

The Divine Psychiatrist in The Cocktail Party

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Abstract

This research studies Eliot's play, **The Cocktail Party**, as a drama of reformation. The work relates the experience of a number of psychologically and spiritually fragmented and detached characters who find themselves manipulated into solutions to their problems through a set of laudable plots arranged by a dominating psychiatrist, Sir Henry Harcourt Reilly. The latter Plays the role of the reformer who restores order and health to his corrupt society.

Supported by two diligent and observant aides, Julia Shuttlewaite and Alexander Gibbs, and endowed with full knowledge of psychiatry, Reilly succeeds in saving a married couple, the Chamberlaynes, from a definite social and psychological separation; he also prepares a psychologically and spiritually sacked girl, Celia Coplestone, for crucifixion as a means towards achieving eternal blessedness. Furthermore, Reilly enlightens, yet does not restore, an unready patient, Peter Quilpe. We are led to believe, however, that some other reformer will take care of Peter. Reilly's mission does not end with treating these cases; rather he starts another similar mission somewhere else. By weaving his play around the efforts of Reilly, who manipulates the other characters and the action of the play, Eliot seems to posit his vision of the role of gifted individuals who take upon themselves the guidance of their societies to the shores of safety wherever they go astray.

T. S. Eliot's play, **The Cocktail Party** (1949), concerns itself with the severed interpersonal relationships among the members of society and the guidance of these members toward the establishment of healthy and integral social relationships. Yet more importantly, the play advocates Christian sainthood and martyrdom as a means to achieve the ideal, permanent and eternal. Eric Bentley maintains that **The Cocktail Party** seems to be centered on the characters who try to break away altogether from human relationships as a precondition to sanctity.¹

Robert Sencourt, Eliot's friend and biographer, does not go as far as Bentley though he recognizes the forcefulness of the religious theme in the play. He comments:

The Cocktail Party shows us that husband and wife must learn to put up with one another and not regard marriage as a veil for the indulgence of egoism. To this is added, with unmistakable clearness and force, the idea of sacrifice which is Eliot's most insistent theme.

(Sencourt, 1971: 207 - 08)

The urge for self - sacrifice or self - denial, which is capitalized upon in **The Cocktail Party**, is a pivotal idea in Eliot's religious ideology and Christian views. Sencourt contends that Eliot originally learned the concepts of altruism and the individual obligation to the welfare of the community from his grandfather W. G. Eliot and from the novels of George Eliot, which his family often read. From the days of his personal tragedy regarding the lunacy of his wife Vivienne came the further ideas of penance and expiation, ideas that were essential to the Christian scheme to which Eliot dedicated his entire life (Sencourt, 1971: 208). These concepts of penance and expiation make essential principles of Anglo - Catholicism, which Eliot called "the one true fold of Christ" to which he converted in 1927 (Sencourt, 1971: 131). Dissatisfied with the secularism of the Massachusetts Unitarianism he learned from his family, Eliot proselytized to his new Trinitarian sacramentalism, believing to have been incorporated into the spiritual life which was the goal of all the religions he had studied (Sencourt, 1971:,131).

Outside his literary works, Eliot expressed his religious views, especially regarding the need for sacrifice, in a number of essays and lectures. One such essay is "Thoughts After Lambeth" (1931). Eliot declares his satisfaction with the recommendation of the Anglican Communion Conference at Lambeth in 1931, that if youth wanted a religion at all, it wanted a religion that demanded sacrifice. Eliot elaborates that thought, study, mortification and sacrifice are necessary trends to be impressed upon the Christian youth. He goes on to say that the version of Christianity that ought to permeate in order to save the Western civilization is a Christianity that is difficult both to the disorderly mind and to the unruly passions (Ackroyd, 1984: 181).

In **The Idea of a Christian Society** (1939), originally a series of lectures he gave at Corpus Christi College of Cambridge University, Eliot calls for the reformulation of the form, attitude and outlook of the Christian church. The book criticizes the reli-

gious titularism of the English people for not committing their lives and conduct to their Christian ideals. Eliot points out that the English thought that they were morally superior to the German and Italian societies under the Nazi and Fascist rules. He explains that the British people believed that it was hell to be under Hitler, as contrasted to the complacency with which they pursued their material existence. However, he declares that complacent materialism is not Christianity, and emphasizes that the Christian alternative to hell on earth is to accept the pain and sacrifice, which on earth are purgatory (Sencourt, 1971: 182-83; Ackroyd, 1984: 249-51).

To dramatize his persistent belief that "to attain the final goal of life one must sacrifice oneself and one must endure,"² Eliot's **The Cocktail Party** recounts the experience of a group of psychologically and spiritually fragmented and detached characters who find themselves manipulated into solutions to their problems through a set of laudable plots arranged by a dominating redeemer. C. L. Barber, discussing the role of Eliot's redeemer, comments:

When we consider Sir Henry's part, along with his attendant spirits, Julia and Alex, we realize that **The Cocktail Party** is partly fantasy. It is like **The Tempest** in presenting people who undergo events that are manipulated without their knowing it so as to bring about spiritual changes in them. Like Prospero, Sir Henry is a version of the immemorial magic doctor who can bring people back to life.³

The Cocktail Party obviously demonstrates the necessity of a mystical redeemer to restore order and health to his corrupt society. Such visionary redeemers might be the few gifted individuals to whom others look for guidance when the way seems dark or the proper mode of approaching life is in doubt. It is to these gifted individuals that communities owe their advance and progress.

