

CHAPTER - IV

THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK

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"Just when you think you're on the point of release
From loneliness, then loneliness swoops down upon
you;
When you think you're getting out, you're getting
further in,
And you know atlast that there's no escape."
-- Lucasta

T.S.Eliot's The Confidential Clerk (1953) is, as various critics say, a play of mistaken identities, recognition and illegitimacy. It is his most significant experiment in religious drama in a modern realistic setting. He has used the theme of foundling children to express the Christian implications of the search for identity. Let us first see the brief story of this play.

It is an early afternoon. Sir Claude Mulhammer, a middle-aged financier, is writing at desk in his business room on the first floor of his London house. Eggerson, his old retired confidential clerk, who lives at Joshua Park, enters the room. Colby Simpkins, a young man, is going to take Eggerson's place. Now the problem before Claude is how to arrange the first meeting

between Lady Elizabeth, his wife and Colby in order to ensure her acceptance for Colby's appointment as a confidential clerk. Sir Claude wanted to be a potter while Colby wanted to be an organist; both are disappointed artists.

The conversation between them reveals Elizabeth's nature. She is a better judge of personality. Eggerson is very sympathetic with the Claudes as they are childless. B. Kaghan is grateful to sir Claude who has shown him the right path. Lucasta Angel, a friend of B. Kaghan, has lost her job and is in financial troubles, as usual. She is acknowledged as the daughter of a friend and she gets allowances from him.

On the very meeting with him, Lady Elizabeth admires Colby's artistic tastes but is disappointed at his health. According to her, Mr. Claude and Eggerson lack the sense of colour. She is eager to make the choice of colour for Colby's room. Sir Claude wants Colby to guide Lady Elizabeth's delusion in a proper direction.

Colby indulges in practising on the piano which is given to him by Sir Claude, Lucasta likes his music and wishes to learn the art of music, especially the form

and structure of music. She finds the difference between herself and Colby, who is more secure than her. Her mother was a poor drinking woman who died of an overdose. Though a bastard, she has self-respect. On Elizabeth's enquiry, Colby informs her that his mother died when he was very young, he never even heard of his father. He tells her that he spent his childhood in Teddington and that aunt Mrs. Guzzard, widow brought him up. Lady Elizabeth is surprised at the name "Guzzard", as she feels it rather familiar.

Sir Claude is going to deliver a speech next evening in Potter's company. His confidential clerk, Colby has to write down the speech with the help of his notes. Lady Elizabeth draws his attention to a discovery that Colby is her lost child. She must see and confront Mrs. Guzzard. Mr. Claude thinks that her memory is guided by her wish. He assures her that Colby is his own son and not hers (he was born out of the union between him and Mrs. Guzzard's sister who died shortly after child-birth). Mrs. Guzzard took care of him and he provided for his education. Elizabeth imagines that she (Mrs. Guzzard) perhaps invented this story to earn money from him or to solve her problem aroused by the child left in her hands.

Numbness comes over Colby. He can love both of them, not as parents but as older friends. In order to ensure his future he needs to know whose son he really is. So they decide to invite Mrs. Guzzard and Eggerson is put in charge of cross-questioning her.

Elizabeth and Sir Claude are planning for the cross-questioning of Mrs. Guzzard. Colby is eager to know the reality about his parents. Eggerson fully appreciates and endorses his feeling. New information comes out that Colby is Lucasta's half-brother. She is really joyful at this moment because her future is going to rest on the union with B.Kaghan. Sir Claude confesses his inability to understand Colby, Lucasta and B.Kaghan. He congratulates Lucasta for her choice of B.Kaghan as her companion in life. On Mrs. Guzzard's arrival there she informs there that she and her husband were childless. A child whose father they did not know was left in their care. As long as they received the monthly allowance, the child was looked after. But when the monthly allowance was stopped, they handed over the child to the neighbours called the Kaghans. Thus the identity of Kaghan is made clear, and he is accepted by Lady Elizabeth as her son.

When asked about his parents, Colby says that he never had a father or not even foster parents like Kaghan. But Mrs. Guzzard throws light on the mystery of his birth and life. Now all know that he is the son of Herbert and Mrs. Guzzard and that her sister Miss Guzzard had miscarried. Then she invented a story that her own son was the son of Sir Claude by Miss Guzzard, keeping only his well-being in mind.

