

**Truth vs. Facts and What Matters in Tom Stoppard's
*Arcadia and Indian Ink***

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Tom Stoppard's plays *Arcadia* and *Indian Ink* can be read as dramatizations of two lines Stoppard gives to Oscar Wilde in *The Invention of Love*. Wilde states, "Biography is the mesh through which our real life escapes" and "it is only a fact. Truth is quite another thing" [IL p. 93]. A. S. Byatt, referring to her 1990 Booker Prize winning novel *Possession*, wrote "biographies are a kind of shadow-play" and "*what really mattered*" eludes "the piecers-together of lives" [1] comments which draw the same distinctions as the lines from *The Invention of Love*. Questions of what really matters in human relationships and the extent to which lives are reconstructible lie at the heart of Stoppard's plays. These works all share a nonlinear narrative structure and are driven by plots featuring academic quests to reconstruct the past. The strategies Stoppard uses in *Arcadia* and *Indian Ink* to both construct and dramatize the past offer the audience a chance to experience and understand the elusive qualities of personal relationships.

A nonlinear narrative structure is ^{particularly appropriate?} (natural) for works dealing with questions of what escapes the mesh of biography. Broadly speaking there are three different ways to structure a narrative about the recovery of the past. Events in the past can be dramatized before the reconstruction efforts (a linear structure), the reconstruction can be presented before the events of the past (an inverted structure), or events of the past can be interlaced with the reconstruction efforts as Stoppard has elected to do. Events from different time periods remain divided by the gulf of temporality in either a linear or inverted structure. By interlacing past and present action, the rigidity of the barrier between time periods is adjustable, allowing for visual as well to thematic resonances to develop and change as the stories unfold. ^{Suspense is limited to either} how much was or will be reconstructed correctly ⁱⁿ a linear or inverted structure; one knows everything about one of the time periods before seeing the other. By interlacing the time periods, the author can more deftly control when information is revealed to the audience and

modulate resonances which develop across time periods. This creates a knowledge gap between what the audience knows of the past and what the modern characters have discovered. It is this gap that allows the audience to decide if what the characters are looking for and what they are able to recover constitutes what 'really mattered' about the past.

Stoppard deftly utilizes the knowledge gap inherent to an interwoven structure to create and increase the pathos which runs under the sparkling, witty surface of *Arcadia*, modulating the tone from light comedy to poignant pathos as the play progresses. The first line of *Arcadia*, Thomasina's inquiry "Septimus, what is carnal embrace?" [p. 8], touches off a hysteric, nearly manic scene where puns whip round with astounding speed and which seems to locate *Arcadia* in the tradition of smart drawing-room comedy. Scene 2 is set in the present and also suggests a farce; two pretentious academics struggle to reconstruct the past that the audience alone is privy to. Instead of continuing in the purely comic vein, the play begins to transition to a more serious mode in the second half of Act 1. In Scene 3, Thomasina movingly laments the vastness of knowledge lost when the library of Alexandria burned with a speech ending "How can we sleep for grief?" [p. 56]. Thus, Stoppard illustrates that the gap between what was in the past and what is recovered in the present can be tragic as well as comic. Valentine and Hannah's conversations dominate scene 4. Valentine is passionate and moving with his speech about why he is excited to be alive at this moment in time. "It's the best possible time to be alive, when almost everything you thought you knew was wrong" [p.69]. Instead of being afraid of not being able to access the entirety of something, he embraces the uncertainty. Encapsulating Bernard's appearance between the more serious conversations of Hannah and Valentine allows the modern period to transition out of its farce mode while maintaining Bernard as a comic caricature. While the tone has darkened at the end of Act 1, the possibility that Byron fought a duel and the mystery of the hermit's identity remain unresolved for both the audience and the modern

characters. Leaving the explanation of the mysteries in doubt serves to counter balance the increasing seriousness and earnestness of the later speeches. The evolution in tone in *Arcadia* can be seen as an arch from comedy to pathos; the end of Act 1 leaves the audience at the apex of the arch, unsure whether the play will return to its comedic beginnings or continue to darken. Interlacing past and present allows Stoppard to vary the tone within both periods while maintaining the overall tonal arch of the play.

