ  
Was betrayed by a kiss  
But I can't think for you  
You'll have to decide  
Whether Judas Iscariot  
Had God on his side.

(Dylan 1964)

7.4.23 The last chorus is beautiful poetry, and Eliot admits that 'hearing beautiful poetry' in a verse play might be a 'part of one's pleasure', provided that the playwright 'gives it' 'dramatic inevitability' (Eliot: 2009: 79). He repeats, 'every line must be judged by a new law, that of dramatic relevance' (Eliot: 2009: 84). This element of dramatic inevitability, even dramatic relevance, is missing in the last Chorus. There is a note of fear, uncertainty, despair and helplessness in all the previous choruses. This is suddenly gone in the last Chorus, without any explanation. Is it the women of Canterbury we hear speaking in the last chorus? Or is it the Priests we hear through them?

**(e) Thomas and a Ritual: Eliot's Interest in Detective Stories**

7.5.1 Brunton, the accomplished and well-known butler of the house of Hurlstone, dismissed by Reginald Musgrave for stealthily studying an old family document at the dead of night, but given leave to stay for a week to save him from public disgrace, was found missing one fine morning. Rachel Howells, the second housemaid Brunton at one time promised to marry, but later backed out, told Reginald Musgrave that the butler was gone. She was hysterical herself and was found missing a couple of days later. Reginald asks Sherlock Holmes to help, and Holmes discovers Brunton's body in an underground chamber. The family document Brunton was found studying gave a clue to hidden treasure, which Brunton succeeded in finding with Rachel's help. He put it in a bag and handed it over to Rachel, but was himself buried in the chamber, either accidentally, or by Rachel, who might have dropped the lid by way of revenge. She had thrown the bag in a lake. It was recovered from there. Holmes identified its contents as the ancient crown of the kings of England. It was probably left to an ancestor of Reginald's when the King had to flee. The family document contained a few questions and answers, which indicated where the treasure was kept hidden. 'It is likely that the Musgrave who held the secret died . . . ., and by some oversight left this guide to his descendent without explaining the meaning of it.' This is, in short, the story of *The Musgrave Ritual* (Doyle 319-333).

7.5.2 The questions each Musgrave had to ask 'for centuries' as a ritual 'upon his coming of age' and the answers he had to give were as follows:

'Whose was it?

His who is gone.

Who shall have it?

He who will come.

What was the month?

The sixth from the first.

Where was the sun?

Over the oak.

Where was the shadow?

Under the elm.

How was it stepped?

North by ten and by ten, east by five and by five, south by two and by two, west by one and by one, and so under.

What shall we give for it?

All that is ours.

Why should we give it?

For the sake of the trust.'

(Doyle 326)

To Reginald, it was 'a thing of private interest', and 'of no practical use whatever' (Doyle 324). Holmes, on the other hand, saw at once a link between this enigmatic paper and the disappearance of the butler and the housemaid. He solved the mystery of the paper, and also of the case.

7.5.3 Eliot was fond of detective stories and, on two occasions, reviewed detective fiction in *The Criterion* (v/1, January 1927 - a review of nine mystery novels; and viii/ 32, April 1929 - a review of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Short Stories* and *The Leavenworth Case* by Anna Katherine Green). In the first, he paid a tribute to Wilkie Collins, the author of *The Moonstone*, saying that *The Moonstone* 'contains the whole of English detective fiction in embryo' (page 140). He also tried to lay down 'some obvious

rule(s) of detective conduct' from his 'study of the stories' reviewed and 'other recent stories', the last of the rules being, 'The detective should be highly intelligent but not superhuman' (page 142). In his essay called *Wilkie Collins and Dickens*, Eliot again spoke of *The Moonstone*, calling it 'the first and greatest of English detective novels. . . . The detective story, as created by Poe, is something as specialized and as intellectual as a chess problem; whereas the best English detective fiction has relied less on the beauty of the mathematical problem and much more on the intangible human element' (Eliot: 1986: 464).

7.5.4 'There is no rich humanity, no deep and cunning psychology and knowledge of the human heart about him; he is obviously a formula. . . . He is not even a very good detective' - this is what Eliot had written about Sherlock Holmes while reviewing Doyle's *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Short Stories* (*The Criterion* - April 1929, page 556). Earlier he had written, 'Never is he (Holmes) impeccable. He employs the most incredible disguises . . . The last two volumes show him in mental decay: he repeats himself' (*The Criterion* - April 1929, page 554). But he also said, '. . . perhaps the greatest of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries is this: that when we talk of him we invariably fall into the fancy of his existence' (*The Criterion* - April 1929, page 553-554). Eliot gives the credit for this to 'the dramatic ability, rather than the pure detective ability' of Conan Doyle (*The Criterion* - April 1929, page 554). Eliot thought that Holmes could not be compared to anyone: 'He does not seem to be descended from either Sergeant Cuff or Monsieur Dupin' (*The Criterion* - April 1929, page 553).

7.5.5 Eliot's views did not go unchallenged. A. P. Rossiter, Shakespearian scholar, later Fellow, Jesus College, Cambridge, wrote to Eliot to say that 'it seems to me that you are mistaken in saying that Sherlock Holmes "does not seem to be descended from either [Wilkie Collins's] Seargent Cuff or [Poe's] Dupin" ', and that 'If Holmes is a formula, he is an intellectual formula: and in both the *Dancing Man* and *The Cardboard Box* he uses Dupin's trick of following his chronicler's train of thought' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 541). In a letter written on 8 July 1929, Eliot told Rossiter that 'I agree that I was guilty of an over-statement, even mis-statement, and I accept most of your criticisms' (Eliot, Valerie and Haffenden, John: 2013: 540).

7.5.6 Nearly six years after his comments on Holmes, Eliot made use of *The Musgrave Ritual* in *Murder in the Cathedral*. Recall lines 362-367 of the 1935 Faber edition:

THOMAS

Whose was it?

TEMPTER

His who is gone.

THOMAS

Who shall have it?

TEMPTER

He who will come.

THOMAS

What shall be the month?

TEMPTER

The last from the first.

THOMAS

What shall we give for it?

TEMPTER

Pretence of priestly power.

THOMAS

Why should we give it?

TEMPTER

For the power and the glory.

THOMAS

No!