Now that all except Mrs. Guzzard are disillusioned. Sir Claude becomes upset by the revelation of Mrs. Guzzard but he does not force Colby to treat him as his father. Colby wishes to become an organist in some parish and Eggerson offers to find a place for him and also invites him to stay at Joshua Park till he is settled. Mrs. Guzzard tells that by this arrangement his wish also will be satisfied.

Kaghan assures the parents that they would like to understand them, Lucasta puts her arms around Sir Claude who asks her not to leave him. A family reunion has taken place at the end of the play.

The confidential Clerk, like The Family Reunion and The Cocktail Party is put in a modern setting. In

The Family Reunion Eliot laid emphasis on the family relationship ; in The Cocktail Party he concentrated on social groups ; in The Confidential Clerk he deals with family as well as social relations. Love, mutual understandings, illegitimacy, mistaken identify, loneliness and alienation are the dominant aspects of the play. According to Bonamy Dorbee, the play is original because of the level of existence this kind of play is made to maintain. He says, " Eliot has made a serious thing out of a farce. Or, from another angle, the originality of the play consists in its being a drastic pushing forward of the old critical comedy which, by making us laugh at and criticise our neighbours, aimed at making us see ourselves as others see us. In this play Eliot calls upon a higher tribunal by demanding that we see ourselves as our conscience sees us..."¹ According to E.Martin Browne, The Confidential Clerk is a better play than The Cocktail Party" because the things he (Eliot) sets out to say are all said in the lives of the characters, characters involved in dramatic action .There are no onlookers --- no Alex or Julia or Reilly. Even Eggerson, the clerk himself, is involved by his final curtain acquisition of Colby as his spiritual son"². In this play we are now in

the world of business affairs and artistic pursuits, of vocations chosen under some external pressures and of avocations forsaken, though not forgotten. It is the world of the characters whose strange and harsh sounding names and their abbreviated forms betray the harsh and mysterious conditions of their life, and also the distance and division between them. The play presents a dark corner of our life in which children are begotten but not brought up by the begetters.

I

As in The Family Reunion and The Cocktail Party, man's alienation from society is powerfully expressed in The Confidential Clerk. Almost all the characters are socially isolated in that they prefer to live their lives alone and think that they are not properly understood by others. Some of them do attempt to go beyond the personal and familial relationships and accept others as their own kith and kin but this attitude of such people does not prevent them from being alone and lonely.

Most of the characters in the play are frustrated as they are forced to do the work which they do not like. Sir Claude Mulhammer is such a one led far away

from his basic bent of mind into the business world of facts and figures where practical considerations are more important than social and spiritual values; 'confidence' is more important than social contacts. His delusion that Colby is his son may be the result of the lack of social contacts, or if considered from a different view-point, it may be his attempt at establishing social contacts. Both Claude and Eggerson reveal to each other that they do not understand their wives properly. Claude tells Eggerson that in spite of their being together for thirty years he has not understood Eggerson. When Eggerson asks Claude whether Colby is his son, the latter replies in an ambiguous way, giving expression to man's social alienation in the following lines:

"That is where I'm in the dark.

I simply can't guess what her reaction would be.

There is a lot I don't understand about my wife.

There's always something one's ignorant of.

About anyone, however well one knows them;

And that may be something of the greatest
importance.

It's when you're sure you understand a person
That you're liable to make the worst mistake about
him.

As a matter of fact, there's a lot I don't know
About you, Eggerson, although we worked together
for nearly thirty years."³

At the opening of the play we are told that Lady Elizabeth is coming back home from Switzerland. She had been on a European tour for 'mind control', symbolic of her restlessness on her own soil. While on a tour she must have felt lonely and alienated from her own society in England.

Eggeron, tells Sir Claude that Colby, the new shall have his choice and his garden should be according to his own idea and not of others: "some day, he'll want a garden of his own. And yes, a bird bath !" ⁴ For Eggeron, Colby is different from the others, his garden is different from that of the others. He is not the part of so called society. He is alienated from the crowd.