Eliot's redeemer, Sir Henry Harcourt Reilly, is endowed with mystical powers and is assisted by diligent aides that enable him to effect change. The mystical powers of Reilly are neither supernatural nor divine, for, in **The Cocktail Party**, the supernatural and the divine are brought down to the level of the physical reality established in the play (osterwalder, 1978: 93-4). Rather, these powers are no more than Reilly's full Knowledge of psychiatry and psychoanalysis. This Knowledge endows him with a clear insight into the deep layers of the human psyche and mind. Donald Hugh Dickinson aptly comments:

Eliot gives us the modish trappings of the profession, though without the catch-phrases; but he carefully evades the question as to whether Sir. Henry is a real psychiatrist, with a license to practice. Superficially, he seems bent on the care of minds; actually, he deals with the cure of souls (Dickinson, 1958: 36).

Writing at a time when psychiatry was gathering momentum as a fashionable field of knowledge, Eliot portrayed his protagonist as a psychiatrist. He himself believes that psychiatry has a lot to do with the success of the play (Dickinson, 1958: 36).

Nevertheless, Reilly is not without a precognitive capability which" enables him to foresee the future of his patients, and consequently guide them along the right path towards their destiny. Eliot's redeemer looks forbidding at first encounter, yet he is only cruel to be kind. He seizes his deluded characters roughly and exercises them heavily till they are made aware of their illusions. His objectives do not include personal gain, for he treats his patients gratis. He is a genuine reformer whose sole concern is the advancement of mankind, the welfare of the individual and society. He is a self-appointed sage who wages war against the forces of chaos and discord.

Again, Reilly is assisted by two faithfully devoted aides, Julia Shuttlewaite and Alexander Gibbs. They are intelligent and very active. They watch carefully and detect anything that seems to go wrong in the community. Julia is a "mine of information," in Alex's words. The amount of knowledge she has intrigues the other characters. Celia emphasizes that "there isn't much that Julia doesn't know." ⁴ Lavinia complains: "I'm puzzled by Julia. That woman is the devil. She knows by instinct when something is going to happen" (p. 39). She also believes that Julia cannot be cheated, "nothing less than the whole truth could deceive Julia," she contends. Edward, too, admits that "Julia is certainly observant" (p. 38). Julia is a guardian who keeps an eye on Reilly's patients (p. 146). She is also Celia's guardian, and a great help and counsel to Reilly himself (p. 148).⁵

Similarly, Alex is observant and very active. He has connections in various places around the world. Peter admits that Alex is "a wonderful man to know/Because... he knows everybody, everywhere" (p. 78). Alex goes on several missions and writes interim reports (p. 164). He is an enchanting story-teller and a cook as well.⁶

In their ability to keep track of the goings-on in the community, in their accuracy in spotting problems, and in their efficiency in executing the orders of their master, Julia and Alex seem to be humanized versions of guardian angels. In *The Cocktail Party*, Reilly and his aides are referred to as guardians. They are definitely so from a Christian point of view. They are like angels who guide people along the right path and protect them from the forces of evil.⁷ Yet for those who lack the Christian faith, Reilly and his assistants are simply benevolent agents let loose in society offering amendment and reconciliation to those who are ready.

Eliot's play arranges for these guardians to encounter their patients in public life, not in an isolated or pre-arranged location. As a matter of fact their field of work is the whole world, and thus they represent the omnipresence of divinity. ⁸ The treatment of the patients, however, culminates in Reilly's clinic. There, they find their ultimate revelation. The treatment starts much earlier than the date of the patients' visit to the clinic, or more accurately the date when the patients' are manipulated into the clinic. It takes place everywhere including the patients' homes and work places. Moreover, Reilly's agents seem to have connections everywhere, in Essex, Durham, Kinkanja, California, New York, and elsewhere. The expanded geographical space in which the guardians maneuver suggests that they are no local reformers, but agents of universal benevolent powers.

Reilly's clients are capable of various degrees of salvation. Some of them, the Chamberlaynes, choose to give up their indulgence of egoism, and learn the concepts of self-denial and obligation to the community. They choose reconciliation with this worldly life. Another character, Celia Coplestone, chooses to attain sanctity through martyrdom and crucifixion. And a third character, Peter Quilpe, is not yet ready to make a choice. Reilly's approach to the problems of his patients differs from one patient to another. His encounter with the Chamberlaynes differs from that with Celia or Peter because these characters demonstrate varying degrees of preparedness for salvation.