7.5.7 The first four lines - from 'whose was it?' to 'He who will come' - are the same in both *The Musgrave Ritual* and *Murder in the Cathedral*. The next line in *The Musgrave Ritual* is as follows: 'What was the month?'. This is a little different in *Murder in the Cathedral*: 'What shall be the month?'. In the line that follows immediately, the word 'sixth' of *The Musgrave Ritual* is replaced by the word 'last' in *Murder in the Cathedral*. The next few lines of



*The Musgrave Ritual* - from 'where was the sun?' to 'North by ten and by ten, east by five and by five, south by two and by two, west by one and by one, and so under' - are dropped in *Murder in the Cathedral* as irrelevant. The next two lines in the form of a question - 'What shall we give for it?' and 'Why should we give it?' - are the same in both *The Musgrave Ritual* and *Murder in the Cathedral*. The answers are, however, different. In *The Musgrave Ritual*, the answer to the first question is: 'All that is ours'. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, the answer to the first question is: 'Pretence of priestly power'. In *The Musgrave Ritual*, the answer to the second question is: 'For the sake of the trust'. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, the answer to the second question is: 'For the power and the glory'.

7.5.8 Lines 362-367 of the 1935 Faber edition, quoted above, are dropped in the Acting edition. They are, however, retained in the 1936 and the 1937 editions and remain unchanged. In the 1938 edition, however, the first question and its answer - 'Whose was it?' and 'His who is gone.' - are deleted. The rest remains the same.

7.5.9 I do not see why Eliot found it necessary to make use of *The Musgrave Ritual* in *Murder in the Cathedral*, except for the fun of it. The King in *The Musgrave Ritual*, who had left his crown behind, or was rather forced to do so, might have returned to reclaim it, as Thomas too might have fallen to the temptation of regaining the Chancellorship back. This is the only resemblance between the two of them. But this is very remote, and does not call for an introduction of the ritual in the play. Thomas had resigned the Chancellorship of his own choice, never to try to regain it. The King had no choice but to go. The exchange of words between Thomas and the Second Tempter might have reminded a few of the Holmes story, but it is very unlikely that it reminded the entire audience of it. To some at least, it must have come as an enigma. How did Eliot gain from it?

7.5.10 Grover Smith thinks that Eliot had designed 'more than one level of meaning' in this part of the dialogue between Thomas and the Second Tempter: 'The two actors seem to be talking at cross-purposes: Becket is speaking of temporal power as a corollary to the fall of man, and also—perhaps ironically referring to Satan and Christ when he asks 'Whose was it?' and 'Who shall have it?'—he may be thinking of Advent when he mentions the

month; the Second Tempter on the other hand is concerned only with Becket's struggle against the King, and is trying to deceive him even in the words 'For the power and the glory', by which he means the power and glory of Becket (and Satan) alone' (Smith 432). A play is not like a poem, not even a verse play. The reader may go back to a poem anytime he wishes and read it over and over again. If there is more than one level of meaning in a poem, he has enough time to find it out and enjoy it. The audience of a play is denied this advantage. A play is a one time affair, even if it is a verse play. If there is more than one level of meaning in a play, the audience may not be in a position to appreciate it. *Murder in the Cathedral* may be watched and read, I think, without any such problem.

7.5.11 Kenner seems to take a broader view and to see the structure and the technique of a detective story employed in the play. 'A detective story is a twice-told tale; it is the second telling that we think we understand. The second telling - the one in the last chapter - establishes this illusion by reducing person to purpose and behaviour to design. Eliot's ingenious stratagem was to give the first telling the substantiality of dramatic exhibition, and produce the glib summing-up as a fatuous anticlimax' (Kenner 240). This is, I think, rather far-fetched. If the Knights have the last word, as the sleuth does in a detective story when the story is told for a second time, Thomas does not remain a martyr any more.

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**Part III**  
**Versions Noted**

## 1. Versions and Problems

1.1 *Murder in the Cathedral* was telecast. It was turned into an opera. A film was made out of it. I have watched neither the teleplay, nor the opera, nor the film. I am not in a position, therefore, to make any comments on these.

1.2 The script of the film is available in the form of a book (Eliot and Hoellering 1952).

1.3 A film and the script of a film are not the same thing. A film may or may not be a work of art, but the script of a film never is. A play, too, may or may not be a work of art, but if it is, it is a work of art both on the stage and in the form of a book. It is not fair to compare what is not a work of art to what is. The script of a film cannot, therefore, be compared to a play which is a work of art, even if the film is based on the play. No such attempt shall be made here.

## 2. The TV Version

2.1 *Murder in the Cathedral* was telecast by the BBC on 21 December, 1936 (Behr 49). G. More O'Ferrall directed the TV play. Mitchelhill, the owner of the Duchess Theatre in London, where the performance of *Murder in the Cathedral* had begun on 30 October, 1936 (Behr 49), 'invited some 300 people to view on four screens set up in the stalls the most significant scenes from the 'live' television show' (Browne 68). I doubt very much if the script of the TV play was ever published - I have not seen any reference made to it anywhere. It has been said that the first-ever experiment of super-imposition was made in this TV play. Each 'Tempter was superimposed on the image of Becket as he emerged into the archbishop's conscious mind. It may thus have been a landmark in the development of television' (Browne 68). Another writer has put it a little differently: 'Thus, in a production of *Murder in the Cathedral*, the Tempters were presented as ghosts whispering in Becket's ear' (Brandt 10).

## 3. The Opera

3.1 An opera was made out of the play in Italian, and was called *Assassinio nella Cattedrale*. It was set to music by Ildebrando Pizzetti, and performed in the Vatican in September,



1959 in the presence of Pope John XXIII (Behr 80). The Pope wrote to Eliot to thank him for 'his services to the Christian faith' (Behr 81).

3.2 The opera was performed by San Diego Opera in March, 2013. San Diego is in California, the US. Ian D Campbell, General and Artistic Director of San Diego Opera, directed it.

3.3 In an interview published on 25 March, 2013, Campbell said, 'Church and State disagreements continue all around the world, it's a part of human history' (Campbell). Erica Miner, the interviewer, commented, 'That's one reason why this piece is so relevant hundreds of years later, because of those universal truths' (Campbell). Campbell also said, 'I don't see it as a ritual; I see it as a drama, a play with music, and the people become real, even the female chorus' (Campbell). Ferruccio Furlanetto (bass) played the role of Thomas. Furlanetto's performance 'was a high artistic achievement' (Howard). 'The sets essentially consisted of columns, a wide, short staircase, and realistic stained glass backdrops. . . . Pizzetti's opera contains some sublime music, particularly for the choruses' (Howard).