Act 2 brings the resolution of both mysteries as well as completes the transition from comedy to pathos. The revelation that Septimus will become a hermit "without discourse or companion save for a pet tortoise" [p.92] follows in the wake of Bernard's dramatic presentation of his reconstruction and the emotional eruption it causes. Contrasting Hannah's quest for the identity of the hermit with Bernard's quest that revolves around Byron raises a key thematic question: is the recovery of the details of a famous personage's life more important than the recovery of the life of someone unknown to history? This question is also raised in Stoppard's earlier works. For example, the action in *Travesties* involves such luminaries as James Joyce and Lenin but is presented through the senile reminiscence of Henry Carr, a man who survives in history as a footnote in Joyce's biography. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* asks why the deaths of two minor figures are any less momentous than the death of Hamlet. In *Arcadia*, the characters known to history seem at first to overpower the unknown: Bernard's Byronic quest overshadows Hannah's quest in Act 1 and the unresolved mystery of the duel overshadows the resolution of the hermit's identity. However, the balance shifts when the account of the "night of reckoning" [p.98] in Scene 6 closes the Byron plot. From this point forward, questions about the characters mostly forgotten in history take hold of the center of the play. The audience is focused on discovering what drives Septimus' transformation from a witty, virulent tutor to a seemingly insane hermit and why history has left an intellect as remarkable as Thomasina's unremarked

upon. Hannah's remark that Thomasina "was dead before she had time to be famous" [p.107], burning to death on the night before her seventeenth birthday, resolves this mystery for the audience. At the moment her untimely death is revealed, Thomasina bursts onto the stage furious with Augustus and very much alive. Until this moment the barrier between the time periods has remained intact, allowing only artifacts to be commingled in the shared location but keeping the characters confined to scenes with others from their period. The nonlinear structure allows the image of the vibrantly alive Thomasina to collide with the audience's newly acquired knowledge of her death, increasing the emotional impact of that revelation over anything possible with either a linear or inverted linear structure. mce

While the witty banter of Act 1 acquires a dark undercurrent on a second reading or viewing of *Arcadia*, one initially is oblivious to its ominous undertones and experiences the play as comic. After learning the fates of Thomasina and Septimus in Act 2, the dark undercurrent becomes increasingly visible to the audience. Much of the final scene's pathos is created by the juxtaposition of the dialogue's witty surface against the undercurrent of death and loss. We'd laugh at Thomasina's wish to marry Byron if we didn't know she will never marry. Lady Croom's comic chiding of Mr. Noakes, "Surly you do not supply a hermitage without a hermit" [p. 121] becomes gut wrenching because the audience knows she will not have to resort to newspaper advertisements to find a hermit – her hermit is standing next to her participating in the banter. The dialogue of the modern characters deepens the undercurrent. Chloe furiously well - &! screams "I'll kill her!" [p. 133] referring to her mother, but the audience sees Thomasina onstage.

Septimus's hopeful comment that "we have time, I think" is answered with "there is no time left" [p. 132] from Valentine. Stoppard deepens the pathos by granting the audience with the knowledge that the tragedy of their fates could be averted if only Thomasina and Septimus could hear Valentine's comment as a warning. However, the characters remain unreachable and unbent

from that path which leads to Septimus spending the remainder in the location of his first kiss with Thomasina searching to regain her insights. The audience are the only ones with full knowledge of what will happen and the true depth of the tragedy it represents, and of course they can only watch the fates unfold, powerless to act or intervene. This sensation of powerlessness created by the interwoven structure serves to heighten the emotional power of the final tableaux.