The Chamberlaynes suffer from the failure of their marriage which is shattered and is about to collapse. Each of them uses the other for the fulfilment of his or her selfish needs. Psychologically, the couple is separated and consequently cannot communicate or tolerate each other. Each of them suffers from what is believed to be a nervous breakdown, and the other is always to blame. Celia Coplestone is spiritually lost. She is burdened by "a sense of sin" (p. 134), not because of anything she has ever done, but, of failure/ Towards someone, or something, outside of myself" (p. 137). Celia has a strong inner call for atonement, the ultimate degree of self-denial. Peter Quilpe has no direction and is lost. Reilly serves as the medium to reconcile the separated couple, guide Celia to atonement, and conduct Peter into the path toward the fulfilment of his ambitions.

Reilly's method of handling the Chamberlaynes' psychological problems goes through different stages. Acting in the role of a psychiatrist, he gathers information about their problem, then diagnoses the real source of it after analyzing the information and finally has Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne undergo a guided experience through which they grow enlightened, ready to make a free, yet expected, moral choice. Reilly, through his insight into human nature and the assistance of his aides, is aware of the problems of his patients. His method in treating his patients, like most psychiatrists' methods, is meant to allow the patient to enunciate his or her own problems orally in order to better recognize them. Of course it is also Eliot's device for exposition which serves to keep the audience or readers in suspense.

Reilly's diagnosis is that they are isolated from each other and that they harbour similar illusions. Edward finds himself incapable of loving, and Lavinia finds that no man can love her (p. 125). Out of vanity each of them hides his or her illusion and self from the other. Their psychological and physical isolation shatters any possibility of their communication.

Reilly's solution is to enlighten them about their self-delusions and about one another's problems, enabling them to establish a true marriage. Their disillusionment is preceded, however, by a psychotherapy achieved through a manipulated experience by which the patient's ego is deflated and humiliated. Psychological suffering enables the Chamberlaynes to accept disillusionment and begin to make the right moral choices. The psychotherapeutic experience consists of a group of shocks and humiliating encounters that are meant to deflate Edward's ego and lower his resistance to Reilly's treatment.

Eliot opens the play by putting Edward in an awkward position by having Lavinia absent herself from a cocktail party she and her husband are hosting. The Chamberlaynes are divided and separated. Their separation and Eliot's leaving Edward in the dark about the departure and destination of his wife, represent the chamberlaynes' psychological fragmentation, spiritual brokenness and deceptive self-delusions.

Reilly's manipulation of his an patients has important dramatic function; it leads to their humiliation and lowers their resistance to the healer's project. Edward, who has taken his wife for granted for five years, is shocked out of his erroneous illusions and led to see her from a new perspective. His process of humiliation starts with the embarrassing questions posed by the guardians concerning the reasons for his wife's absence. Edward's vanity is punctured and his illusions about his married life are put at stake.

Reilly assures Edward that
All to the good.
You will find that you survive humiliation.
And that's an experience of incalculable value.

(P. 31)

The seemingly rough psychological and physical experience Edward undergoes is for the best. There is no harm done, and there are signs of improvement.

Reilly, disguised as the Unidentified Guest, observing the conduct of Edward in the party, looks as an unknown mystical agent representing the divine presence.

Immediately after the party, Reilly becomes Edward's mentor. Edward, embarrassed and humiliated before his guests, chooses the Unidentified Guest to hear his confession about his wife's departure. He finds it easier to talk to a person he does not know (p. 24), Yet Edward's choice is expected and calculated. Reilly says:

. . . I knew that all you wanted was the luxury
Of an intimate disclosure to a stranger.

(p. 28)

As redeemer, Reilly, uses the occasion of Edward's confession as permission for him to work on Edward's case. Edward, in other words, submits to his superior, or has been put in a situation to do so by his free will, and now he cannot retreat. Reilly reminds him:

. . . Let me tell you that to approach the stranger
Is to invite the unexpected, release a new force,
Or let the genie out of the bottle.
It is to start a train of events
Beyond your control.

(p. 28)

This is similar to Lavinia's recognition that by resorting to Reilly, she

. . . started some machine; that goes on working
And I cannot stop it; no, it's not like a machine - -
Or if it's a machine, someone else is running it.
But who? Somebody is always interfering - -
I don't feel free . . . and yet I started it - -

(p. 87)

Eliot clearly shows the Chamberlaynes entering into their relationship with Reilly out of their free will. They are the ones who have given the redeemer the chance to interfere and solve their problem. The emphasis on the freedom of choice for Eliot's characters is a manifestation of the idea of Christian freedom. "Choice is free for the Christian, but the price of the wrong choice is a state of death - in life -, while the reward of the right choice is ultimate illumination" (C. Smith, 1963: 179).

Reilly's exchange with Edward immediately after the cocktail party is a process of cleansing of Edward's mind of the misconceptions and illusions he has of himself and Lavinia.

