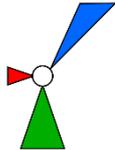


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bncdoc.id	EFX
bncdoc.author	Ackroyd, Peter
bncdoc.year	1988
bncdoc.title	T S Eliot.
bncdoc.info	T S Eliot. Sample containing about 45557 words from a book (domain: arts)
Text availability	Ownership has not been claimed
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_biography

<1289/c>	artificial, public self collapses and the real man, the ordinary human being, emerges.
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>He confesses his past mistakes to his daughter who reaffirms her love for him and then, at the close of the play, he retires to the shade of a beech tree and dies. His daughter and her fiance are left on stage, where they confirm their love for each other with a poetry that Eliot would have once found impossible to write: Not even death can dismay or amaze me Fixed in the certainty of love unchanging. The critics seemed to approve of the poetry, although they emphasized the theatrical and “dated” aspects of the play. Martin Browne himself believed that Eliot was too ready to rely upon outworn social and theatrical conventions, but suggested that they “reflect an unconscious reversion to the drama that Eliot must have seen as a young theatregoer before 1914”. It would perhaps make a poignant epitaph to Eliot’s creative career that he should return to the literary associations and memories of his youth in America - the “Victorian American” who even in his rebellion against that inheritance marked himself as its true heir. But the “theatricality” of the play works beneath the purely formal level: Lord Claverton has always acted a role and it is only at the end of his life that he allows his true human self to emerge, although ... the longer we pretend The harder it becomes to drop the pretence, Walk off the stage, change into our own clothes And speak as ourselves. Theatrical images of this kind are apparent throughout Eliot’s work and, as Browne has remarked, “The image of the actor finding himself on stage in the wrong part comes to Eliot as the expression of a climax of disturbance”. One character in The Elder Statesman remarks, “Forgery ... is a mug’s game”, which is precisely what Eliot had said of poetry twenty-five years before. It is not necessary to conflate the two to recognize how artifice and expression are deeply implicated with each other in his work - how one can only speak freely by playing a part, like Cyrano in the shadows. But just as one theme of the play is that of artifice discarded, so Eliot produces here some of his simplest and most expressive poetry. There are passages of great beauty in the play, sustained by a perfectly adjusted theatrical cadence. The sudden transitions and complications have disappeared along with the irony and grandiloquence - and with them, too, the bitter distaste for the world and the yearnings for an elected fate as saint or martyr. He returned to London with his wife on 2 September, and</p>
	<p>the London production of the play</p>
	<p>opened at the Cambridge Theatre three weeks later. A party was held at A L’Ecu de France to celebrate the first night, and on the following evening a small reception was held at Kensington Court Gardens to celebrate his seventieth birthday. There were only a few guests - among them Martin Browne and his wife, Rupert Hart-Davis and Jacob Epstein (whom Eliot had come to like and admire when he was sitting to him). Eliot’s presents were laid out on the table, and there was champagne and a birthday cake: when Rupert Hart-Davis lit the candles on the cake, Eliot knelt down and blew them out. Epstein proposed a toast to him, to which he replied, “This is the happiest birthday I’ve ever known”. Nothing could interfere with that happiness now. When The Elder Statesman received less than adulatory notices, and failed to succeed at the box office, he was noticeably calm in his reaction. And</p>

	<p>the fact that he seemed to accept the failure of his play, which in previous years would have depressed and unnerved him, is further evidence that he was now a more sanguine man. In an interview which he gave in this year, the reporter noted how he seemed much “heartier, more unworried and more unafraid of the world than he did ... five years ago”. “Love reciprocated is always rejuvenating,” Eliot told him. “Now I feel younger at seventy than I did at sixty. Any man if he is alone becomes more aware of being lonely as he ages. An experience like mine makes all the more difference because of its contrast with the past”. In other interviews celebrating his seventieth birthday, he made similar confessions about his private experience - confessions which, in the past, he would have been too defensive to make. He was “more reconciled and calm” than he had been at thirty; “age had not made him wiser but I have never been wise”. There was also the prospect of more poetry although “They would have to be new poems in a new idiom”. He had written one poem since his marriage, dedicated to his wife, which is couched in a spirit quite different from any poetry he had written before - he had finally, he told Cyril Connolly, written a poem about love and happiness. And he was looking forward again: “I don’t feel I’ve ever got to the point I aim at and I do n't think I ever will, but I would like to feel that I was getting a little nearer to it each time.”</p> <p>The future</p>
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