According to Colby, if a person knows a language other than his mother tongue then he is regarded as superior to, as something more than the others and thus becomes lonely. His distinction itself becomes a mark of his social isolation of which he speaks figuratively in this way:

"If you learn to speak a foreign language fluently,
So that you can think in it-you feel yourself to be
Rather a different person when you're talking it."⁵

Both Colby and Sir Claude are disappointed artists. Colby wanted to be a musician and Claude, a potter but they could not become so. Their attitudes to arts reflect their social alienation. According to Sir Claude, the materials used for arts are not only 'use' or 'decoration' but also a world of rest and relief into which one can escape, at one's leisure and pleasure. Sir Claude says:

"Most people think of china or porcelain"
 As merely for use, or for decoration --
 In either case, an inferior art.
 For me, they are neither 'use' nor 'decoration' --
 That is, decoration as a background for living;
 For me, they are life itself. To be among such
 things,
 If it is an escape, is escape into living,
 Escape from a sordid world to a pure one."⁶

The real world for both Colby and Sir Claude lies behind the private door. Here the symbol of door indicates the way to a better world, a world of real bliss. He hopes that Colby will follow his course and find in his private experience of music an escape into reality by going 'through the private door' into the real world' The worlds of business and of secretariship for them are both unreal; the world of aesthetic experience alone is real for them. Sir Claude says:

"And when you are alone at your piano, in the evening,
I believe you will go through the private door
Into the real world, as I do, sometimes."⁷

Colby likes to play on the piano for himself. Hence whenever he is alone, he plays on it. According to Lucasta, his garden is completely his own. It is his individual property. It symbolises his inner life to a degree none can penetrate. He says :

"I turn the key and walk through the gate,
And there I am... alone, in my 'garden'.
Alone, that's the thing. That's why it's not real.
You know, I think that Eggerson's garden
Is more real than mine."⁸

He is incapable of connecting the outer life with the inner one. These two worlds seem unrelated. He withdraws into his secret garden. The withdrawal into the inner life is, to him, a narrow ideal of conduct. Hence he says that Eggerson's garden has a physical reality and it is something more than his secret garden of inner contemplation. In continuation to his talk of the garden, both literal and figurative, Lucasta says about him: "You have your secret garden; to which you can retire/ And lock the gate behind you."⁹ The words like 'secret' 'lock' 'gate' and 'retire' highlight his loneliness in solitude. Later in Act III she says that

Colby is a difficult personality to judge and charges him with the egotism that distinguishes him from the others; "You're either an egotist/ Or something so different from the rest of us/ That we can't judge you."¹⁰ Here we see that Colby is alienated from Eggerson as well as from the rest in society. Eggerson's garden is real and so he does not feel alone there, for he can have marrows, peas or beetroot for Mrs. Eggerson. Colby's garden has nothing but loneliness. Eggerson's garden is literal, Colby's figurative.

Lady Elizabeth finds the difference between Colby, and Kaghan and Lucasta. According to her, he should not mix with a kind of society which is materialistic, worldly and vulgar. His strata is different from that of Kaghan and Lucasta. She tells him that he must leave the company of ill-bred people and join the well-bred and intellectual people. Elizabeth's advice to him implies his alienation from the lower sections of society: " -- you're not the sort of person/They ever meet in their kind of society."¹¹ And she says further : "you ought to mix with people of breeding /---And, second, you need intellectual society."¹²

When Lucasta tells Colby that she is the daughter of Sir Claude, she thinks that she may be misunderstood and rejected by him. But Colby tells her that he is interested in what she is and not in who she is. He tells her frankly that "I've accepted you."¹³ She responds to him in words that voice her alienation from other people in society. "Oh, that's so wonderful, to be accepted! / No one has ever 'just accepted' me before./Of course the facts don't matter, in a sense."¹⁴ The social isolation of Lucasta and Kaghan is intensified by their being rootless and poor, and being bastard and foundlings. Eggerson, the confidential clerk lives five or six days a week in London and feels alienated from the people of Joshua Park. On his retirement he is likely to be separated from the people with whom he had lived together about thirty years. Dr. Parvati Sinha comments on the social isolation of these people in the milieu of cultural disintegration in these words: "In The Confidential Clerk, Eliot discusses the phenomenon of cultural disintegration. He focuses attention on the state of society where not only two or more strata have separated into distinct cultures but also where the upper groups in a society have fragmented into sub-groups, each representing but a single cultural

activity. Eliot finds here that both kinds of disintegration ... between the various levels of society, and within the upper level -- have already taken place in Western civilisation.... The Confidential Clerk highlights the gulfs between the communicability not merely due to semantic difficulties, but due to sheer impenetrability."¹⁵