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The juxtaposition of the reconstruction effort against what it seeks to recapture illustrates the difference between fact and truth. Gus presents Hannah with Thomasina's drawing of Septimus and Plautus, the final 'fact' she needs to prove that Septimus became the hermit. In contrast the love between Thomasina and Septimus leaves no 'facts' behind. True affection, like heat, "goes into the mix" [p. 132] defying any attempts to recapture it. Hannah's and Bernard's reconstruction efforts have uncovered the general shape of the past – Byron was a visitor, a challenge was issued, Septimus became a hermit, and Thomasina was a genius. However, because the audience has witnessed the past, they know that these facts do not capture its essence any more than Thomasina's translation of Shakespeare from Latin retains the poetry. Just as Thomasina's translation captures the prose of the passage, the reconstructions realize the general shape of the past while getting details incorrect. Poetry resides in the details. Both in science and history it is "the ordinary-sized stuff which is our lives...these things are full of mystery" [p. 69] and which we do not know how to quantify or describe. Despite having all the crucial facts of history discovered, the 'truth' of what happened remains elusive to the modern characters.

good

While the 'truth' of the past is unrecoverable, attempting to access the facts of the past is not useless. Stoppard chooses not to end with the fire that engulfs Thomasina. Such an ending would leave no room for solace in the face of the tragic fates of Thomasina and Septimus, not to mention the heat death of the universe. Despite her declaration, "I will not go" [p 136] the audience knows Thomasina will go, and she will burn. Death is forever hovering in the wings

awaiting her final exit. Instead the play ends not with a moment of utter destruction but with a small consolation: that in the face of the inevitable the characters elect to live and love despite the pain it will lead to. As Hersh Zeifman so elegantly puts it, Stoppard ends with a “twinned dance of Eros...yet they still choose, bravely, to embrace romance, to dance - a dance not of innocence but of knowledge sorely gained, an act of grace in the face of unspeakable loss” [2]. If there is consolation for the ~~lost~~ poetry of the past, it lies in that fact that the past's influence can alter and change the world of the present. After all, Hannah progresses from staunchly declaring “I don't dance” [p. 51] in Act 1 to accepting Gus's invitation at the end of the play and, despite the awkwardness, waltzing alongside Thomasina and Septimus. *Arcadia's* two seekers, Hannah and Bernard, present vastly different personalities and abilities to be affected by contact with the past. By investigating how each character's reconstruction is linked with their personality, we can understand why only Hannah joins the final dance.

Bernard champions the belief that the past can be recaptured whole and rewritten in the present (of course, he'd prefer it be done by him with an accompaniment of media fanfare). He goes directly from the suggestive artifacts of the letters to a full blown reconstruction in, as Hannah says, a “hop, skip, and jump” [p.84]. Once he has arrived at his reconstruction, he refuses to budge despite a lack of hard confirmation and even in the face of contrary evidence. Bernard makes the evidence bend to fit his theory and not vice versa. Two of his comments from Scene 4 serve as a brief summary of his approach to the past:

“It dropped from sight but we will write it again!”

“Gut instinct. The part of you which doesn't reason. The certainty for which there is no back-reference. Because time is reversed. Tock, tick goes the universe and then it recovers itself, but it was enough, you were in there and you bloody *know*.” [p. 71-72].

Ultimately Hannah's prediction that Bernard's cavalier attitude toward proof and his narcissism will earn him “so much fame that [he] won't leave the house without a paper bag over

[his] head" [p. 84] is played out with "something like bishop's mitre" [p.123]. Gut instinct guides his reconstruction; however, intuition is not what steers him into trouble. Rather it is his failure to thoroughly investigate what his gut instinct leads him to uncover. His gut did tell him there was a previously unknown connection between Byron, Septimus, and the the reviews of Chater. However, in his recklessness to publish, Bernard fails to do thorough background research into the possibility of a connection between Septimus and the *Piccadilly Recreation*. He answers the question "Did Septimus Hodge have any connection with the London periodicals?" [p.81] in his lecture with a resounding "No" calculated for maximum rhetorical effect when juxtaposed with the excited "Yes!" in response to the following question "Did Byron?". The audience already knows that Bernard is wrong and that Hodge wrote the reviews, but at the time of his lecture they do not know if there is evidence to prove that. In the final scene, the audience learns that Septimus's elder brother is the editor of the *Piccadilly Recreation*, a connection that would have been discovered by a less reckless academic. Bernard's reconstruction is flawed not because of gaps in the historic record but because he views facts through the prism of his own ambition. Bernard's rebuke to Hannah "no, no, look at me, not the book" [p.47] and "*this is fame*" [p.49] succinctly sum up his motivation. While Bernard views the past as his ticket to fame, his reckless approach will bring him shame. > & rhyme!

