

CHAPTER - II

THE FAMILY REUNION

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" We have suffered far more than a personal loss
We have lost our way in the dark". ---- Chorus

The Family Reunion occupies a prominent place in the history of the revival of poetic drama. It is Eliot's first successful attempt at employing contemporary setting and speech in drama. The plot of The Family Reunion is extremely simple, however it has a complexity all its own.

The play begins with the family party to celebrate the sixtieth birth-day of Amy, mother of the hero. Harry and his brothers, John and Arthur are expected to come home to join the party. Amy's sisters, Ivy, Violet and Agatha have already arrived. Charles and Gerald, the two younger brothers of her dead husband are also present with Mary, daughter of the deceased cousin of the Dowager Lady (Amy). This family gathering is arranged after a gap of eight years.

Amy has grown old and so suffers from cold. She complains of cold, of winters have grown longer, and of the springs that never arrive soon. She feels cold as

she is aged and has lost her vigour and youth. Even Wishwood has always been a cold place. Ivy advises her to go south in the winter. Violet hates this place as it is full of vulgar people. Charles agrees with her and prefers a London club - while Gerald suggests East. Everybody agrees that the younger generation is decadent, it lacks stamina and a sense of responsibility.

Amy informs all the members that nobody should reveal the painful past before Harry and refer to his marriage or talk about his wife. All of them are told to welcome him warmly. On his arrival he stares at the Eumenides which have chased him during the last eight years. They all wonder at his strange behaviour. He is haunted by the past that while sailing on a ship in the mid-Atlantic, probably, he pushed his wife over and killed her. This sense of guilt hangs over his mind so heavily that he is unable to maintain even the normal relations with his kith and kin !

Mary does not feel at home at Wishwood. Amy, who has always been a domineering woman, wants to have her as a tame daughter-in-law without money. She is thirty and not yet married. The Monchensy circle is arranging

the things for dinner. The scene closes with the Chorus expressing its fear of the unknown events about to take place.

Amy never punished her children but made them feel guilty. The rule of conduct was only to please her. Harry comes across the secret about his parents. They were not happy together. His father went to live abroad and died there when Harry was merely a child. Warburton advises Harry not to pursue the unpleasant matter which will cause a great harm to Amy's health as it is only the force of her personality and her indomitable will that have kept her alive.

Denman appears to announce the visit of Sergeant Winchell to meet Harry who at once imagines that he has perhaps come to arrest him for the imagined murder of his wife, Sergeant Winchell is much surprised at Harry's agitation; he has actually come to inform them that John has met with an accident. Later, Ivy also comes with the news that Arthur has also met with an accident. He was drunk, was driving rashly and collided with a cart and reared into a shop window. But he did not receive any serious injuries.

At the end of the play Harry is going away on a long journey. He suggests that John should take his place at Wishwood, Amy and Agatha confront each other, and all the past comes out before them. Amy gets angry with Agatha as the latter had taken away her husband thirty-five years before and now Harry is being taken away by her. According to her, all the time Amy's husband loved Agatha but she ignored all for the sake of the family. She managed everything as her attention was centred mainly on Harry. When she comes to know that Harry is acting on the advice of Agatha, the centre of her own life is shaken and her will is broken. She finds no reason to live for and she dies. They are all stunned by this unexpected death.

The play closes with the birthday rituals of Agatha and Mary. They place cake and candles, and on each round they blow a few candles and end it with the hope that the curse would be ended.

The play has a great thematic potential. It has been looked upon by various critics from philosophical, psychological and religious view-points. It is a story of sin and its expiation, of crime and consequent punishment. The philosophical awareness of Time may also

be considered as one of Eliot's major concerns. The contrast between the old and the new, between the ordinary and the extraordinary, between the simple and the complex also strikes us while we look at the play closely. If looked upon it from the existentialist point of view, the play becomes the serious study in loneliness, alienation and man's search for his own identity in modern times. It is also a partial answer to the eternal question asked by man, "Who am I ? David E. Jones has rightly said that " The play is thus seen as a portrait of permanent human nature in its modern predicament"¹. According to Virendra Roy, Eliot deals in this play with" the absurdities of life without belief in the other world of spiritual values and dramatizes the struggle of a penitent to cross the boundry-line of the filthy world of disbelief and enter into the rose-garden of his soul's dream"². Desmond Maccarthy says that the play postulates a supernatural conception of sin,³ whereas Purnima Gupta notices in it "a case of philosophical psychology"⁴. E Martin Browne thinks that "The basic pattern of the play is the family relationships and the irruption into them of the force represented by the Furies".⁵ The theme of man's alienation from Society, Family and Self, among other

things, is also powerfully expressed in this play. The following sections of this Chapter are devoted to the exploration of these three facets of alienation.