The humiliation and embarrassment Reilly inflicts upon Edward are meant to make Edward surrender to, even confident in, Reilly's treatment. Reilly reduces him "to the status of an object, / A living object, but no longer a person" who wills and makes decisions, he becomes no different from Prufrock. In the presence of Reilly, he is like "a piece of furniture in a repair shop/For those who surround you, the masked actors;/All there is of you is your body / And 'you' is withdrawn" (p. 30).

An important part of Reilly's treatment is temporarily to leave Edward in doubt as to his wife's departure and location, He tells Edward:

There is certainly no purpose in remaining in the dark
except long enough to clear from the mind
The illusion of having ever been in the light.

(p. 32)

By refusing to share his knowledge with Edward, Reilly means to derive from Edward a feeling of trust and confidence in his redeemer.

Reilly diagnoses the causes of Edward's ailment as the little self - knowledge he possesses (p. 30). Edward for him is no more than a set of obsolete responses, and thus is so humiliated further that he can come up with more relevant responses to Reilly's questions. This way the psychiatrist can lead his patient to a clear understanding of his problem. Leaving Edward in the dark concerning his wife and his awkward situation, Reilly aims at shattering the certainty of Edward's illusion that he knows himself and his motivations.

Reilly meets Edward three times during the course of the play. During the lapse

of time between their first and second encounter, it is Reilly's aides who continue the treatment. They are nurse - like in their care of Edward till he sees his doctor again.

Reilly's spell on Edward is tremendously influential. Even during his absence, Reilly hovers over the action influencing Edward's exchange with Peter. Edward advises him to accept the fool he is, and to wait, for everything is for the best. He also congratulates him for his early escape from Celia. What Edward expresses is no more than a reiteration of Reilly's advice, and a reflection of the remnants of his previous misconceptions concerning his own wife. His asking Peter to wait is reminiscent of Reilly's asking Edward to wait. Unlike Reilly, however, Edward does not know what Peter is to wait for.

Celia recognizes the change that Edward has undergone. She even notices that Edward is no more than an object at the mercy of circumstances; he is not aware of anything, even himself:

I think -- I believe -- you are being yourself.
As you never were before, with me.
Twice you have changed since I have been looking at you.
I looked at your face: and I thought that I knew
And loved every contour; and as I looked
It withered, as if I had unwrapped a mummy.
I listened to your voice, that had always thrilled me.
And it became another voice, -- no, not a voice:
What I heard was only the noise of an insect,
Dry, endless, meaningless, inhuman----
And listened to your heart, your blood;
And saw only a beetle the size of a man
With nothing more inside it than what comes out
When you tread on a beetle.

(p. 67)

Her words echo Reilly's suggestion to Edward that he is merely a body without a personality or a will.

Celia functions as a thematic commentator on the scene. And in a way she, like Gonzalo in *The Tempest*, is a character whom the playwright uses to control and modulate the spectator's view of the action.⁹ Celia recognizes Reilly's mystical power, and wonders:

. . . Who was that man? I was afraid of him;
He has some sort of power.

(p. 57)

She is puzzled by Reilly's project and intentions:

But why should that man want to bring her back--
Unless he is the Devil ! I believe he was.

(p. 57)

Celia also describes Reilly's method in persuading Edward to bring Lavinia back as a "Devil's method" (p. 60). The "Devil" who has bewitched Edward (p. 58) is the "very great doctor," named Reilly, that Celia advises Edward to see (p. 61). This shows that at this point neither Edward nor Celia is aware of the identity of their manipulator.

Edward has changed; he is humiliated and becomes passive. Everything is destined for him and thus he places himself passively into the hands of powers beyond his ken:

I see that my life was determined long ago
And that the struggle to escape from it.
Is only a make-believe, a pretence
That what is, is not, or could be changed.

(p. 66)

He suffers a mental and a psychological hell:

What is hell? Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections. There is nothing to escape from
And nothing to escape to. One is always alone.

(p. 98)

Reilly is aware of his influence on Edward. He calculates the mental and psychological changes in Edward's personality. Thus, Reilly has to see him before Edward meets Lavinia to give him another set of directions. Reilly tries to persuade Edward to do all he can to cooperate with him, and carry out instructions, or remedy may evade him. This encounter is highly effective and occurs at the right time, when Edward is completely passive and willing to accept his healer's treatment. Neither can Edward at this stage withdraw from the relationship he has entered with Reilly out of his free will. Edward has already given Reilly the permission to work on his problem, and by doing so he has let the genie out of the bottle, to use Eliot's oriental image (p. 70). By making a decision, Edward gave up his freedom to his healer. This process looks like blackmail, yet Reilly is cruel only to be kind. Reilly's conduct is an unconventional one that nevertheless brings success and happiness for the patients.

Reilly instructs Edward that he and his wife have changed with time. He teaches him that what one knows of people is a set of images and memories of moments during which one knew them. One always prefers the convenience of pretending that one knows people. In reality, however, one always meets strangers (p. 72). Edward, according to Reilly's creed, has changed and so has his wife. Neces-

sarily, then, he should meet her as a stranger and see her afresh (p. 73). This element of alienation is important in order to see Lavinia from a different, new perspective. Up to this point Reilly remains the stranger in dealing with Edward. This secrecy about his identity is a part of Reilly's plan to leave Edward in the dark in order to lead him to disillusionment.