Personal ambition and recklessness are not the only reasons Bernard fails to write history again. Bernard's notion of a recapturable history is contradicted many times in the play both by characters in the past and the present. Bernard is set up as the anti-science viewpoint in arguments with Valentine and as such fails to recognize the implications of entropy on one's ability to recapture the past. Bernard's declaration "we will write it again!" resonates strongly with Thomasina and Septimus's conversation about what is lost to history and how it may be recovered. Septimus's consolation of Thomasina, "The missing plays of Sophocles will turn up

Yet

piece by piece, or be written again in another language" [p.57]. is undermined by Thomasina's translation of Shakespeare from one language to another losing the poetry in the process.

✓ Bernard's desire to reverse time so that the universe goes "tock, tick...and we know" is contradicted by Thomasina's intuitive understanding that time runs only in one direction - the only possibility is tick, tock. Thus, in addition to allowing personal ambition to cloud his interpretation of evidence, Bernard fails because, as Enoch Brater has written, he "reconstructs the past without ever considering the virtue or the wonder or the sheer impossibility of reconstructing it" [3]. He doesn't appreciate that in addition to heat the essence of human relationships is lost to entropy; it goes into the mix.

✓ Bernard is a transitory figure at Sidney Park, interacting with its inhabitants but always keeping his own interests at heart. His selfish visit parallels Byron's visit 200 years before.

Bernard's dalliance with Chloe echoes Byron affair with Mrs. Chater, both in the seriousness with which the men view the liaison and its dramatic discovery by the current lady of the house. Like Byron, Bernard is ultimately of secondary interest in *Arcadia* when compared to the characters who are fixtures at the park. Because Bernard fails in emotional sensitivity, he exits chagrined but fundamentally the same as he entered. His final line, "Publish!" [p. 135] illustrates that his experiences at Sidney Park have failed to teach him caution. He consoles himself with the thought that he has discovered two previously unknown reviews by Byron, and while this part of his reconstruction stands at the end of *Arcadia*, one cannot help but believe eventually a "pendant" associated with the history of the *Piccadilly Recreation* will "blow the whistle" [p. 126] on the last piece of his exciting, but unreal reconstruction.

The major difference between Hannah's and Bernard's approaches to the past is her awareness of the impossibility of absolute certainty and her caution. Hannah is well alive to the impossibility of recapturing the past in its entirety as shown by her assertion that Bernard's theory

Pendant!

"can't prove to be true, it can only not prove to be false yet" [p. 105]. Both scholars start with a suggestive but inconclusive letter and weave a theory about the past from it. However, Hannah, unlike Bernard, will change her theory as new evidence emerges. In Scene 1, Hannah describes the Sidney hermit as her "peg for the nervous breakdown of the Romantic Imagination" [p. 39], and who she believes "was placed in the landscape exactly as one might place a pottery gnome" [p. 42]. It is Bernard's question "Who was he when he wasn't being a symbol?" [p. 44] that

✓ recalls Hannah to the fact that the hermit was not simply a garden ornament but also a person.

While Bernard brushes aside any questions of his theory, Hannah heeds Bernard's comment which ultimately changes the nature of her quest from a desire to find a piece of the past which bolsters her theory to a sensitivity towards the tragedy of the transformation of Septimus from tutor to hermit. While "Bernard is going through the library like a bloodhound" [p. 64], Hannah meditates on the artifacts she encounters. He is quicker than she is, but Hannah is more thorough and thus more receptive to capture and be affected by emotional undercurrents both in the past and the present. Although she will never be able to recapture the past, it is Hannah who (is) sensitive to the lost humanity that the recovered facts represent.

