

INTRODUCTION

It is to be noted at the outset that this work is not a comparison of Eliot's theory and practice nor a general discussion but one which is based on consultation of available drafts of the plays. My interest in the drafts was aroused by Eliot's foreword to The Cocktail Party in which he said that those who see the drafts will know how much he owed to his friend John Hayward and to his producer E. Martin Browne. This led me to the drafts to investigate the creative process at work in the plays.

Eliot was fortunate in finding or rather, in being found by E. Martin Browne, a well known director of plays, who suggested that Eliot should write the words for The Rock. It was fortunate because the director shared Eliot's spiritual beliefs and his interest in poetic drama. He was useful to Eliot in pointing out what would be effective on the stage, both in dialogue and in structure. By his sympathetic and sensitive productions, he played no small part in Eliot's success.

John Hayward (1905-1965) was a bibliographer of repute. Eliot met Hayward when the latter was an undergraduate in King's College, Cambridge. After graduating, Hayward re-introduced himself to Eliot in 1927. He had already proved his literary powers by producing an edition of the works of Rochester in 1926. He published his famous Nonesuch edition of the complete poems and selected prose of Donne three years later. He settled in London and led the life of a man of letters.

From his childhood he had suffered from a congenital muscular disease which gradually crippled him. When he came to London he was still able to walk though with pain. Later, his friends had to wheel him in a wheel chair. By 1930, Hayward and Eliot were on friendly terms. After Eliot's return from America in 1933, Eliot and his friends from Faber and Faber used to meet regularly in Hayward's house in Bina Gardens. Later the two friends decided to set up a joint household at 19 Carlyle Mansions in 1946.¹ Here Eliot stayed until he got married in 1957. Eliot gave Hayward drafts, copies of books, and lists of Faber books showing the ones for which he had written the blurbs. Hayward himself preserved reviews and programmes.

Some of the drafts have been published by E. Martin Browne in The Making of Eliot's Plays (1959). The late Mr. E. Martin Browne had directed me to the Houghton Library in Harvard University where his papers are now stored. John Hayward's collection is housed in King's College Library. Some early drafts are in the Bodleian Library in Oxford University. An early notebook of Eliot containing unpublished poems is in the New York Public Library. I am grateful to Mrs. Valerie Eliot for permission to study these materials and to quote from some of them. There are some slight discrepancies from the drafts in the quotations in The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays : these have been pointed out where relevant. For convenience,

1 See further details in Helen Gardner, The Composition of Four Quartets, p. 5 ff.

his classification of the drafts has been followed in this study. This thesis is to be read along with a copy of The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays and The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot (1969).

Eliot wrote no major poetry after Four Quartets (1942) but continued to write poetic drama to the end of his life. His work in this genre stretches from the unfinished Sweeney Agonistes (1926) to The Elder Statesman (1959). Although two full length studies of Eliot's plays have appeared, namely, The Plays of T.S. Eliot by David E. Jones (1960) and T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice by Carol H. Smith (1963), it is useful to have a fresh look at Eliot's intentions and efforts in the light of an examination of the drafts. For this study, aesthetic or critical evaluation will have to be combined with some quotation of textual details.

A chapter on the background to Eliot's choice of the genre of poetic drama and containing some of his theoretical pronouncements on aspects of drama is followed by separate chapters on the plays. Eliot said that he himself was "no longer very much interested in my own theories about poetic drama, especially those put forward before 1934. I have thought less about theories since I have given more time to writing for the theatre."² This study will consider how Eliot bodied forth his ideas in dramatic form and will relate his achievements to his specific aims in each of the plays. The drafts help us to see what problems Eliot faced

2 The Paris Review, No. 21 (Spring-Summer 1959), p. 62.

as a craftsman and how he overcame them. They also throw light on the evolution of his thought.

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This work contributes some primary material in the form of hitherto unpublished matter. No evaluation of Eliot's plays has yet been made drawing on the evidence of the drafts since E. Martin Browne's book appeared, hence there is need for a study of this kind. The part played by E. Martin Browne is indicated in The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays but the role of John Hayward was so far unknown to scholars; this study throws light on this subject. In the course of this work an evolution in the thematic content of the plays has also been noted.