When the Chamberlaynes are reunited, they no longer hide their psychological failings from one another, nor do they sit in separate parts of the room listening to the disembodied sound of their record player. They now sit together and relate to one another, even though that relation is still highly defensive. Each of them believes that each has changed, and threatens rather than promises to behave differently in the future. Lavinia intends to "treat you [Edward] very differently/In future" (p. 93), and insists that she is "rather a different person/Whom you must get to know" (p. 95). Although Edward's response is sardonic, it nonetheless implies his belief that he himself is a different person as well:

This is very interesting:
But doesn't it occur to you that possibly
I may have changed too?

(p. 95)

He threatens that "in future, I shall behave, I assure you [Lavinia] very differently" (p. 94). Both of them recognize the existence of a grave domestic problem, yet each charges the other with responsibility for it. This shows their continued self-absorption and egoism, a problem that Reilly is to rid them of later. Lavinia complains of a set of bad qualities which she attributes to Edward; they include dullness, passivity, indecisiveness and distrust of her. Edward, too, complains of her selfish, exploitative and dominant personality. Each of them regrets his/her submission to the other. Clearly, the main dilemma that faces the Chamberlaynes is an egoism that engenders self-absorption and self-justification. They must come to learn mutualism and understanding each for the other. In order to teach them this, the guardians in Act 11 manipulate them separately into Reilly's counseling room. It is in this Act that we discover that Alex and Julia are Edward's and Lavinia's guardians, that they have coaxed them into making appointments with Reilly, and that all is predesigned and calculated, for the restoration and salvation of Edward and Lavinia. As guardians, Alex and Julia stay in the building during Reilly's sessions with Edward and Lavinia but remain unseen spirits, keeping the patients ignorant of the fact that they are manipulated or ameliorated.

In the clinic, Edward is shocked to see that the Unidentified Guest is his doctor. Edward's reaction is one of disbelief when he suddenly discovers that he is manipulated. He does not, however, feel free to leave because he has already made a decision. Going ahead with his session, he explains to Reilly that he is very ill and his wife is to blame. He complains that she has taught him to depend on her and live according to her own terms:

... she has made me incapable
 Of having any existence of my own ...
 She has made the world a place I cannot live in.
 Except on her terms. I must be alone,
 But not in the same world. I want you to put me
 Into your sanatorium. I could be alone there?

(p. 112)

Reilly knows better than that having told Alex earlier that Edward doesn't want to escape from her, but wants her to feel penitent (p. 106). So Reilly shocks him deeply as he tells him that he is no more than a set of obsolete responses, that he has fabricated his case, and is merely deceiving himself. Reilly reveals that Edward, like many others, does harm without knowing it in his attempt to feel well about himself (p. 111).

To ensure good results, Reilly unconventionally brings Lavinia into his clinic. The couple are shocked by Reilly's unprofessional conduct; Edward calling it a "dishonourable trick" (p. 116) and Lavinia wondering about the identity of Reilly:

Are you a devil
 Or merely a lunatic practical joker?

(p. 117)

Husband and wife begin by putting on one another the blame and responsibility for what is happening. They are on the defensive. Edward, who feels spiritually not physically dead, is obsessed with the illusion that he is insignificant (p. 111). Reilly, unconvinced by their exchange, reveals more information about them than they like to reveal. He reveals that Edward, who has failed to find love in his married life, has started an affair with Celia hoping for romance and proof that he can love. However, the moment his wife leaves him he discovers that he is incapable of loving anybody. Lavinia, too, has sought to arouse love from Peter. But the moment Peter falls in love with Celia, Lavinia fears that she is unlovable. Clearly, each of them suffers a nearly identical isolation:

A man who finds himself incapable of loving
 And a woman who finds that no man can love her.

(p. 125)

Reilly suggests to them that what they have in common should be looked at "as the bond which holds you together" (p. 125).

Reilly is aware of the spiritual dilemma of the Chamberlaynes. Both are preoccupied with the need of being loved. But because they suffer from intramarital domestic problems, they seek love through extramarital affairs. Eliot demonstrates that Edward's and Lavinia's relationships with Celia and Peter, respectively, are

misguided and not-Christian in the sense that their pursuit of love in these relationships is merely narcissistic and is motivated by the search for the self. Eliot seems to posit that "the proper view of christian love necessitates both the recognition of the spark of divinity in every other creature and the act of loving as a reflection of love for the creator" (C. Smith, 1963: 179). Reilly wants to disillusion Edward and Lavinia that improper love is usually destructive. Indeed, when Lavinia absents herself from the party, Edward does not feel the loss of another person he loves, but rather the loss of his own identity. His own personality is "on the image he sees reflected back from his wife, rather than on knowledge himself" (C. Smith, 1963: 179). Reilly embarrasses him by revealing the reality of his problem:

There's a loss of personality;
Or rather, you've lost touch with the person
You thought you were.