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Hannah initially values 'thinking' over 'feeling,' the Enlightenment over the "Romantic sham" [p. 43]. As the play progresses and she learns more, chinks develop in her "classical reserve" [p. 106]. Bernard's proposal of casual sex at the end of Act 1 is met with dismissal; however, Valentine's suggestion of a trial marriage is met with amusement. The sources of each proposal obviously dictate how they are received to an extent, but the fact that Hannah can receive any sexual suggestion with amusement indicates a thawing of her reserve. Just as Hannah awakens to the humanity of the hermit, she also awakens to the humanity of those around her. When Bernard asks about the family, Hannah's responses show she has not taken a deep interest in them; she "didn't ask" [p. 37] why Gus is mute (and will later comment "I've always

been give credit for my unconcern" [p. 70]) and she hasn't inquired far enough into Valentine's work to know that he is a mathematician not a biologist. Over the course of the play Hannah learns to read the emotional undercurrents, becoming sensitive to Gus's regard for her and opening up to Valentine to such an extent that they share the most moving exchanges of any of the modern characters.

An artifact from the past, Thomasina's primer, acts as the catalyst which brings Hannah and Valentine into meaningful conversation. Valentine is the means through which Hannah (as well as all the non-scientists in the audience) learns of chaos theory and entropy. While Bernard remains oblivious to the implications of the second law of thermodynamics for history, Hannah incorporates it in her defense of why "wanting to know makes us matter" saying, "Better to struggle on knowing that failure is final" [p. 107]. This knowledge not only shapes her reconstruction of the past but her relationships with those around her. Her aversion to "sentimentality" lessens as she awakens to the "mystery" of everyday life and to the importance of carrying on in the face of the tragedy of the past and the tragedies that lie ahead in the future. By the end of the play Hannah, not Bernard, is the character who has come far enough to join in the final dance because she has allowed her contact with the past to shape her. If 'what really mattered' in the past cannot be recovered, contact with the 'facts' of the past may be enough to awaken those sensitive to them to what 'really matters' in their own existence.

Indian Ink, Stoppard's next major stage play after *Arcadia*, also features a nonlinear structure and detective plot. The contrast between historical 'facts' and historical 'truth' as well as the importance of emotional sensitivity also are explored in *Indian Ink*. However, *Indian Ink* is generally acknowledged to be a less moving and less successful play than *Arcadia*, which is often heralded as Stoppard's masterpiece. Looking at *Indian Ink* will allow us to decide if what

is through a bit of a clunk, given 10 pp. in more

to the transition, why we need to go here now, v. just similitude... even this requires fiction-making!

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is presented as 'really mattering' is the same in this play as it was in *Arcadia* and why *Indian Ink* falls short of *Arcadia's* mark.

In order to understand the relationship between these plays, one must look at the chronology of their genesis. *Indian Ink* is an adaptation of Stoppard's 1991 radio play *In the Native State*. In 1993 Stoppard was working with the Royal National Theatre on the first production of *Arcadia* as well as adapting *In the Native State* for the stage. Thus, it is not surprising that there are strong character and structural parallels between the plays given that work on *Indian Ink/Native State* bookends the creation of *Arcadia*. The question of whether Stoppard superimposed the character of Bernard on that of Pike or vice versa is a chicken-and-egg question. In *Indian Ink* Pike seems like a copy of Bernard from *Arcadia*. However, Bernard's roots can be traced back to the disembodied voice of Pike from *In the Native State*. While the Pike/Bernard debate is circular, I argue the Stoppard imposed the structure of *Arcadia* on the dialogue of *In the Native State* and that by doing so he created a less cohesive play. ✓

The interwoven conversations of Mrs. Swan/Anish Das and Flora Crewe/Nirad Das create the structure of *In the Native State*. While this dialectic works wonderfully on radio, it would be woefully short of visual interest on stage. Indeed Felicity Kendal, who played Flora Crewe, astutely noted that *In the Native State* "is to do with language rather than action and it lends itself particularly well to the radio; it isn't the story that's the thing, it's the spider's web of ideas and circumstances" [4]. During the taping of *Native State*, Stoppard said in an interview that the question of "what to do with Pike" [4] would be key in adapting the work to a visual medium such as stage or film.