#### **4. The Film**

##### **(a) A Play Turned Into a Film**

4.1.1 In 1951, George Hoellering made a film out of *Murder in the Cathedral*, the play. The screenplay of the film was published for its 'first showing at the International Film Festival in Venice' on 28 June, 1951 (Behr 69). At the Venice Festival, it got 'prizes for the Best Film in Costume and the Best Art Direction' (Hoellering 84). The script of the film was published in 1952 by Faber and Faber in London and by Harcourt, Brace and Company in New York and was called *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral*. The names of both T. S. Eliot and George Hoellering appear as authors. It has two prefaces - one by Eliot, and another by Hoellering.

4.1.2 *Murder in the Cathedral* was 'the first contemporary verse play to be adapted to the screen', at least Eliot believed so (Eliot and Hoellering 7). 'The film itself, by T. S. Eliot and Hoellering, is not available. A copy exists in the archives of the British Film Institute but does not seem easy to get it' (Coulardeau).

4.1.3 There are in the film scenes not included in the play. It was necessary to add these, wrote Eliot, in order 'to turn the play into an intelligible film' (Eliot and Hoellering 7). The director had given Eliot 'the subject-matter of these scenes'; Eliot 'had only to provide the words' (Eliot and Hoellering 7). This may remind one of what Eliot had said about *The Rock*: 'I had only to write the words of prose dialogue for scenes of the usual historical pageant pattern, for which I had been given a scenario' (Eliot: 2009: 98).

4.1.4 Hoellering has narrated the story of making the film (Hoellering 1958). He asked Eliot to give him the film rights, but 'offered to prepare a complete film adaptation of the play' first, so that he could have an idea as to what the film was going to be like (Hoellering: 1958: 81). Hoellering claims that Eliot 'was very pleased with it' (Hoellering: 1958: 81). 'In the contract' that was drawn up, Eliot 'was given the right to approve the cast, the music, the costumes and sets, as well as each day's 'rushes' and the final version of the film' (Hoellering: 1958: 81). This looks like going out of the way and giving the author a lot of freedom and a lot of authority. In consequence, Eliot 'took a great personal interest in everything that was going on' and 'for several months came regularly once a week to a little recording studio in St John's Wood . . . , where he read through the entire play in his careful and precise voice' (Hoellering: 1958: 82). It was so good that Hoellering thought that Eliot 'had the makings of a very able actor. It was fascinating to listen to him recording the murder of the Archbishop—to the masterly way in which he contrasted the brutal, drunken voices of the Knights with the calm, humble voice of Becket' (Hoellering: 1958: 83). Hoellering asked Eliot to play the role of Becket. Eliot was 'a little tempted' (Hoellering: 1958: 83), but finally turned down the offer. Hoellering 'felt the Fourth Tempter should not be treated as a visual figure, but as a disembodied voice', and asked Eliot 'to speak the part in the film' (Hoellering: 1958: 83). This time Eliot agreed - he actually thought that 'presenting the Fourth Temptation merely as a voice proceeding from an invisible actor' was a 'happy idea' (Eliot and Hoellering 7). Hoellering thinks that Eliot's 'delivery of this part has an inner quality that will outlive any style of acting' (Hoellering: 1958: 83).

4.1.5 Hoellering 'found it difficult to express in filmic terms the speeches of the Knights after murder, and explained to Mr Eliot that, in' his 'opinion, the whole atmosphere of this part of the film would suffer if the Knights suddenly started to address the audience at length at this point' (Hoellering: 1958: 83). Eliot said that 'this scene was his main reason for writing the play' (Hoellering: 1958: 83). This is rather surprising. Eliot and Hoellering, however, found a way out of the problem. Following 'the murder of Becket, the people of Canterbury had been shown realistically and in action, preparing to storm the Cathedral. The Knights were therefore placed in a position where they had to act quickly and decisively; it would have completely interrupted the continuity of the film to let them deliver at this point the long, ironic speeches of the play, which are really addressed to the audience and not to the people of Canterbury' (Hoellering: 1958: 84). Later the First Knight 'speaks to the cinema audience' briefly (Eliot and Hoellering 117). This 'Mr Eliot wrote specially for the film' (Hoellering: 1958: 84). This explains, I think, the difference between a play and a film splendidly.

#### **(b) Eliot's Views on Films**

4.2.1 Hoellering thought that Eliot 'had no great respect for films in general', but agreed to collaborate with him as 'he saw here a possibility of experimenting with verse in a new medium' (Hoellering 81).

4.2.2 Eliot was, I think, interested in drama, not for the sake of drama, but for the sake of poetry. At one time, he had said that the audience ought to be reminded of the fact that 'what they are seeing is a play, and not a photograph. The theatre, in the effort to get greater and greater realism—that is, greater illusion—and thereby attempting to do what the cinema can do better, has tended to depart so far from poetry as to depart from prose too; and to give us people on the stage who are so extremely lifelike that they do not even talk prose, but merely make human noises' (Eliot: 1936: 994). Mere 'human noises' cannot, obviously, be the language of any work of art. If the cinema succeeds in creating a 'greater illusion' than a play and if, in the process, it employs a language which is so close to reality that it cannot be labelled as anything better than a human noise, the cinema is clearly to be deplored. Poetry is abstraction, and an abstraction cannot, by definition, be

close to reality. A film must, on the other hand, be close to reality and have as little to do with abstraction as possible. A poet's fear of the film is therefore neither unfounded, nor irrational.

4.2.3 One reason why Eliot 'preferred poetry to prose' was that poetry had 'a musical pattern' and dealt with feelings from 'a deeper and less articulate level' (Cooper xviii). [Cooper quoted the terms 'a musical pattern' and 'a deeper and less articulate level' from Eliot's writing in the *Listener*, titled *The Need for Poetic Drama* (Eliot 1936), referred to in the preceding paragraph (paragraph 4.2.2)]. One of the tasks of a poet writing a verse play is to find a way to reconcile the presentation of the 'less articulate' with the presentation of what is not so. He has, in fact, to go further and integrate the two. In the case of a film, the task is all the more difficult, since a film must keep up the illusion of reality more closely than a play. In his preface to *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot says that the 'difference between stage and screen in respect of realism is so great . . . as to be a difference of kind rather than degree' (Eliot and Hoellering 8).