(p. 29)

Lavinia, too, is shattered not by her discovery of the Edward-Celia relationship, but by the realization that Peter is in love with another woman. Reilly disillusions them about the core of their problem: their search for love is in fact a search for the self. He teaches them that to be spiritually restored and to be happy in life they have to "avoid excessive expectations,/[and] Become tolerant of themselves and others" (p. 139). The husband and wife enlightened through the unconventional psychotherapy they have undergone, go back to their mundane world of cocktail parties and "common routine" (p. 139), and are ready to forge enlightened relationships with each other and with society.

The Cocktail Party deals with another important case, Celia's, in which human relationships are broken as a precondition toward the achievement of "a life beyond life," in Milton's phrase. The inclusion of Celia's case adds another layer of meaning to **The Cocktail Party**. Reilly's tactics in dealing with this case are similar to those he uses in solving the Chamberlaynes' problem, yet in Celia's case he manipulates her penance and sainthood after he gains her trust in his ability as a redeemer or a confessor. His agents, Julia and Alex, play a major role in the process of Celia's redemption. Thus, the dramatic pattern of this thread of the plot is not different from that used in the Chamberlaynes' plot though it leads to different results. Like the chamberlaynes, Celia suffers from a spiritual strain. Through Reilly's agency Lavinia and Edward are restored to spiritual health, whereas, Celia is restored beyond health to spiritual blessedness. Paradoxically, health means life; but blessedness, which is more than life, means death.

Reilly's first encounter with Celia Coplestone's case was an apparition of Celia which he saw as he first met her:

When I first met miss Coplestone . . .
I saw the image, standing behind her chair,
Of a Celia Coplestone whose face showed the astonishment

Of the first five minutes after a violent death.
 . . . so it was obvious
 That here was a woman under sentence of death.
 That was her destiny. The only question
 Then was, what sort of death? I could not know;
 Because it was for her to choose the way of life
 To lead to death, and, without knowing the end
 Yet choose the form of death . . .
 . . . so all I could do
 Was to direct her in the way of Preparation.

(p. 183)

Reilly through telepathic power could foresee Celia's end, violent death. He consequently sees his role as merely that of a guide who prepares her for a violent death through which she attains sanctity. With the help of the guardians, particularly Julia, he has to put her in a situation, or manipulate her, to choose the path leading to sanctity. Julia guides Celia to Reilly's clinic where Reilly plays the role of a confessor to her. Celia is different from Edward and Lavinia. She is aware of the abnormality of her situation, and does not place the blame outside herself. She is honest with Reilly and herself. Her plight has two symptoms: an awareness of solitude and sense of sin. Like Edward after the departure of his wife, she feels lonely. Edward suffers tremendously because of his loneliness and thus aspires to be reconciled to society and social life. Celia's loneliness is a break from human relationships, a precondition for sanctity. It is not a break of a relationship that she suffers from, but a revelation that.

Everyone's alone. Although people:
 . . . make noises, and think that they are talking to each other;
 They make faces, and think they understand each other.

Celia notices that people do not communicate (p. 134). Burdened by a sense of sin, not because she is immoral or has hurt others, Celia elaborates;

It's not the feeling of anything I've ever done,
 Which I might get away from, or of anything in me
 I could get rid of - - but of emptiness, of failure
 Towards someone, or something, outside of myself;
 And I feel I must . . . **atone**.

(p. 137)

Unlike Edward, she resorts to Reilly with humility and passivity. Julia does not find her hesitant to come to Reilly, but merely diffident. She is afraid that he will not take her seriously or that she deserves to be taken seriously. She accepts her situation as it is, saying:

. . . I may have been a fool;
 But I don't mind at all having been a fool.

(p. 135)

Clearly she is different from Edward, who prefers not to stay in the dark concerning his wife's departure because, out of his vanity, he does not want to look like a fool.

In the presence of her confessor, Celia is not confessing a violation that she has committed. She merely reveals to him the symptoms of an abnormal situation she suffers from. Reilly's role is to show her the choices she has; to choose reconciliation with the world of common routine, or to attain eternal life through tremendous suffering and complete self-denial. Reilly assures her that her condition is curable but that she has to choose the form of treatment.

One choice, is that he can reconcile her to the human society like the Chamberlaynes. Yet there is another choice. He says,

The second is unknown, and so requires faith - -
The kind of faith that issues from despair.
The destination cannot be described;
You will know very little until you get there;
You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession
Of what you have sought for in the wrong place,

(p. 141)

This is a way of faith that requires suffering, yet will lead to sanctity and permanence. The alternatives Reilly offers Celia are the two Christian traditional paths through which the soul could be restored and come to God - - The Negative way and The Affirmative way. Carol Smith explains:

Followers of the Negative Way believe that God may be reached by detaching the soul from the love of all things that are not God, or, in the terms Eliot most frequently chose to use, by following the council of St. John of the Cross to divest oneself of the love of created beings.