The solution Stoppard found was to import from *Arcadia* the plot of an academic's attempt to recover facts about the past, expanding Pike's disembodied Southern drawl that is confined to footnoting Flora's letters to an onstage character with a quest. Stoppard also said, ^

✓ The trick [to adapting *In the Native State* for the stage] is to put the radio play aside and write a stage play about the same people" [5]. However, instead of setting the radio play aside, he added a second play to it in the form of Pike's story. *In the Native State* subordinates the questions of one's ability to recover the essence of past events to questions about the ethics of empire, the politics of identity, and how history affects interpersonal relationships. Expanding Pike's role causes both sets of questions to compete for the center of *Indian Ink* and disrupts rather than heightens the emotional resonances created by the juxtaposition of past and present. It also has the effect of shifting the play from an almost Brechtian center that focuses societal issues to a play dominated by the persona of Flora Crewe. The plot, structure, and tone of *Arcadia* combine in an organic whole to create the deep pathos of its final moments. *In the Native State* also ends with a moment of thematic and emotional unity; however, the Pike plot is not fully integrated into *Indian Ink* and muddies the ending (which partly determines why it is less masterful than *Arcadia*).

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Both *Indian Ink* and *In the Native State* end with Flora reading a portion of an Emily Eden letter written in 1839. The entire dialogue of *In the Native State*, almost all of which is retained in the stage adaptation, can be seen as an answer to the last line of the letter: "I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off and say nothing more about it" [p. 482]. The play explores E.F. must keep "how..." as written and is an exploration into how the dynamics and implications of cultural exchange have changed from 1839 to 1930 to 1990. Much as *Arcadia* ends with the specter of death, so too does *In the Native State*. The play closes by moving from Flora's last line, "a sin which I'll carry to my grave" [NS p. 80] to Mrs. Swan's memory of that grave with the flashback of her visit there and finally to Emily Eden's letter. This progression that emphasizes death and decay is off-set somewhat by the presence of Francis, Mrs. Swan's future husband. Life will be carried on by the Swans and Francis's use of "We" to refer to India indicates hope for Anglo-Indian relations.

Eden's letter lands the radio play leaving the audience to ponder the evolution of Anglo-Indian relations.

Indian Ink restructures Flora's narrative so that her departure is inserted between the memory/reenactment of Mrs. Swan's visit to the grave and Emily Eden's letter. The line, "perhaps my soul will stay behind as a smudge of paint on paper, as if I'd always been here ... undressed for love in an empty house" [p.480] is added to Flora's letter in *Indian Ink* and prompts Pike's quest. This line addition as well as the narrative restructuring undermines the continuity created by the death imagery which ends the radio play. The power of Eden's letter is further diminished by having it accompany the visual of Flora's train's departure. The story of Anglo-Indian relations and Flora's personal story continue their competition for the center of the play in the final moment leaving the play feeling unresolved. Much better, I think, to have completed the transformation from a play about the ethics of empire with muted questions about the recoverability of the past to a play about the recoverability of the past with muted questions of empire by removing or at least moving the Eden letter.

While the structure diminishes the power of *Indian Ink's* ending, it still raises important questions about how much of the past can be reconstructed and who the past should matter to. While there are clear similarities between Pike's voice in *In the Native State* and *Arcadia's* Bernard, the expansion of Pike's role in *Indian Ink* makes them seem almost identical. They share the same motivations for reconstruction and general emotional sensitivity (or lack thereof). Unlike Hannah or Anish who are trying to create something new, Bernard and Pike's work is parasitic. As Pike says, "That is why God made writers so the rest of us can publish" [p. 371]. Just like Bernard, Pike is insensitive to emotional undercurrents and routs after 'facts' like a pig after truffles. Dilip almost has to restrain him from rushing upon Mr. Singh, Flora Crewe's former punkah-wallah. This causes Pike to deliver the telling line, "Esteem. If he dies, I'll kill

you" [p. 435]. Pike has no interest, knowledge, or relation (being an American) with Indian history. While speaking with the Raja he can barely bring himself to utter the begged question of what happened to the motor cars and mistakes the Hindi farewell for the Raja's "Christian name" [p. 461]. His comment "Oh, shit" [p. 461] mostly refers to the fact that the information the Raja has presented him casts doubt upon his reading of Flora's letter, and not the egregious social gaff his has just made.¹