4.2.4 Eliot thought that 'the cinema (even where fantasy is introduced) is much more realistic than the stage. Especially in an historical picture, the setting, the costume, and the way of life represented have to be accurate. Even a minor anachronism is intolerable' (Eliot and Hoellering 8). In watching a film, he added, we 'are seized with the illusion that we are observing the actual event, or at least a series of photographs of the actual event; and nothing must be allowed to break this illusion' (Eliot and Hoellering 8).

4.2.5 Eliot noted that in 'watching a stage performance, the member of the audience is in direct contact with the actor, is always conscious that he is looking at a stage and listening to an actor playing a part' (Eliot and Hoellering 8). The audience may, or may not, react to a play in a way the director and/or the players expect it to do. If it does react in an expected way, the director and the players may congratulate themselves on being able to read the mind of the audience in advance. If it does not, they can always give their ideas about how to present the play a second thought if they think they should to do so. [This can be easily done, since each performance of a play is a new one, even if given at the same place and under the same conditions, directed by the same person

and played by the same actors and the same actresses. No two performance of a play can ever be the same. On the other hand, there is, in a film, no scope for taking into account the reaction of the viewers and for bringing about changes, however necessary or desirable.] The contact between the audience and the men and women on the stage is not only direct, but also live. [In fact, it is direct, because it is live.] As Eliot puts it, the audience of a film is, compared to the audience of a play, 'more passive' - 'as audience', it contributes 'less' (Eliot and Hoellering 8).

4.2.6 Eliot proceeds to argue that since one watching a film is 'in a more passive state of mind', 'so he has to have more explained to him' (Eliot and Hoellering 9). Eliot does not say what constitutes a 'passive state of mind', nor does he explain how those who watch a film are 'more passive' than those who watch a play. If the same person watches both a film and a play, does he or she become more passive while watching the film than while watching the play? If the play and the film happen to deal with the same subject - as *Murder in the Cathedral*, the play, and *Murder in the Cathedral*, the film, do - does a member of the audience react to the play in one way and to the film in another? Does he or she go through a qualitative change, a sort of metamorphosis, while switching from one to the other? Eliot claims that the audience of a film contributes 'less' as an audience. How does one measure the contribution of an audience? How does one know that an audience is contributing 'less'? Less than what? Is the audience of a film less capable of being moved emotionally than the audience of a play? It cannot be true. At least, there is, as far as I know, no scientific evidence to show that it is. Does the audience of a film take more time to understand what it watches than the audience of a play? It cannot be true, either. The only contribution an audience can make is through its reactions to what it watches. As we have noted earlier, there is, in the case of a film, no way in which such reaction can be taken into account for the purpose of bringing about changes in the film. That is none of the audiences' fault. On the basis of such lack of opportunity in the case of a film, one cannot come to the conclusion that the audience is passive, or that it does not contribute as much as it should. The question of explaining more to it does not, therefore, arise.

4.2.7 The fact remains that the play and the film are two different forms of expression and that one cannot automatically be transformed into another. Each form has its own rules, and these have to be honoured. Making a film of the performance of a play on the stage is not the same as making a film out of it. It is just a video of the performance, nothing more. It may be necessary to bring about changes in the contents of a play while turning it into a film, and, if such a need arises, it must be met.

4.2.8 Take, for example, the case of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (Ibsen 1999), which Satyajit Ray turned into a film. He called the film *Gonoshatru (The Public Enemy)*. In the play, Dr Stockmann says that the 'Baths are nothing but a cesspool', a 'whited poisoned sepulchre', a 'most serious danger to health' - 'All that filth up at Mölledal, where there's such an awful stench—it's all seeping into the pipes that lead to the pump-room! And that same damned, poisonous muck is seeping out on the beach as well!' (Ibsen 18). This is an ordinary problem, with nothing special about it. It can be taken care of without any difficulty - that is, if one wishes to take care of it at all. In Ray's film, however, it is not easy to take care of the problem, since it involves sacred water, flowing from a temple. Since it is sacred, it is, by definition, pure, and can never be contaminated. This immediately brings Ibsen's play, set in conditions little known to the Bengali audience, to familiar grounds, to life as it went on in West Bengal at Ray's time, to problems and prejudices that were an inseparable part of that life. 'The introduction of the temple into the story is Ray's masterstroke' (Robinson 339).

4.2.9 When one makes a film out of a play or a novel, or makes a play out of a short story, one does not simply copy the original in a new format. One must have a vision of one's own if one aims at creating a work of art, and this one must be able to present to one's audience. One must also invest 'a story with organic cohesion' (Ray 14). The additional scenes in *Murder in the Cathedral*, the film - that is, scenes which are not there in the play - would be justified if, and only if, these are found indispensable in order to give the film its 'organic cohesion'.

4.2.10 Eliot thinks that, in a film made out of a verse play, 'what you see should never distract your attention from what you hear' (Eliot and Hoellering 10). He also thinks that 'the illustration of the

words by the scene', in a film made out of a verse play, is 'an interpretation of the meaning of the words' (Eliot and Hoellering 10). From this, he comes to the conclusion that 'only a producer who understands poetry' 'is competent to deal with such a play at all' (Eliot and Hoellering 10). Obviously, Eliot considered Hoellering to be one such producer.

4.2.11 Hoellering said that he would 'like *Murder in the Cathedral* to be regarded as an experiment in a new type of film, where dialogue is at last given an equal place to picture, and where the audience is called upon to listen as well as to look' (Eliot and Hoellering 14). The assumption, unmistakably, is that the audience, so long, either looked, or listened, and did not look while listening, or listen while looking. Isn't it a little too presumptuous?

### **(c) The Play and the Film: An Overview**

4.3.1 While King Henry does not appear in the play, he plays an important role in the film. Bishop Foliot too appears in the film, though not in the play.