I

After the brief summary of and the critical opinions on The Family Reunion in the preceding pages, we will now see in this section the reflection of man's alienation from Society. Amy and Harry, two major characters of the play are the centre of the play. On the one hand, Amy, mother of the hero is the centre of Wishwood, but on the other hand Harry is the centre of this play. He is a man who is shown at every moment of turning or conversion, he is coming home after a gap of eight years. Amy is a traditional lady from the upper-class family and so sticks to the old beliefs and customs and prefers the rustic life of Wishwood, which is everything to her, even her prison. She wants to keep Wishwood alive to keep the family alive, to keep her alive, and to keep them all together.

The play has a double pattern : the outer drama takes place at Wishwood, where as the inner drama centres round Harry. Harry's critical state of mind takes him away from others and alienates him from them.

It is really a special event because after a gap of eight years, for the first time, they are coming together to celebrate Amy's birth-day. This gap of eight years itself is indicative of Harry's social alienation. Agatha thinks that it is rather painful for Harry to come to Wishwood, the place of his birth. He had left this place when he was merely a boy, and now he is a grown-up man. Now "The man who returns will have to meet/ The boy who left".⁶ On Harry's arrival, all wonder at his strange behaviour. His aunts and uncles propose various schemes to make him stay at Wishwood. He has probably, like the modern young people, lost his sense of taste and smell, has no sense of responsibility. He is out of tune with everybody there. He withdraws into his own make-believe world. He thinks that one is as lonely spiritually as a traveller in a crowded desert enveloped by a thick smoke with many persons moving about round and round without direction. The following words spoken by him to Agatha bring out man's social alienation in general:

"The sudden solitude in a crowded desert
 In a thick smoke, many creatures moving
 Without direction, for no direction
 Leads anywhere but round and round in that vapour--
 Without purpose, and without principle of conduct.
 In flickering intervals of light and darkness;

... ..

I talk in general terms
 Because the particular has no language. One thinks
 to escape
 By violence, but one is still alone
 In an over-crowded desert, jostled by ghosts"⁷

He lives in his own world where only he can see the Eumenides. His journey from the real world to the world of fancy isolates him from the people from the real world.

Dr Warburton, the family doctor, wants a few minutes alone with Harry for the private talk with him. Issues are so sensitive in our life today that we take resort to social isolation as is evidenced here by Dr Warburton's following words:

"I'am glad of a few minutes alone with you, Harry. In fact, I had another reason for coming this evening Than simply in honour of your mother's birthday. I wanted a private conversation with you On a confidential matter".⁸

The words like 'private', 'alone', 'confidential' in Dr Warburton's speech enhance and underline Harry's social alienation.

The things which Harry thought real are mere shadows, and the real ones are what he thought merely private shadows. He has already experienced loneliness of an insane mind. Now he lives in public and realises

that the pain of liberty is different from the pain of imprisonment.

Amy charges Agatha that she took away her husband then and that now she is taking away her son. Agatha replies dashingly that if she has taken anything from her, it is something that she never had. Further she says that she got nothing except thirty years of solitude and aloneness among the women in a Women's college. Her pathetic and pity-evoking words spoken to Amy speak for her long, painful social alienation. She says :

"What did I take ? nothing that you ever had.
 What did I get ? thirty years of solitude,
 Alone, among women, in a women's college,
 Trying not to dislike women".⁹

Harry leaves Wishwood to become a missionary. Amy does not like his decision, she cannot bear the blow of his parting. She ominously warns him that if he goes she shall never see him again. Her dying voice on his departure severs her permanently not only from Wishwood but also from the world : "Agatha ! Mary ! Come ! / The clock has stopped in the dark !" ¹⁰

Harry, a man of religious temperament, is taken among the faithless people of secular society. By submitting himself to the genial bond of love, he realises that

Amy's subjective world has no meaning for him and so he leaves Wishwood, doomed house which is always cold.