Pike's quest to uncover the painting will go unfulfilled not because it is unfulfillable, but because he does not approach the subject of Flora's life with the 'esteem'. He alienates Mrs. Swan by treating Flora like another subject such as biology or botany and in doing so denies her humanity. He says to Dilip, "All we want is the facts and to tell the truth is our fashion" [p. 471]. It is the insistence on molding the 'truth' to his fashion that dooms him to remain outside the "railings of [the] unattainable park" [p. 375] of the past, barred by Mrs. Swan. He will be denied access to the nude miniature of Flora which Flora muses may retain her "soul... as a smudge of paint on paper" [p. 480] exactly because he is not interested in her soul. Pike's insensitivity to the living as well as the dead also denies him access to other 'facts' of Flora's life. Pike's footnote about the Sasha Fund simply states "the reference is obscure" [p. 453]. We learn that Sasha was the name of Mrs. Swan's infant son who died because Eric (Francis in *In the Native State*) has the sensitivity to ask. The insensitivity which prevents Pike from asking the correct questions is his greatest sin and will prevent him from accessing the true shape of the past, just as Bernard's failure to ask questions caused him to reconstruct the past incorrectly. Pike performs the same role in *Indian Ink* as Bernard does in *Arcadia* in raising questions as to why some characters fail to access the past.

¹ Of course, which meaning is most emphasized will change depending on how it is played. However, I feel the preponderance of evidence in the script suggests this reading.

While Hannah serves as the emotional foil to Bernard in *Arcadia*, neither of them have any connection to the history they are searching for. The Anish Das/Pike contrast in *Indian Ink* adds the additional question of who the past should matter to. While Pike is looking for the nude painting of Flora Crewe to spice up his upcoming biography, Anish Das is searching for clarification of the nature of his father's relationship with Flora. Pike's interest in the 'facts' of history is contrasted with Anish's desire to uncover the 'truth' of history. Anish is portrayed much more favorably than Pike partly because Anish is focusing on questions that we believe should matter to him since they focus on his relationship with his father. We are at a lost to understand why Pike has chosen to devote his time to trying to reconstruct Flora, other than the fact there has been a revival in interest in her work thanks to feminist criticism ^{because} and her liberated view toward sexuality will help boost the sales of a biography. This contrast between who the past is most important to serves to distinguish the contrasting reconstruction efforts in *Indian Ink* and *Arcadia*. *INK*

In contrast to Pike, who comes looking for information empty-handed, Anish brings Mrs. Swan a portrait of Flora to show her in exchange for the information he hopes to extract. The differing reactions of Pike and Anish to Mrs. Swan's offer of cake highlight their opposite capacities to read emotional subcontext and to reciprocate. As silly as it may seem to Pike, Mrs. Swan takes great pride in her baking and accepting cake, regardless of whether you want some, is a sign of respect. Pike begrudgingly accepts one piece of cake and brushes off his second offer in his excitement to see Das' unfinished portrait of Flora. In contrast, Anish is attuned to the importance of cake for Mrs. Swan and accepts her offers. During their argument about if the English brought culture to India or whether India already possessed a vibrant culture, Anish heatedly says, "You are a very wicked women. You advance a preposterous argument and try to fill my mouth with cake so I cannot answer you" [p. 390]. However, he quickly understands that

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he has misjudged her intentions and that the offer of cake was an attempt to make peace. He reciprocates with his own peace offering in the form of asking to draw her "to make us friends" [p. 392]. Thus not only is Anish more emotionally aware than Pike, he also has something to offer in exchange for what is his seeking.