The Way of Affirmation, on the other hand, consists of the recognition that because the Christian God is immanent as well as transcendent, everything in the created world is an imperfect image of Him. Thus, all created things are to be accepted in love as images of the Divine. The Way of Affirmation, while less vigorous, has its own implicit difficulties, for the price of loving created beings ultimately involves suffering and loss.

(C. Smith, 1963: 157 - 58).

Whereas the Chamberlaynes choose the affirmative way of Christian marriage, Celia chooses the Negative Way through marriage to God. In her encounter with Reilly, she shows a spiritual condition (her feeling of isolation and her need to unite to something or somebody outside of herself) which indicates her readiness for atonement and crucifixion, the means toward the achievement of spiritual blessedness. Celia's choice of the Negative Way thus comes as no surprise. Making this decision, Celia becomes qualified to go to Reilly's sanatorium, to which nobody goes except saints.

Celia's journey is horrifying and transhumanizing; however, it leads to ultimate illumination. Julia wonders:

But what do we know of the terrors of the journey?
 You and I don't know the process by which the human is
 Transhumanised: what do we know
 Of the kind of suffering they must undergo
 On the way of illumination?

(p. 147)

The way to sanctity is a way to illumination, it entails tremendous sacrifice and leads to the transcendence of human limitation. Faith is the only guide along this trip. As Reilly expresses his worries about Celia, Julia consoles him that Celia will not be afraid of anything - "yet she must suffer" (p. 148). She does. Toward the end of the play, Alex reports that she has been crucified near an ant-hill in the far away KinKan-ja.

Reilly fully succeeds in guiding the spiritually lost Celia into a triumphant Christian death. He has not chosen for her, he has merely prepared her for the right choice. He considers her crucifixion a triumphant way towards the ideal, permanent and universal (Crawford, 1987: 232 - 35). Whereas, the Chamberlaynes choose the transitory, the particular, and the mundane.

As for Peter Quilpe, Reilly is as much concerned with his case as with the other cases. In this case, however, he keeps at a distance from his patient because he is not yet prepared for salvation. In the libation scene, Reilly and his assistants discuss Peter's case:

Reilly	:	There is one for whom the words cannot be spoken.
Alex	:	They cannot be spoken yet.
Julia	:	you mean Peter Quilpe.
Reilly	:	He has not yet come to where the words are valid.
Julia	:	Shall we speak them?
Alex	:	Others, perhaps, will speak them. You know, I have connections - - even in California.

(p. 151).

Reilly sees that Peter's great achievement is to understand his metier:

You understand your metier, Mr. Quilpe
 Which is the most that any of us can ask for.

(p. 177)

However, that metier for Peter has only been a means to an end. He goes into it for self-aggrandizement and for the improvement of his own image in Celia's mind. But now it is insignificant as Celia is dead:

And what a metier! I've tried to believe in it
So that I believe in myself
I wanted it, believed in it, for Celia.
And, of course, I wanted to do something for Celia - -
But what mattered was, that Celia was alive
And now it's worthless. Celia's not alive.

(p. 177)

It is not Reilly or his assistants who immediately respond to that, but rather Lavinia who has been cured and reconciled to herself and to her husband:

No, it's not all worthless, Peter. You've only just begun.
I mean, this only brings you to the point
At which you **must** begin.

(p. 178)

To which Peter responds:

You're telling me what I ought to know about myself.

(p. 178)

Peter realizes that he has only been interested in himself, "and that isn't good enough for Celia" (p. 179). The enlightened Lavinia consoles him, however, saying:

you must have learned how to look at people, Peter,
When you look at them with an eye for the films.
That is, when you're not concerned with yourself
But just being an eye. You will come to think of Celia
Like that, someday. And then you'll understand her
And be reconciled, and be happy in the thought of her.

(p. 179).

To which the answer is "Oh. I'm glad you reminded me"

(p. 179).

Reilly sees Peter as a promising character for change and "he should go far/ Along his own lines" (p. 180), like Celia. Alex knows everything about his last movie, though he has not seen it. Peter is clearly not ready yet. However, he is always under the guardian's supervision.

As Alex notices Peter's ambitions to establish a career in film making, he entrusts him to Bela Szogody, supposedly another guardian. Alex says:

I was well advised
To put him in the hands of Bela Szogody.

(p. 181).

And Reilly observes:

. . . That young man
Is very intelligent. He should go far - -
Along his own lines.

(p. 180)

Reilly's words, "Go far - - / Along his lines," may mean that, as an artist, Peter, like Eliot himself, may find his peace through his own lines without the agency of a priest, like Reilly. In the libation scene Reilly and his agents are not sure that they will ever toast Peter's salvation. Alex, however, emphasizes that other guardians will do: "Others, perhaps, will speak them. you know, I have connections - even in California" (pp. 150-51). Alex's words touch the core of the message of the play. There are agents of the divine everywhere in the world - - and, more importantly, there will always appear others whenever and wherever necessary.