Mary also does not feel at home at Wishwood. Amy, who has always been a domineering woman, wants to have her as a tame daughter-in-law, without money and means for livelihood. In response to Gerald's talk about the younger generation, Mary has the following to say:

"Really, cousin Gerald, if you want information
About the younger generation, you must ask
someone else.
I'm afraid that I don't deserve the compliment:
I don't belong to any generation".¹¹

Her direct words, fraught with the sense of frustration, reflect not only Gerald's failure "to draw her into the conversation"¹² but also her absolute social alienation from young and old, from men and women. At first, she thought that she would go on well with Harry, but it could not happen so on account of Harry's typical spiritual loneliness in which only the sense of guilt and the haunting Eumenides matter.

When Agatha asks Harry what is weighing heavily on his mind, Harry tells her that he was yet to learn the meaning of the past, the future and the present. He gives a vent to his mind thus:

"I still have to learn exactly what their meaning is.
 At the beginning, eight years ago,
 I felt, at first, that sense of separation,
 Of isolation unredeemable, irrevocable --
 It's eternal, or gives a knowledge of eternity,
 Because it feels eternal while it lasts. That is one
 hell".¹³

Harry is determined to leave Wishwood in order "to become a missionary"¹⁴ to expiate the curse by undergoing some punishment. His last words spoken to Gerald and his mother reveal and highlight his social isolation and depict the dilemma of his life in which he has no present destination and future destiny:

"Oh, yes, I'm taking Downing.
 You need not fear that I am in any danger
 Of such accidents as happen to Arthur and John:
 Take care of them. My address, mother,
 Will be care of the bank in London until you
 hear from me .
 Good-bye, mother."¹⁵

II

In this section we will discuss how the characters in The Family Reunion feel alienated from the Monchensey family at Wishwood. Majority of the characters of the play face the problem of maintaining relations with each other. They fail to unite, either physically or emotionally. They find it impossible to communicate with each other, and remain lonely and isolated from the other members of their family.

Amy, like the others, is waiting for her sons on this occasion of her birth-day party. She is reminded of her past. She was once very happy when she was young and strong. The Sun seemed to her warm, the light was taken for granted. She looked forward to the day with pleasure. But now in her old age she is only to feel and re-create her past. Life is changed so much that no clocks can be trusted, tomorrow cannot be assured. Everything is just uncertain and unpredictable. Nervousness is deliberately expressed through her speech. Her thoughts are centred round the image of her family, and the maintenance of it. The celebration of her sixtieth birth-day has a special significance in that it is arranged to bring the family and the relatives together. But here also each tries to preserve his own private world. One notices, in the following dialogue between Amy and Agatha, the ominous ring of the family alienation:

Amy : This is a very particular occasion
As you ought to know. It will be the first
time.
For eight years that we have all been
together.

Agatha: It is going to be rather painful for Harry
After eight years and all that has happened
To come back to Wishwood.¹³

The birth-day party in the play gives a promise of the family reunion, but the present pleasure is very soon punctured by their knowledge of Harry's special malady and by the news of accidents met with by Arthur and John and also by Amy's eventual demise.

She is a dominant figure in the family, children always lived under her pressure. She wanted all to yield to her and follow her dictates. Generally mother stands for kindness, love, forgiveness but as far as Amy is concerned she was fear and command for those little kids. They were like actors in the dumb show. To please her meant the great thing to them. The impression that the children had formed of her can be seen here in a representative manner in Harry's speech :

Mother never punished us, but made us feel guilty.
 I think that the things that are taken for granted
 At home, make a deeper impression upon children
 Than what they are told.¹⁷

The code of conduct was simply pleasing mother ; misconduct was simply being unkind to mother. What was wrong was whatever made her suffer, and whatever made her happy was what was virtuous. Mother never punished them but made them feel guilty. This sort of family atmosphere in which the maternal eye was extremely sharp

and searching could not but give rise to the children's severance from mother, the centre of their life. Harry's father parted from her when Harry was a child. Amy and her husband were emotionally severed as they did not love each other. She wanted company, and so Agatha came to live with her. Though Amy knew about her husband's love for Agatha, she tolerated and kept mum. Harry was born and in the years that followed, John and Arthur were born. After seven years her husband left her, travelled abroad and faded out in solitude. When he died Harry was still a boy. Father and sons, husband and wife thus were separated from each other forever. Harry, who hardly remembers him, says:

But now I remember
A summer day of unusual heat,
The day I lost my butterfly net;
I remember the silence, and the hushed excitement
And the low conversation of triumphant aunts.
It is the conversation not overheard,
Not intended to be heard, with the sidewise looks,
That brings death into the heart of a child.
That was the day he died.¹⁸

Whatever her faults and failures one cannot forget that Amy all the while struggled for the name of her family. Eliot has created her in real flesh and blood. Though her old, strict ways can be made fun of, she still stands as a most dominant force in the family. It

is true that she meets frustration and disappointment in her dealing with her sons and husband, her sisters and her bothers-in-law. She is greatly disappointed with her sons, particularly with John and Arthur as they are careless, irresponsible and indifferent. Harry, then becomes the centre of her hope. But he, too, deludes her unawares. He has his own spiritual dilemma which finally takes him away from his family. Thus Amy and her sons (John being in Leicestershire and Arthur in London and Harry being not at home in Wishwood) are alienated from each other. The lack of communication between Harry and his mother can be seen in Agatha's speech: "I think it as well to leave Harry to establish/ If he can, some communication with his mother."¹⁹.

Amy was as well separated from her husband in that he had fallen in love with Agatha, her own sister. Her separation from her husband was further intensified by his departure from Wishwood, and the consequent death in an unknown place. They lived a life of utter loneliness even when they were together. As Agatha has pointed out, Harry's father "hid his strength beneath unusual weakness,/The diffidence of a solitary man"²⁰. And a little later, she says to Harry:

"You see your mother as identified with this house--
 It was not always so. There were many years
 Before she succeeded in making terms with Wishwood,
 Until she took your father's place, and reached
 the point where
 Wishwood supported her, and she supported Wishwood.
 At first it was a vacancy. A man and woman
 Married, alone in a lonely country house together,
 For three years childless, learning the meaning
 Of loneliness. Your mother wanted a sister here
 Always. I was the youngest: I was then
 An ungraduate at Oxford. I came
 Once for a long vacation. I remember
 A summer day of unusual heat
 For this cold country"²¹.

Harry's deprivation from family life has several dimensions. Deprived of the paternal love and maternal company he seems to have developed a bent of mind which is introspective. At the beginning, he does not understand the nature of his dilemma, but in due course, he comes to know that he is more sinned against than sinning. He comes to know that he is made a scapegoat through whom the parental sin is to be expiated and the divine justice is to be delivered. Helen Gardner traces Harry's alienation from family to his 'sin of failure in loving' in the following passage:

"Conceived and brought forth in hatred not in love, he bears the sins of his parents, at once their victim and their perpetuator, for he has been himself incapable of love. Mary's 'ordinary hopelessness', and his wife's wretchedness are fruits of this sin, his parent's and his own, the sin of failure in loving. He has to learn to love. He must go away into solitude and silence, like the

scapegoat, laden with sin, driven out into the wilderness, so that years later, or months--we do not know how long it may be--he may find what ways of love are possible for him. What is impossible is that he should remain at Wishwood, where his mother does not want he can give, and where Mary, who does not share his burden of knowledge, can be hurt by his presence and the gulf between them. He is sustained by the discovery that he is loved. There are not eyes spying and watching to find him out; there is a single eye above the desert."²²

This idea has also been developed by David E. Jones who says that "The lack of human warmth in Harry may be accounted for as part of the curse upon his family. And we notice that when he has learned of the rift between his mother and father, he says: 'Now I see / I might even become fonder of my mother --/ More compassionate at least--by understanding. / But she would not like that'. But what disturbs us is that, although his wife's death is the motive of his spiritual awakening, remorse or concern for her as a person never shows itself"²³.

The fact that the Monchensey family is under a curse and that Harry is to expiate it speaks volumes for his alienation from his family. Helen Gardner looks upon him as a 'victim' of a family curse, and David E. Jones looks upon him as "the guiltless one suffering for the guilty"²⁴. The curse on the family has deprived its members of all material and spiritual pleasures. Not only that, the members of the Monchensey family are

unable to share pains and pleasures of each other, they are unable to come together on Amy's birth-day. In the light of this curse it seems that marriage in the Monchensey family cannot succeed, that some members do not marry or that some others cannot marry. Loneliness in married life in The Family Reunion is the direct consequence of the members' alienation from their family. The loneliness in married life becomes a distinguishing feature of this play. Nevill Coghill has rightly put his fingers on it in these words: "The marriage (Harry's) was as loveless as his father's had been, the history was beginning to repeat itself. The pattern was still imprecise, but the new loneliness was there, just as it had been when Harry's father had married Amy".²⁵