4.3.2 The play begins with a chorus, made up by women of Canterbury, gathered close by the cathedral, waiting, and wondering, 'Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety, that draws our feet / Towards the cathedral?'. In the film, these words are heard much later, after a shot of a sea is shown, introduced, presumably, to indicate that the Archbishop is separated from his people. Shortly before that, the Prior tells the priests: 'The King's Court has given judgement . . . / The Archbishop is gone. . . / He refused to hear the sentence'. The women of the chorus in the film, instead of standing close to the cathedral, walk into the Mary Chapel before saying the words with which the play opens, light candles and place them at the foot of a painting of the Virgin.

4.3.3 The film begins with the picture of a crucifix, followed by that of a monk ringing a bell. Then the Archbishop is shown, kneeling at the altar. The Archbishop rises to address the assembled priests and monks. The first words heard in the film are: 'Canons and brethren, I am summoned to the King / Who holds his court at Northampton.' This speech is not there in the play.

4.3.4 The film starts before Thomas goes into exile; the play seven years later. At the beginning of the film, the people of Canterbury do not miss him, do not expect him back and do not suffer in any way on his account. The play begins, on the other hand, with a deep sense of fear and apprehension in the minds of the people. When this sense of fear is introduced in the film with the speech with which the play begins, it might seem a little abrupt.

4.3.5 Eliot thought that 'in some respects - notably in the treatment of the choral passages -' the film made 'the meaning clearer, and in that way' was 'nearer to what the play would have been, had it been written for the London theatre and by a dramatist of greater experience' (Eliot and Hoellering 10). Does this mean that Eliot, looking back at the play years later, thought it to be rather immature? He does not clarify how the film makes the meaning clearer 'in some respects' and how the treatment of the choral passages in the film differs from that in the play. I wish he did.

#### **(d) Cast**

4.4.1 Father John Groser played the role of Thomas; Alexander Gauge, that of King Henry II; and Alban Blakelock, that of Bishop Foliot (Eliot and Hoellering: page number not given, presumably 15).

4.4.2 Music was set by Laszlo Lajtha. Peter Pendry was the art director, and David Kosky, the director of photography (Eliot and Hoellering: page number not given, presumably 15).

4.4.3 The game of chess played in the film was designed by S. Tartakower (Eliot and Hoellering: page number not given, presumably 15). There is no such game in the play.

#### **(e) Changes and Additions**

4.5.1 One of the Prefaces of *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral* was, as we have noted earlier, written by Hoellering. In it, he says nothing about the edition of the play he had used for the purpose of making the film. Consider, for example, two extracts from the book. The first is as follows: 'Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up beneath my feet' (Eliot and Hoellering 72). This is taken from the 1937 edition of the play (Eliot: 1937:



49). In the 1938 edition, the line is a little different: 'Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up against our feet' (Eliot: 1938: 40). Obviously, Hoellering had not used the 1938 edition. Again, in his sermon in the film, Thomas at one point says, 'Ambition fortifies the will of man to become a ruler over other men: it operates with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action of impurity upon impurity' (Eliot and Hoellering 82). This line does not occur in the 1938 edition of the play (Eliot: 1938: 49). Again, Hoellering had not used the 1938 edition. Why didn't he? Why didn't Eliot insist that he should? It would have been only natural for him to use the latest edition of the play unless there were any particular reasons for using an earlier one. Apparently, there were no such reasons.

4.5.2 At the beginning of the film, the Archbishop addresses priests and monks. This is an addition to the play. He says,

'Canons and brethren, I am summoned to the King  
Who hold his Court at Northampton. Therefore I have  
summoned you—  
Since I must be gone by daybreak—to hear me and to learn  
The cause, the need, the purpose and the probable end.  
You know of John the Marshall, how he would possess  
himself  
Of lands appurtenant to a vassal of our see:  
You know how we dismissed his suit, finding  
No shadow of title. Crafty and mischievous,  
He would have taken his case before the King's court  
To provoke dissension to his private profit,  
Setting on foot great evil, to serve a little gain.  
You know that I denied the ground of his appeal  
And send three Knights to testify. Therefore I am  
summoned.  
But this is now no longer  
The small adventure of a petty robber  
Greedy to gain a manor and a field or two,  
A rat slipping into the Church's granary.  
The accuser will be the King. The accused will be  
Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury. The forfeit

Is a great power, all power.

Were I to yield,  
The Church, all Christendom, Christ in His Vicar  
Would suffer limitation. If I stand firm,  
It is only I who am diminished and deprived.  
Perhaps to exile. Most surely a long absence:  
For if no justice here, then justification  
In Rome. If I am powerless here, I must invoke  
The power of Rome.

But you, remember, and be comforted.  
This is no new discord, only one engagement  
In an unending war. The obscure chronicle  
Of the future when it is the past, will show  
The Church brought many times much nearer desolation  
And against all Christ's promise.

There must be two powers  
Always in this world. The King would have one power  
alone  
The worldly power which reaches towards the absolute  
And even when aiming well, still brings forth evil  
And most when absolute, bows down to Anti-Christ.

There is but one absolute King, the Lord you serve.  
Pray for me. And in all things be obedient;  
Be sober and discreet, restrained and prudent, and observe  
Such orders as the Father Prior may give. Receive our  
blessings.'

(Eliot and Hoellering 19-20)

4.5.3 Thomas' address is followed by a Chorus of Women. This is new, an addition to the play. It is as follows:

*'Chorus of Women*

Here let us kneel, close by the cathedral. Here let us pray  
for our good Archbishop;

may his journey be easy, his road be  
smooth, weather and wind be fair, may his horse not fail.

God who created us  
Jesus who saved us  
Spirit who cleanseth us  
God be with you between the woods  
Jesus be with you at the turning of the hill  
Spirit be with you in crossing the stream  
Blessed Mary, St. Michael, St. Elphege, and all the saints  
pray.  
May the prayers of the poor, of your people, your poor  
folk of Kent, avail,  
And of us, the women of Canterbury. Now  
May the King be enlightened, your enemies thwarted, the  
truth prevail, all powers of evil driven away.

*One Woman*

But this morning my fire would not kindle

*Another Woman*

This morning my cauldron would not boil

*A third Woman*

Last night I was ridden by witches

And the cat jumped onto the bed

*A fourth Woman*

Our housedog howled all the night

At the owl that cried in the elmtree

*A fifth Woman*

My wedding ring slipped from my finger

And my milk jug fell on the hearth.