Despite Anish's emotional sensitivity, he will leave Mrs. Swan with little more information with regards to his father and Flora's relationship than he had before visiting. Because the interwoven structure has allowed the audience to experience the tenor of Flora's relationship with Nirad Das, Captain Durance, and the Raja, they are aware that Mrs. Swan's answer to Anish's questioning statement "[Flora] had a romance with my father" [p. 476] is not correct. Mrs. Swan asserts "It hardly matters looking back" on which man, if any, Flora had a [implied sexual] relationship with and that "men were not really important to Flora." Mrs. Swan is correct that the sex in of itself "hardly matters;" however, Mrs. Swan's assertion that all relationships were the same regardless of the man involved is incorrect. Flora's behavior toward each of the three men shows different degrees of intimacy. While her contact with Durance would be classified as a typical 'romance,' her relationship with Nirad Das was deeper not because she didn't mind if he saw her naked, but because they exposed more of their souls to each other. Mrs. Swan may not be attuned to the different connotations of each relationship, but she is sensitive to the emotion contact with 'facts' from the past can cause. Pike is barred by Mrs. Swan and Anish from tabulating all the 'facts' of Flora's life because they have judged him to be unable to catch the emotional import that 'facts' can carry for the living because of his lack of connection with Flora.

While Pike (and to a limited extent Anish) equates the heart of a relationship with its physicality, Stoppard seems to be asserting that the heart of the relationship lies in the intangible connection made between two souls which defies description. In *The Real Thing*, Stoppard's first

play to deal extensively with the implications of Eros, Debbie says with disdain, “[Most people] think all relationships hinge in the middle. ‘Sex or no sex. What a fantastic range of possibilities” [p. 218]. As Nirad Das explains to Flora “*Rasa* is juice. Its taste. Its essence. A painting must have its *rasa* which is not *in* the painting exactly. *Rasa* is what you feel when you see a painting, or hear a music; it is the emotion the artist must arouse in you” [p. 407]. Stoppard has demonstrated that relationships, like art, have a *rasa* that is not recoverable by knowing the fact that bodies once came in contact.

The nonlinear structure of *Indian Ink* and *Arcadia* allows Stoppard to argue eloquently without words that 'what matters' in relationships is the *rasa*, the essence, and that it cannot be captured by knowing all the 'facts' about a relationship. While it is the most importance aspect of the relationship, it also the quickest to dissipate. Like heat, *rasa* goes into the mix, unrecoverable. The nonlinear structure allows the audience to experience the *rasa* of the past because they don't belong to the laws of physics operating in the fictional universe. Modern characters belong to the fictional universe and therefore entropy limits them to knowing 'facts' about the past but not the 'truth.' Despite the impossibility of recapturing the 'truth', searching for the past is not futile. Contact with the past teaches Hannah to dance and moves both Anish and Mrs. Swan to tears. The past touches the emotions of those sensitized to them and emotions are 'what matters' both in the past and in the present.

Eros often leads to tragedy in Stoppard's universe but the cost of choosing to remain separate from the dance is greater than entering it. *The Invention of Love*, Stoppard's next play after *Indian Ink*, is an extended illustration that the tragedy of someone turning away from Eros is at least equal to or greater than the tragedy of embracing it. Oscar Wilde says, “Better a fallen rocket than never a burst of light” [IL p. 96]. In the Stoppardian universe, love explodes against the backdrop of history like *Arcadia's* fireworks, “small against the sky, distant flares of light

like exploding meteors" (p. 130). Breath-takingly lovely while they last, but quick to dissipate, ^{they} leaving ^{no} tangible evidence to be gathered by future biographers. Thankfully the audience belongs to a different universe and ^{we} can witness the explosions.



Nice!

References

Page numbers denoted with IL refer to *The Invention of Love*, Grove Press, New York, 1997.

Page numbers denoted with NS refer to *In the Native State*, Faber & Faber, London, 1991.

All other page numbers refer to *Tom Stoppard: Plays 5: Arcadia, The Real Thing, Night & Day, Indian Ink, Hapgood*, Faber & Faber, London, 2000.

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lovely job
linking lots of
ideas + insights!
work on making those long
sentences so clear in their
phases + relationships
are your ideas

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