His married life was nothing but a disaster. His wife did not wish to be one of the family and wanted to keep Harry to herself and not with his friends and relatives. Harry's wife's non-chalance to his family is expressed in clear-cut terms in Amy's speech : "She never would have been one of the family;/ She never wished to be one of the family/ She only wanted to keep him to herself /To satisfy her vanity."²⁶ He is not clear

whether he wanted to kill her or not. He did not like to see her leaning over the railing of the ship, but he thinks that he pushed her over. After some time he returned to his cabin expecting to find her there but she was not there. He made inquiries about her, but all in vain. Harry was all distressed at not finding his wife there. This is, in fact, the beginning of his alienation from his own family, particularly from his wife. His separation from her and the deep spiritual anguish are voiced in the following lines spoken by him:

"I felt, at first, that sense of separation,
Of isolation unredeemable, irrevocable---
It's eternal, or gives a knowledge of eternity,
Because it feels while it lasts. That is
one hell."²⁴

Mary is treated as one of the members of the Monchensey family (i.e. as a prospective wife of Harry) but she does not feel the sense of belonging to it. As she has known the selfish interests of Amy in keeping her at home, she does not have high opinions of her, or a sense of gratitude. She even fails to adjust herself to the Aunts and Uncles of the play. She frankly tells them that she does not belong to any generation. Though thirty years old, she is yet unmarried and now that she cannot marry. She is totally deprived of family life. Her alienation from family life becomes sharper, when

seen in the light of Amy's selfish purposes, as in the following lines:

Mary: I know very well
 Why she wanted to keep me. She didn't need me.
 She would have done just as well with a
 hired servant
 Or With none. She only wanted me for Harry.
 Not such a compliment: She only wanted
 To have a tame daughter-in-law with very
 little money.
 A Housekeeper-companion for her and Harry.²⁸

She is not happy among the Monchenseys. As fed up with them, she takes Agatha into confidence and expresses her disappointment and disgust, her mental suffocation and suffering. Her separation from them and her consequent desire to get rid of them can be seen here in these lines: "Now I want your advice, because there's no one else to ask / And because you are strong, and because you don't belong here / Any more than I do. I want to go away."²⁹

In short, we realise that the Monchensey people are alienated from each other, both physically and emotionally. Amy remains isolated not only from Harry but also from other sons, John and Arthur (who never appear in the play). Harry, who is in a difficult mental state, lives apart from his mother, brothers, aunts and

uncles. For Mary, this family is a mystery, a delusion. She cannot include herself in the family. Amy charges Agatha that she took away her husband thirty-five years ago, and now that she is taking away her son. Under such a circumstance Agatha just cannot feel at home in the Monchensey family.

The title of the play is ironical in that it depicts, not the family union or reunion, but the family disintegration. With Amy's death, with Harry's departure from Wishwood, and the inability of John and Arthur to come to Wishwood on account of their accidents, the family disintegration is total, beyond any cure or repair.

III

After having discussed in the following pages man's alienation from Society and Family, we will now see the reflection of man's alienation from his Self in The Family Reunion. Most of the characters in the play, as we have seen, have failed to establish the right social and familial relationships. It is a common observation that one who is not at one with his society and family is likely to be out of tune with himself.

The characters in The Family Reunion can be divided into the flat characters-- Charles, Gerald, Ivy, Violet, Dr. Warburton, Sergeant Winchell, Denman and Downing, and the round characters-- Amy, Harry, Agatha and Mary. The question of self-alienation does not arise much in the case of the flat characters who are just 'types' or 'caricatures', as they do not get much involved in the main story of the play. They are just 'watchers and waiters', neither feeling much nor doing much. As for the round characters, self-alienation is their plight and problem. In a very general way it may be said that almost all the characters in the play feel self-alienated in that they have to yield to the choice and voice of domineering Amy whose presence reduces them to nothingness. Their selves neither grow adequately nor are they fully expressed before her.