*A sixth Woman*

O Lord Archbishop, do not carry the cross, or the cross

will carry you. I have boding of bane and bale.

Return,

return to us, for without you we have no succour or  
stay.'

(Eliot and Hoellering 23)

4.5.4 The proceedings at the King's court, which are not there  
in the play, are as follows:

*'Archbishop*

My Lord the King, I am guilty of no treason. Never would I be lacking in reverence for the King's Grace or for the King's Law in his domain. The suit of John the Marshal pertained to my court; it was tried in my court; and it was dismissed. The evidence was plain, the judgement that imposed by canon law. Beyond that court there could be no appeal, for such a case, in this land. Therefore, when summoned to your court, I could not comply: that were to fail in my duty as Archbishop and betray the Church in all Christendom. Yet I did not fail in respect for the King's Majesty: I sent three of my knights to give account of actions, to testify that this suit could not be allowed, and to explain my absence. More I could not do.

*King*

Your defence is not accepted. You pretend to ignore the Constitutions of Clarendon. To these every bishop, all of them here present, consented, and you too, my Lord Archbishop. The Constitutions admit that a plaintiff has the right of appeal from the Archdeacon to the Bishop, from the Bishop to the Archbishop, and from the Archbishop to the King. I therefore hold you guilty of treason. And I shall hold guilty of treason all those—if there be any—who support you in this conduct. My Lords Bishops, I demand that you now pronounce the judgement of my Council.

*A few seconds' silence.*

*First Bishop*

What shall we say?

*Second Bishop*

To my mind, the question is perfectly simple. We signed the Constitutions of Clarendon. We are honest men; the oath was binding; and for us to break it now

would be excessively imprudent.

*Third Bishop*

The Archbishop exceeds his authority. I refuse to be bullied. I say we should pronounce for the King.

*Fourth Bishop*

But the saving clause—Thomas consented saving only the law of the Church.

*First Bishop*

And the King did not accept this reservation.

*Fifth Bishop*

So Thomas refused to sign.

*Sixth Bishop*

For my part, I am convinced that the true interests of the Church demand that we should give judgement for the King. It was the King who forced Becket upon us as Archbishop against our wishes and the interests of the Church. He must now regret this interference. By condemning Thomas we shall be expressing, in the clearest possible manner, our objection to the intrusion of the State into Church affairs.

*Third Bishop*

I agree. And then we can have My Lord of London as Archbishop—a choice, my Lords, which I know we should all have preferred.

*Bishop Foliot*

My Lord, you are too kind.

*Second Bishop*

Yes, my Lord, we know you for the wisest man among us, and a moderate man, an extremely moderate man.

*Bishop Foliot*

I think I see a way.

*Seventh Bishop*

But I am fearful of hasty measures. It is most inconvenient, but Thomas is still Archbishop, and has power of excommunication over us.

*Bishop Foliot*

I know, I know, and that is why I shall propose this solution, which will make it possible for us to satisfy the King.

*Voices sink into an indistinct murmur.*

*First Noble*

This is better than a tournament (*Laughter*).

*Second Noble*

And the onlookers, my Lord, see the best of the game.

*Third Noble*

Look at those bishops! like frightened birds when one of my falcons is ranging, they don't know where to turn.

*Fourth Noble*

These are birds too fat to fly.

*Fifth Noble*

This is an end to Bishop's Law, I think: tomorrow there will be only King's Law.

*Second Noble*

Then tomorrow, my Lord, look to your own rights.

*Sixth Noble*

Ay, ay, one thing at a time. Let King eat Bishop, he'll find his holy barons tougher meat.

*Seventh Noble*

I do not like it, I tell you. The King may grow too powerful for us.

*Seventh Bishop*

My Lord of Canterbury, we, the bishops of this realm, hold that you have failed of the respect due to the King's Grace. By reason of your oath of homage, you were bound, saving only urgent business or infirmity, to answer the King's summons in person. This you failed to do: we exhort you, therefore, to admit your contumacy, and throw yourself upon the King's mercy.

*Some Nobles*

Hear, hear.

*Archbishop*

My Lord King, there is no subtlety in this charge, and I will use no subtlety in my defence. I am not guilty. Were I to give any other answer, then should I three times break faith. The oath I took at Clarendon was ever saving my order; that all men know. Should I now be faithless to my vows as priest and bishop? These same Constitutions of Clarendon were then annulled by the Pope. Should I now be faithless to my obedience to the Vicar of Christ?

And, as touching the third bond, I know well what evils would come upon this country of England, were I to suffer unprotesting the subjection of the spiritual power to the temporal. Should I now be faithless to my people?

My Lords, as concerning the temporal power, though it be also of God, as signified in the consecration of the King to his office when he is anointed and crowned by the Church, I bid you think that this same temporal power has to do with today and tomorrow. Those who wield it, as you, my Lords, wield this power under the King, are much tempted to bend it to their own advantage. You think of estates and honours for yourselves and for your sons: yet it is but a little while, and your estates are scattered, and your honours lost, and your monuments broken, and your name forgotten.

Tomorrow where is Vere? where is Bohun? Where is . . . . .  
You would do well to remember the Church of God which was, and is and ever shall be to the end of the world according to the promises of Christ.

But for you, my Lords Bishops, my heart is very sorrowful. You have deserted me to whom you are bound by your order, by your estate and by your dignity. Those disciples, that were afterwards Saints by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, left Our Lord and fled through bodily fear: take heed that you do not desert me through the greater sin of worldly greed and ambition, and that no saving grace redeem your end.

There is one here would willingly be Archbishop in my stead.

Consider, my Lords, that what violates the Law of God cannot be lawful. Consider, that the King's reverence cannot be magnified by abating the reverence of the Church. You have yet time, and the time is this very moment and no more, to abjure your apostasy and renew your obedience to the Law of Christ's Church, to Christ's Vicar, and to me.

And for myself, though I stand alone in England, though every deprivation and enforcement ensue to me, yet will I in no way relinquish the right.

*King (shouts)*

Hear him no further, but pronounce! I have not got you here to whisper and whine, to plead with an Archbishop, but to give judgement upon a manifest and shameless traitor. Will you make yourselves accomplices of this man? I have consulted you according to the form of law: what more do you require? Pronounce judgement, or by the Mass, I will strip you, every one of you, out of palace and church; ay, out of chasuble and cassock, too.