II

In The Confidential Clerk Eliot seems to be saying that the broken families in modern times have an insidious effect on our social life. The idea of free love is expected to result in marriage; but when it does not, the lovers are emotionally disturbed throughout their life as deception in love goes on pricking and pinching them. Pre-marital love accompanied by sexual relations creates the problems of bastardy and illegitimacy which further pollute the social climate. There are three families in this play-- the Claudes, the Eggersons and the Guzzards. The noteworthy fact about them is that they do not have children at present ; in the case of the Cluades, they childless; in the case of the Eggersons, their son had been dead; in the case of the Guzzards the son had been first renounced and is

later on claimed. As a matter of fact, Kaghan and Lucasta, though rootless, indirectly belong to the Claudes as Lucasta is the daughter of Sir Claude and Kaghan the son of Lady Elizabeth. Man's alienation from his family has pervaded the text of this play.

Let us begin with the Claudes. Sir Claude Mulhammer and Elizabeth Mulhammer feel alienated from the family as they are childless. It has been a sad thing to them. Eggerson, in point of fact, expresses their own feelings thus; "I'm `sure it's been a grief to both of you / That you've never had children."¹⁶ Mr. Cluade has been unable to understand his wife well inspite of their living together for many years. He admits; "There's a lot I don't understand about my wife."¹⁷ There is no mutual understanding between them, no proper communication. When Sir Claude was young he hated his father's occupation. It was a big shock to his father. He realised very late that his father was right in forcing him to follow him as a businessman. His early resistance to his father's desire and the later repentance speak for his emotional alienation and physical separation from his dead father. Lady Elizabeth's wonder at their conjugal life is aptly and

briefly expressed here in her words: "I was only thinking/ How strange to have lived with you, all these years." She did not know about his aim to be a potter. For her it is a strange thing. She should not have loved a potter. As he feared that she would despise him he did not tell her about his aim. Both have a feeling that each treats the other as inferior. We see a gap of communication and the lack of understanding between them which ends in an emotional detachment. In this respect they are like Edward and Lavinia, emotionally alienated from each other.

The confrontation between them on the issue of Colby as to whose son he is reveals the fact that they are both disloyal to each other.

Colby tells Lady Elizabeth that he has no brothers, sisters, parents and relatives. He did not even know his father. He admits that he has never been interested in relatives. She also tells him how she disliked her parents and a governess. Colby felt lonely in his childhood, he had almost no kith and kin; she felt lonely amidst so many uncongenial, unpleasant, carnivorous relatives. Their alienation from family and the eventual loneliness in their childhood are spoken by

her in this speech: "Oh, swarms of relatives!... /
 / I wonder if you had the same
 obsessions?"¹⁹

She tells him of her three obsessions: her ugliness, her feeble-mindedness and her being a foundling, which reinforced her alienation from her family.

The question of parenthood occupies Colby during his conversation with the Claudes. The feeling of numbness weighs heavily on him. It is a part of total agony being isolated from the parents. He feels a gap which never can be filled. He strongly opposes the idea of taking the Claudes as his parents. He prefers to treat them as his older friends. Deprived of his real parents and also of those who want to treat him as their son, he feels utterly lonely and alienated from both the families. He says:

"I only wish it was more acute agony:
 I don't know whether I've been suffering or not
 During this conversation. I only feel....numb.
 If there's agony, it's part of a total agony
 Which I can't begin to feel yet. I'm simply
 indifferent.
 And all the time that you're been talking
 I've only been thinking: 'What does it matter
 Whose son I am ?' You don't understand
 That when one has lived without parents, as a child,
 There's a gap that never can be filled. Never.
 I like you both, I could even come to love you---
 But as friends--older friends. Neither, as a parent.
 I am sorry: But that's why I say it doesn't matter
 To me, which of you should be my parent."²⁰

Now that he is so much grown-up and is so much self-reliant that he does not want parents. When Sir Claude suggests that he would want them for the sake of his children, he reacts in the tone of despair and disappointment thus: "I don't feel, tonight, that I ever want to marry."²¹

Colby's real mother Mrs. Guzzard was alienated from her family the moment she lied to Sir Claude after Colby's birth. She is also alienated from her family now and also from her dead husband.