Even Amy, who has always attempted to maintain the family unity and solidarity and made herself the centre of the family, sees things falling apart, particularly when she sees that her two sons, John and Arthur cannot come home and that Harry cannot stay at home. When everything and everybody has gone out of her hands, she is filled with remorse and repentance, and also with a sense of being punished for her typical, out-dated ways

of life: "I always wanted too much for my children, / More than life can give. And now I am punished for it."³⁰ Her dominance over Wishwood and her family and relatives, her obstiancy, her sticking strictly to the old ways of life, her fortitude and the force of her personality in general -all go to form her outer personality, though visible, not much feasible. As a matter of fact, this outer personality is only a reflection of her inner personality, fraught with inexplicable frustration and unhappiness. She ignores the past and dreams of the future. She wants to forget what has happened in the past and hence concentrates on the betterment of Harry, the centre of her hopes. In looking before and after and pining for what she cannot have, she is caught between the past regrets and the future plans. The force of her personality and her indominable will just wither in the face of accidental and uncontrollable circumstances. She is constantly haunted by the fear of death, which as she says, is "A momentary shudder in a vacant room," which is symbolic of the vacancy of her mind. Her initial desire, "I do not want the clock to stop in the dark" gives way to her final voice of resignation". The clock has stopped in the dark!" And we are convinced of "This is the way the

world ends/Not with a bang but a whimper".³¹ Her self-alienation, though not striking, is not slight.

Mary, a distant relative of Amy, is living at Wishwood at the mercy of Amy. The fact that she has been kept there as company to Harry, as a prospective wife of Harry and as a helper in housework speaks for her self-alienation in that she is not valued there as a significant personality, with her own dreams, desires and aspirations. She feels the sense of belonging to no place or persons; she thinks that she is not counted or consulted. When Agatha tells her that Dr. Warburton too is invited to dinner, she records her protest very softly and silently:"... I think she might have told me;/ It is very difficult, having to plan/ For uncertain numbers. Why did she ask him ?"³² At one place in her long conversation with Harry, she tells him how she was totally neglected in the family. The following words spoken by her stand witness to her self-alienation.

"Well, it all seemed to be imposed upon us;
 Even the nice things were laid out ready,
 And the treats were always so carefully prepared;
 There was never any time to invent our own
 enjoyments.
 But perhaps it was all designed for you, nor for
 us."³⁰

As her planned marriage with Harry did not take place, all her hopes in life are lost, the spring of her life is dried up (now that she is thirty) and her self-alienation enhanced.

As for Agatha, she too is an instance of man's alienation from his own self. Her position in the play is very precarious and mysterious. Harry's father's falling in love with her has created a sense of antagonism between her and Amy, her own sister. In a sense she has stolen away the love of her sister and this act of hers has created a pattern of new relationship which is responsible for her self-alienation, because she does not know what role she is fit for and what role she is to act. When Mary wants her to help her in getting a job for her on her decision to leave Wishwood, Agatha tells her that their roles are those of 'watchers and waiters' and thus voices her severance from her genuine, effective, potential self:

"Now, the courage is only the moment
 And the moment is only fear and pride. I see more
 than this,
 More than I can tell you, more than there are words
 for.
 At this moment, there is no decision to be made;
 The decision will be made by powers beyond us
 Which now and then emerge. You and I, Mary,
 Are only watchers and waiters: not the
 easiest role."³⁴

Her tone of hesitancy, her inability to decide the issue, her helplessness before and reliance on the powers beyond and her mental confusion are all indicative of her self-alienation.

The Chorus in the play includes Charles, Ivy, Violet and Gerald, who actually take part in the action of the play. As characters in the play they have neither substance nor significance, but as Chorus they do have something to say. They are assembled at Wishwood on the occasion of Amy's birth-day party, but feel impatient, irritable and restless, particularly when they realise that they are assigned no work, allotted no definite parts, and entrusted with no duty or responsibility in particular. Naturally they compare themselves to amateur actors who have not been assigned their parts. They are representatives of modern passive humanity without any solid and meaningful self. Here are their words expressing their self-alienation:

why do we feel embarrassed, impatient, fretful, ill
at ease,

Assembled like amateur actors who have not been
assigned their parts ?