*First Bishop*

My Lord! we are taken between the hammer and the anvil:  
have mercy upon us!

*Archbishop*

Fool! you betray yourself among irreverent laughing men.  
You ask me to commit a greater sin, to confirm and  
justify you in your cowardice. The law of man that  
breaks the law of God is no law, but lawless violence.

Betray me if you will, but do not ask me to betray.

*Bishop Foliot*

My Lord the King. I have taken counsel with my brethren  
here gathered, and they have asked me to put forward  
a proposal which should satisfy both Your Majesty's  
reasonable demand and their own not unreasonable  
scruples. The Archbishop, as our metropolitan, for-  
bids us to proceed further with this case.

Here, it must

be admitted, he is acting according to the strict letter  
of ecclesiastical law, however we may interpret his  
motives. He has the power of excommunication over  
us; and I think your Majesty will acknowledge, that it  
would be a very grave scandal, and the excuse for  
misconduct among the common people, for the whole  
of your bench of bishops to be excommunicated.  
There is nothing that we more earnestly desire, than to  
demonstrate our loyalty to Your Majesty's person and  
Your Majesty's laws. We therefore respectfully propose  
to appeal to the Pope to release us from our canonical  
obedience to the Archbishop: we shall then be in a  
position to pronounce judgement upon him. I hope  
that this suggestion will commend itself to Your  
Majesty.

*King*

Cowards and traitors! I will have judgement, and I will

have it now.

*(To the nobles)*

You have heard these wind-bags and precise committee men. You, my Lords, are men of action, who can prove your loyalty without palaver. Pronounce the judgement.

*Noble*

My Lord Archbishop, we declare you guilty of . . .

*Archbishop*

What is this? Did I not say truly that the law of man that violates the law of God is no law, but lawlessness? You respect not even these same Constitutions of Clarendon that the King invokes. Is it not there affirmed that offences by the clergy against the King shall be punished by the Church? You are but lay persons: you can utter no judgement upon your Father in God. I will not hear you.

*The Archbishop leaves the court followed by his knights'*

(Eliot and Hoellering 25-33)

4.5.5 In the next scene, the Prior 'speaks to the people'. This too is not there in the play. The Prior says,

'My brethren, and you, good people of Canterbury.

These knights have brought bad news: bad news is what I  
give you.

The King's Court has given judgement: if that is judgement  
Which is only the voice of the wicked and the frightened;  
And if that is a Court, which has no authority  
To pronounce such a judgement. The Archbishop is gone.  
He refused to hear the sentence, left the Court.  
He has taken ship for France, for what can he do  
But appeal to the Holy Father, to the judgement seat of  
Rome?

He is not a man who has fled for his own safety—  
Safety he could have bought, at the price of betrayal—  
But he is your Archbishop, who must carry on the fight

Where the fight can be waged, no other place than Rome.  
To Rome he will appeal, for the Church in England,  
For the law of God in England. He will return to you  
With the Holy Father's blessing, and the Papal anathema.  
For us is but to wait, to pray, to suffer  
Perhaps for a long time. I have nothing to promise you  
Until his return, but waiting and suffering.  
I have nothing to ask of you but prayer and endurance.  
The men at arms will soon be here  
To enforce the King's command, to confirm the seizure  
By John the Marshal, to the great harm of some of you;  
To take forfeit of us, imposing heavy penalty.  
We must not withstand them. You must not withstand  
  them.  
The Archbishop would not wish of you rebellious  
  behaviour  
Against the King, to the danger of your bodies,  
Or hatred and anger to the danger of your souls.  
We must comply, but not consent. Pray to St. Elphege.  
Let us bow the knee. Let us pray. '

(Eliot and Hoellering 34-35)

4.5.6 The Chorus with which the play opens ('Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait. . . . For us, the poor, there is no action, / But only to wait and to witness.') is introduced at this point.

4.5.7 The next departure from the play occurs when the First Tempter comes to see Thomas. 'The screen becomes black' and 'A chess board appears' (Eliot and Hoellering 53). 'The tempter makes the first move' (Eliot and Hoellering 54). A little later, the 'Archbishop checkmates the Tempter' (Eliot and Hoellering 56). There is, however, no departure from the play in the exchange between the Archbishop and the Tempter.

4.5.8 The voice of the Fourth Tempter is, as noted earlier, heard in the film, but he is not seen. [There is an illustration in the

book showing the '*modulations on the sound track of the film made by T. S. Eliot's voice speaking the part of the Fourth Tempter*' (Eliot and Hoellering 65).] The Archbishop's '*shadow is thrown across the painting above the altar*' as the '*Fourth Tempter's voice is heard. The Archbishop walks about his Hall listening to the Fourth Tempter's voice*' (Eliot and Hoellering 65). When the Fourth Tempter delivers his last words ('You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer . . . Be forever still'), the Archbishop is seen '*kneeling at his altar*' (Eliot and Hoellering 70).

4.5.9 The next words ('There is no rest in the house. . . the back of my hand?') in the play are spoken by the Chorus. In the film, a Priest speaks these (Eliot and Hoellering 72).

4.5.10 This is followed, in the play, by the words of Four Tempters ('Man's life is a cheat . . . enemy of himself'). The lines are not, however, divided among the Tempters in the play. In the film, they are. The first three lines are spoken by the First Tempter; the next four lines by the Second Tempter, the Third Tempter, the First Tempter and the Second Tempter respectively, each speaking a line; the next seven lines and the first half of the eighth by the Third Tempter; and the last half of the eighth line by the three Tempters together. In the play, the three Priests speak next ('O Thomas my Lord . . . by the sun?'). In the film, the Third Priest alone speaks the lines.

4.5.11 In the play, the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters deliver the next few lines ('Is it the owl that calls . . . feel the cold in his groin'), speaking '*alternately*' (Eliot: 1938: 42), until the Chorus makes a long statement. In the film, the First, the Second and the Third Tempters speak the first three lines instead of the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters respectively. The fourth line is spoken by a Priest in the film in place of the Chorus. In the film, all other lines are spoken by either the First Tempter, or the Second Tempter, or the Third Tempter, or by a Priest. There is, in this part of the film, no room for the Chorus to speak.