The Eggersons also feel the pangs of alienation from family. Their son's death in action deprived them of the filial love. The fact that "his grave" is unknown has intensified their sufferings in the house which is childless. Sir Claude's words stand testimony to their severance from their son: "No worse, Eggerson, / Than for you and your wife, to have had a son / Lost in action, and his grave is unknown."²²

Even Mr. Eggerson and Mrs. Eggerson are not at one with each other. Mr. Eggerson has won the 'confidence' of Sir Claude but seemed to have failed to win the confidence of his own wife!

Lastly we will briefly discuss the alienated condition of Lucasta and Kaghan. Both are foundlings, forsaken by their parents. It is at a later stage in the play that they come to know about their parents: Lucasta's father Sir Claude, Kaghan's mother Lady Elizabeth. Both are separated from the second parent. When she tells Colby that she is Claude's daughter, she also reveals to him the drab and dirty family conditions in which she was forced to live :

"His daughter. Oh, it's a sordid story.
 I hated my mother. I never could see
 How Claude had ever liked her. Oh, that childhood--
 Always living in seedy lodgings
 And being turned out when the neighbours complained.
 Oh of course Claude gave her money, a regular
 allowance;
 But it wouldn't have mattered how much he'd given
 her:
 It was always spent before the end of the quarter
 On gin and betting, I should guess.
 And I knew how she supplemented her income
 When I was sent out. I've been locked in a cupboard!
 I was only eight years old
 When she died of an 'accidental overdose'.
 The Claude took me over. That was lucky.
 But I was old enough to remember --- to much."²³

Her comments on her condition that "Claude has just accepted me like a debit item/Always in his cash account", speak a lot about the commercialization of human relationships in modern times.

B.Kaghan, like Lucasta, also voices his alienation from family in the words which throw light on the harsh reality of his life: "I was foundling ? You didn't know that! / Never had any parents. Just adopted, from nowhere. /... .. / I have no background--no background at all."²⁴ Later on, when asked about his father, Lady Elizabeth tells him that his father died suddenly in a fatal accident and so he was adopted by somebody else, the Kaghans. The act of adoption itself speaks for his alienation from his real parents.

In view of the comments made in this section, we are fully convinced that, as elsewhere here too, Eliot was seriously concerned with modern man's total alienation from his family, the place where man starts from and returns to. Michael Goldman rightly says: "The characters in The Confidential Clerk are haunted by disappointments, ghosts of absence, missing children and parents, lost sources of vocation and relatedness...."²⁵

III

Eliot's constant preoccupation with human self, its fragmented nature and the meaning and value of human personality is amply seen, as in the two earlier plays

already discussed, in The Confidential Clerk as well. The nature of self-alienation as reflected in this play is more profound than that in the earlier plays in the sense that some of the characters are actually divided between two careers or two selves - the past and the present one. This play has a special significance with reference to self-alienation for the reason that the characters in it do not regard themselves as human personalities: they are different and doubtful even about themselves. Some have their own obsessions, some are always haunted by the unalterable and unacceptable past of their lives, some are still more absorbed in their past avocations than in the present vocations. Their buried self, which was ideal, gets confronted with the real self and this confrontation gives rise to an intense form of self-division, self-abnegation and self-alienation. In his penetrating study of the causes of self-alienation, Ernest G. Schachtel makes the following pithy remarks:

"It has haunted many people increasingly in the last hundred years. They no longer feel certain who they are because in modern industrial society, as Hegel and Marx first showed, they are alienated from nature, alienated from their fellow men, alienated from the work of their hands and minds, and alienated from themselves. I can only state here my belief that self-alienation, the doubt

about and search for identity, always goes together with alienation from others and from the world around us.