Like amateur actors in a dream when the curtain
rises, to find themselves dressed for a
different play or having rehearsed the wrong
parts,

Waiting for the rustling in the stalls, the titter
in the dress circle, the laughter and catcalls
in the gallery ? ³⁵

The self-alienation of modern young people, who have no proper tastes and interests, who do not know what they do, eat and drink, is voiced in Charle's remarks on them :

"It's the cocktail-drinking does the harm:
 There's nothing on earth so bad for the young.
 All that a civilised person needs
 Is a glass of dry sherry or two before dinner.
 The modern young people don't know what they're
 drinking,
 Modern young people don't care what they're eating;
 They've lost their sense of taste and smell
 Because of their sense of taste and smell.
 Because of their cocktails and cigarettes
 That's what it comes to ." ³⁶

Of all the characters in the play Harry is the most self-alienated character. He has been made, as we have already seen in the earlier context, a scapegoat, a victim of the curse upon the family. Being the eldest son, he must expiate this family curse. As he has been brought up under strict discipline, and with family hopes centred on him, his true self has never found a full scope. After his marriage, pressed under the burden of guilt, his self becomes the abode of the Eumenides. His failure to distinguish between reality and dreams, his guilty conscience and his philosophical awareness of his spiritual problem leave him a creature alienated from his own self. It is the fear that dominates him

Nobody understands him and in the very nature of things none understands his sufferings. It is not the loneliness alone but the sense of the spiritual filthiness that causes his horror. He wants to clean his skin and purify his life. But now that there is no way out. He must undergo horrendous sufferings till he is saved and restored to himself.

The accident of a moment of unreality in his past life is what has put him among the Eumenides. He hysterically asserts that the Eumenides are feasting upon his dead self and that they have no right to haunt the New Harry. He says:

"When I knew her, I was not the same person.
 I was not any person. Nothing that I did
 Has to do with me. The accident of a dreaming
 moment,
 Of a dreaming age, when I was someone else
 Thinking of something else, put me among you,
 I tell you, it is not me you are looking at,
 Not me you are grinning at, not me your
 confidential looks"³⁹.

Under his mother's severe eye he must have felt the suffocation of his self. He must have suppressed and repressed many of his desires which have accumulated now in his unconscious and are harassing and following him in the form of the Eumenides, which represent his confrontation with the secret world of isolation. On his

return to Wishwood he remains a mystery to the people who interpret his behaviour in different ways. In his interview with Harry, Dr. Warburton comes to the conclusion that Harry's is a psychic case; he is, in short, a patient of neurosis. Downing's comments on Harry's case substantiate Dr. Warburton. Charles says about Harry that "He doesn't seem to be ... quite himself."⁴⁰ Downing, in his conversation with Harry, speaks of Harry's depression, repression and nervousness which are all indicative of his self-division :

"Well, you might say depressed, Sir.
 But you know his Lordship was always very quiet:
 Very uncommon that I saw him in high spirits.
 For what my judgement's worth, I always said his
 lordship
 Suffered from what they call a kind of repression.
 But what struck me more nervous than usual;
 I mean to say, you could see that he was nervous.
 He behaved as if he thought something might
 happen."⁴¹

While explaining his typical malady to others, Harry speaks of his unredeemable degradation, his sorrows and the mingling of his past with his present. His depersonalization and the devaluation of his self are expressed in the metaphor of the old house. He says: "I am the old house / With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning, / In which all past is

present, all degradation / Is, unredeemable."⁴² Further, at Agatha's encouragement, he probes deeper into the problem of self-alienation. What he has said to them "in general terms/ Because the particular has no language" is applicable to him as well. The self-alienation of modern millions living a purposeless, meaningless and directionless life is very beautifully and powerfully expressed by him in the following words that reminds us of Hamlet:

"The sudden solitude in a crowded desert
 In a thick smoke, many creatures moving
 Without direction, for no direction
 Leads anywhere but round and round in that vapour
 Without purpose, and without principle of conduct
 In flickering intervals of light and darkness;
 The partial anaesthesia of suffering without feeling
 And partial observation of one's own automatism
 While the slow stain sinks deeper through the skin
 Tainting the flesh and discolouring the bone--
 This is what matters, but it is unspeakable,
 Untranslatable : I talk in general terms
 Because the particular has no language."⁴³

After his determination to leave Wishwood, Amy asks him about his destination. He tells her that he is still unsettled about the place and the precise direction his spiritual journey will take. He knows that his journey is meant to pursue something, to seek something. Perhaps it is meant for self-search, soul-search, self-knowledge, and self-identity. Amy's

question, "Where are you going ?" is answered by his own question, " where does one go from a world of insanity? / Somewhere on the other side of despair.

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