4.5.12 In the film, people come '*into the crypt for Midnight Mass*', holding '*lighted candles in their hands*'. '*The Archbishop stands before the altar and begins his Christmas sermon*' (Eliot and Hoellering 79). In the play, the Archbishop '*preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning*' (Eliot: 1938: 47). Technically,

'morning' may mean any time after midnight. But one might miss in the play the foreboding darkness of this part of the film.

4.5.13 The Chorus, which marks the beginning of Part II of the play in the 1938 edition ('Does the bird sing in the South . . . waiting is long'), is not spoken by the women of Canterbury in the film, but by a peasant and his wife in their hut, the man '*carrying wood*' and depositing it '*down by the fire*', and the woman rocking '*her child in its cradle*' (Eliot and Hoellering 84). Hoellering thinks that this 'scene forms a bridge between the Christmas sermon, which marks a radical division in the play, and the next appearance of the priests ('since Christmas a day . . .') (Eliot and Hoellering 13).

4.5.14 The Chorus beginning with the words 'I have smelt them' and ending with the words 'out of our shame' (Eliot: 1938: 66-68) is spoken in the film by as many as eleven different women, each speaking a line or two. In addition, all the women speak a few lines together. These include 'In our veins our bowels . . . women of Canterbury' (Eliot: 1938: 100) and 'Am torn away . . . out of our shame' (Eliot: 1938: 100-101), with one woman speaking the line 'O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop' alone in the second instance.

4.5.15 When the priests drag Thomas off to safety, a few lines ('You will be killed . . . become of us?') assigned to the Priests in the play are spoken by '*An Archbishop's Knight*' in the film. Thomas' words 'Go to vespers, remember me ... joyful consummation' (Eliot: 1938: 70) are dropped in the film. The director explains why: 'Becket's words 'Go to vespers . . .' were omitted, so that they could be used in a later scene; when, shortly before the return of the knights, the priests again implore Becket to leave. He tells them to go to vespers, and by blessing them forces them to withdraw, as there is nothing more they can say after having received his blessing. This handling of the scene generally increases its dramatic intensity, as the Archbishop faces his murderers alone, instead of having around him a number of priests who do not lift a finger to come to his aid. This, in my opinion, is an improvement which could also be used in stage productions of the play' (Eliot and Hoellering 13).

4.5.16 After Thomas is killed in the film, '*The people run into the Cathedral*', '*An angry crowd surrounds the Knights*' and '*The Knights address the crowd*' (Eliot and Hoellering 113). Compared to the play, the defence of the Knights is very short in the film. When, finally, the First Knight '*suddenly stands in darkness*' and '*speaks to the cinema audience*', he says, 'If you have now arrived at a just subordination of the pretensions of the Church to the welfare of the State, remember that it is we who took the first step. You accept our principles; you benefit by our precedent; you enjoy the fruits of our action. Yet we have been dead for nearly 800 years and you still call us murderers. In a moment you will see the Archbishop laid before the altar and acclaimed as a martyr. Then ask yourselves, who is more representative of the thing you are: the man you call a martyr, or the men you call his murderers?' (Eliot and Hoellering 117). This 'new speech' was 'specially written by Mr. Eliot' (Eliot and Hoellering 13).

4.5.17 The director had found it necessary to bring about these changes 'because it had been found that in stage production these speeches' - that is, the speeches made by the Knights after murdering Thomas - 'amused the audience instead of shocking them, and thereby made them miss the point—main point of the whole play' (Eliot and Hoellering 13-14). That the Knight is addressing the people some eight hundred years after Thomas' murder is mentioned for the first time. The play does not mention it. Only from Eliot's essay *Poetry and Drama*, one comes to know that the Knights 'are quite aware that they are addressing an audience of people living eight hundred years after they themselves are dead' (Eliot: 2009: 86).

4.5.18 The entire dialogue of the Priests after the speeches made by the Knights in the play is dropped in the film. After the short speech of the First Knight, addressed to the audience of the film, the '*priests and Archbishop's Knights carry the Archbishop's bier*', '*A monk lights the candles on the altar*', '*The bier is laid before the altar*' and '*The people kneel and bow deeply*' (Eliot and Hoellering 118). Then the final Chorus ('We praise Thee . . . Blessed Thomas, pray for us') (Eliot: 1938: 85-88) is heard.

4.5.19 There is, writes Hoellering, 'one difference of great importance between the film and the play: the handling of the women's chorus. From the moment of their first appearance, the

women are shown as real women of Canterbury, praying at the altar of the Virgin, going about their work, etc. They have been completely integrated with the action of the play, in a way which it would be impossible to achieve on the stage' (Eliot and Hoellering 14). Were the women of the Chorus in the play, then, unreal? I don't think so. 'They have been completely integrated with the action of the play' - this, precisely, is what Eliot, I think, never wished to do in the play. The women of the Chorus have no part to play in the events that affect their lives so deeply. They are outsiders. For them, 'the poor, there is no action, / But only to wait and to witness' (Eliot: 1938: 13).

## 5. A Last Word

5.1.1 Obviously, *Murder in the Cathedral* appealed to people as diverse as the producer of a TV play, the writer of an opera and the director of a film - each different from another, in taste, training, understanding of art, approach to it, even language. They belonged to different times, and had, presumably, divergent views. This goes to show how widely the creative people liked the play. This is a testimony to its inherent strength.

5.1.2 Not many works of art give rise to a new work of art. The ones that do must be considered exceptional. *Murder in the Cathedral* is certainly so. It is their technique that makes a TV play, an opera and a film different from one another. The difference in the technique does not, however, occur merely because of the difference of the medium. More importantly, it is explained by the difference in how one looks at life. Each of these - the TV play, the opera and the film - presents a different view of life, and yet, in this case, looks to a single play as its source and as its inspiration. It is a difficult play, difficult to understand, difficult to interpret, and written in verse. That does not seem to make any difference at all to the producer of the TV play, the writer of the opera and the director of the film. This is very remarkable.

5.1.3 It is necessary for a poet to have 'a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence' (Eliot: 1986: 14), but a poet who makes a conscious use of history in his or her work must not only have this perception, but also be able to demonstrate it. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot links the past with the present, deliberately, bringing into focus the conflict between the temporal

and the spiritual, the secular and the non-secular, raging even today. Maybe this is what had moved the people most, including those who felt obliged to create works of their own.



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