The problem of identity and alienation from the self came to the attention of psychoanalysts in the last thirty years when they observed its role in an increasing number of patients. Karen Horney formulated it as the problem of the real self, as distinguished from the idealized self-image; Fromm as the problem of the original, real self as distinguished from the conventional or pseudo-self, Erikson, who has made the most detailed study in the development of the sense of identity, as the problem of ego-identity."²⁶

In the light of the foregoing quotation, one is fully convinced that self-alienation of the characters in The Confidential Clerk is the result of their alienation from all around them. It is also true that some of the characters are torn between their real self, as distinguished from the idealized self-image.' Sir Claude, Colby, Lady Elizabeth, Lucasta Angel, B.Kaghan are all mainly the self-alienated characters who are in search of meaningful identity and personality.

Sir Claude is a big financier. He came into business at the pressure of his father, and much against his will. In fact, he wanted to be a potter as he loved form and colour. His basic urge was to create something and be lost in the world of imagination. In the course of time, life changed him totally. The life imposed on

him, later on, became a matter of routine, adjustments and compromises. This sort of life, he says, "begins as a kind of make-believe/And the make-believing makes it real."²⁷ As he is least interested in the world of practical affairs, he sometimes goes into the real world by the private door. He admits to Colby:

"But when I am alone, and look at one thing long enough,
 I sometimes have that sense of identification
 With the maker, of which I spoke --- an agonising
 ecstasy
 Which makes life bearable. It's all I have.
 I suppose it takes the place of religion :
 Just as my wife's investigations
 Into what she calls the life of the spirit
 Are a kind of substitute for religion.
 I dare say truly religious people ---
 I've never known any - can find some unity.
 Then there are also the men of genius.
 There are others, it seems to me, who have at best
 to live
 In two worlds-each a kind of make - believe.
 That's you and me. Some day, perhaps,
 I will show you my collection."²⁸

Sir Claude has a feeling that he has committed an error of coming into the field in which he is not much interested. As a result of his yielding to his father's choice about him, he could not become what he wanted to become. He is divided between his ideal or imagined self belonging to the past and the real one belonging to the present. He confesses to his wife:

"I am a disappointed craftsman,
 And Colby is a disappointed composer.
 I should have been a second-rate potter,
 And he would have been a second-rate organist.
 We have both chosen-- obedience to the facts."²⁹

His words are fraught with regret and repentance. His mind is divided between what he is and what he would have been, between the reality of his life and the would-be possibility of it.

Lady Elizabeth is also not immune from the pangs of self-alienation. In her conversation with Colby she says that Colby, in his childhood, must have felt lonely because he had no relatives, no brothers and sister, but she felt lonely "Because they were so numerous - and so uncongenial./They made me feel an outcast."³⁰ She was estranged from them. Then she tells him of her 'three obsessions'-- her ugliness, her being a foundling and her feeble-mindedness -- which aggravated her self-alienation to such an extent that she "liked to believe/ That I was a foundling - or do I mean 'changeling'?"³¹

As Sir Claude is an artist turned financier so is Colby an artist turned confidential clerk. Though he does his job to the best of his abilities, his basic interest lies in music. In his case, too, the ideal, artistic self comes into conflict with the real,

accepted self. When Sir Claude asks him how he finds the new work as a confidential clerk, he diagnoses his own case before Sir Claude thus :

"In a way, exhilarating.
 To find there is something that I can do
 So remote from my previous interests.
 It gives me, in a way, a kind of self-confidence
 I've never had before. Yet at the same time
 It's rather disturbing. I don't mean the work:
 I mean, about myself. As if I was becoming
 A different person. Just as, I suppose,
 If you learn to speak a foreign language fluently,
 So that you can think in it --- you feel yourself
 to be
 Rather a different person when you're talking it.
 I'm not at all sure that I like the other person
 That I feel myself becoming---though he fascinates
 me.
 And yet from time to time, when I least expect it,
 When my mind is cleared and empty, walking in the
 street
 Or waking in the night, then the former person,
 The person I used to be, returns to take possession:
 Always, when I play to myself,
 And I am again the disappointed organist,
 And for the moment the thing I cannot do,
 The art that I could never excel in,
 Seems the one thing worth doing, the one thing
 That I want to do. I have to fight that person.³²

Here Colby has revealed the dilemma of his personality. He knows that his job as a Confidential Clerk takes him away from the previous interests and hence it is interesting and exhilarating. It also gives him self-confidence. But the fact that he is turned into a different person annoys him most. He plainly tells Sir

Claude that when his mind is empty, the 'former person', the person he used to be grapples and wrestles with him to take possession, and the successful Confidential Clerk yields to 'the disappointed organist.'