Eliot's play does not leave the readers in doubt concerning the outcome of Reilly's efforts. In Act III we meet all the characters, the guardians included except Celia, whose martyrdom and crucifixion are reported by Alex. During this encounter Reilly leads the Chamberlaynes to further enlightenment by explaining to them the triumph of Celia's death. Thus he leads them to stop thinking of her death as a waste and to drop their guilt feeling toward her. Thus enlightened, Edward and Lavinia add themselves to Reilly's agents for the treatment of other characters. They tend their sympathy and show their understanding of Peter's situation. They share with him the education they have acquired through their experience and demonstrate their willingness to share his suffering. Peter's image of Celia is an image based on his needs rather than her true nature. The enlightened Lavinia advises him to think of his love to Celia not as worthless but as a new beginning.

The last encounter between Reilly and his patients serves to demonstrate the harmony of the diverse paths along which he guides consultants, and which lead to a common spiritual goal (Crawford, 1987: 175).

Eliot's reformer is sincere, devoted, and committed to the redemption and enlightenment of his fellow men and society. He selflessly strives for others' happiness, and is endowed with moments of real humanity, "moments of self-doubt and inadequacy which he suffers after reconciling Edward and Lavinia and sending Celia on the road to martyrdom" (Dickinson, 1958: 37). Reilly for a moment is suspicious that he has taken a great risk as the solution he offers the Chamberlaynes might not endure (p. 146). He may rest assured, however, as his aide, Julia, promises to keep an eye on the couple. Julia is Reilly's support giving him confidence when he is in doubt, and encouraging him when he is worried. She teases him:

That's one way in which I am so useful to you:
You ought to be grateful.

(p. 148).

Reilly and his assistants are endowed with human traits to indicate that outside their role they are not magical. Reilly comes to a moment when he must say in effect: "Bear with my weakness. My old brain is troubled" (I V. i. 159).²⁶ Reilly's consummation of his goals, however, does not mean the termination of his therapeutic mission in the world of Man, it rather means the end of one project and the beginning of another. As he leaves the Chamberlaynes' party, he takes his aides to the Gunning's where most probably he will start another project. Reilly represents the divine grace or the divine spark that will always remain the individual's guide along the right path. Eliot concerns himself more with the restoration of the individual soul than the reformation of the whole society. Eliot however does not offer an eternal solution for the societal or individual problems. He rather seems to say that whenever corruption, fragmentation, and discord infect society or the individual, there should be a mystical agent of change to put things in order.

The Cocktail Party is thus a play about redeemers or seers who have prophetic qualities enabling them to render change and restore harmony to humanity. The play stresses the role of those gifted individuals who take upon themselves the guidance of others to the shores of safety, leading them out of probable crises. They are imaginary heroes delineated to represent Eliot's vision of mystical heroes who look on their world and bring it back to the right path whenever it goes astray.

Notes

1. Eric Bentley, **The Dramatic Event: An American Chronicle** (London: Dennis Dobson, 1956), pp. 230 - 33. Bentley complains of Eliot's philosophy embodied in his plays that "relationships between human beings are not possible" (p. 231). He gives an example of the husband and wife in **The Confidential Clerk** who are not like strangers, but are strangers to each other: they do not know each other's favorite brand of cigarettes. He complains that Eliot distorts the meaning of what he quotes from St. John of the cross that the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union until it has divested itself of the love of created beings. Bentley discards this philosophy as "the most undramatic view of life ever committed to paper" (p. 232).
2. Sencourt uses these words in reference to Eliot's **Four Quartets** (p. 190), yet they definitely apply to **The Cocktail Party**.
3. C. L. Barber, "The Power of Development . . . in A Different World," in **The Achievement of T. S. Eliot**, ed. F. O. Matthiessen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 235.
4. T. S. Eliot, **The Cocktail Party** (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1950) p. 14. All citations from the text will be hereafter taken from this edition. Page numbers will be included in brackets (!) immediately after citations.
5. For more discussion on the role of Julia, see Thomas E. Porter, **Myth and Modern American Drama** (Detroit: Wayne state Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 53-76; see also Denis Donoghue's chapter on **The Cocktail Party** in the **The Third Voice** (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959), reprinted in T. S. Eliot: **A Collection of Critical Essays**, ed. by Hugh Kenner (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), pp. 173-86. Donoghue compares Julia to the hero of **The Acharnians** and to Prospero of **The Tempest** and the Duke of **Measure for Measure**.
6. See Carol Smith's analysis of Alex's Character as a cook with reference to the mythological and ritualistic tradition in her book, **T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice** (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p.180.

7. For more discussion on the metaphor of "guardians," see Osterwalder, p. 100; and Nevill Coghill's Commentary on **The Cocktail Party** (London: Faber Ltd., 1974), pp. 255-64.
8. From this point of view, **The Cocktail Party** comes close to **Measure for Measure** in which the action takes place in all Vienna rather than a special, isolated place.
9. See Champion's comments on Gonzalo in **The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedy** (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 180.

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