When Sir Claude tells him that he should "never have become a first-rate potter" because he does not have the capacity to channelize his inner drives into artistic creations. Colby tells him that he too would never have become a great organist as he is not an executant. Sir Claude becomes a mirror to him. His self-alienation can be seen in the following self-assessment presented to Claude:

"Indeed, I have felt, while you've been talking,
That it's my own feelings you have expressed,
Although the medium is different. I know
I should never have become a great organist,
As I aspired to be. I'm not an executant;
I'm only a shadow of the great composers.
Always, When I play to myself,
I hear the music I should like to have written,
As the composer heard it when it came to him.
But when I played before other people
I was always conscious that what they heard
Was not what I hear when I play to myself.
What I hear is a great musician's music,
What they hear is an inferior rendering.
So I've given up trying to play to other people:
I am only happy when I play to myself."³³

Sir Claude has impressed it upon Colby's mind that he is the father of Colby. According to Colby, he lacks

several things that Claude possesses, Colby glorifies, almost deifies Sir Claude's personality when he comes to look upon him as his 'protector', 'provider' and 'patron' but upon himself as a creature inferior and submissive to him. Here his self-alienation becomes prominent because "Every act of submissive worship is an act of alienation and idolatry in this sense... It is the fact that man does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished thing, dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance,"³⁴ to put it in the words of Erich Fromm.

Lucasta Angel (her name is ironical because since her birth, she has lived only a 'hellish' life) is impressed very much by Colby's playing on the piano. She thinks that, in contrast to her own life, Colby's life is secure and that he can retire into it at any time. Her sense of being born on the wrong side of the tracks, her sense of a negative identify and her regarding herself as a bit of living matter (not mind) expose her self-alienated condition in these following words:

"No, my only garden is.... a dirty public square
 In a shabby part of London-- like the one where I
 lived
 For a time, with my mother. I've no garden.

I hardly feel that I'm even a person:
 Nothing but a bit of living matter
 Floating on the surface of the Regent's Canal.
 Floating, that's it."³⁵

She feels a great loss to her as a person and hence comes to regard herself as a commodity, a bit of living matter, floating helplessly on the surface of the water of the Regent's Canal. Her 'floating' suggests that she does not have any first-hand and solid experience in life and that she is just living at the mercy of others. Her diffidence and her social isolation lead her to self-alienation and to eventual self-alienation. Her condition of self alienation is further intensified by her feeling that Claude, her father, has never treated her as his daughter but only as a 'debit' item in cash account. She tells Colby that

"Claude has just accepted me like a debit item.
 Always in his cash account. I don't like myself.
 I don't like the person I've forced myself to be;
 And I liked you because you didn't like that
 person either,
 And I thought you'd come to see me as the real
 kind of person
 That I want to be. That I know I am.
 That was new to me. I suppose I was flattered.
 And I thought, now, perhaps it someone else sees me
 As I really am, I might become myself."³⁶

We consistently notices in this play that while addressing each other, the characters use the initials

and the abbreviated forms of their names; sometimes even surnames are dropped. Lady Elizabeth has rightly touched upon this fact when she tells Colby that "Young people nowadays / Seem to have dropped the use of surnames altogether."³⁷ Thus we have `B' Kaghan, `Lu-' for Lucasta, `Mrs. E' for Mrs. Eggerson, `Lizzie' for Lady Elizabeth, `Muriel' for Mrs. Eggerson. This typical use of the names of persons indicates that they do not count much as human personalities. Their names speak for the disintegration of their personalities . They are the representatives of modern self-alienated humanity.

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