



Absurdity And Relationship Between Past And Present In Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*

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Abstract

This article explores the theme of absurdity and relationship between past and present in Tom Stoppards *Arcadia*. Literature is a mirror of life its always shows what is happening in the society. In this particular work Tom Stoppard explored the relationship between past and present. The past and the present have a mutual relationship which is essential for the traditional poet's work. When it comes to a literary work's conformity with the past, the past also do the accepted thing to it. T.S. Eliot analyze that a literary work of art have to be new or else it would "so not be a work of art." In order for a literary work to be traditional to the past at all, it must be new in some way—a new take on the past or else it would not be literary art at all, and would not fit in with all art as a complete. As a final point Eliot maintains that in order to know the past, one must be in the present. He explores that the present is "an awareness of the past in a way which the past's awareness of itself do not show." This proposes that the present is a essential vantage point for viewing the past as it actually is. In other words, with no the present, there would be no past.

There is a likeness between both the past and literature we all understand completely, but not concretely. As we observe that Aesop's tales are measured mythical works of narrative yet at the same time we recognize the fact that they signify a fragment of history that is perpetually embedded in the timeline of the ancient works.

The connection between history and literature will always be enveloping because one is the collection of activities and the other is the reflection of human life in its ever shifting form. Together they make up the representation of our humanity, but still leave sufficient space for more questions.

Key words: Arcadia, Past and Present, Tom Stoppard, Absurdity, Thomasina Coverly, Septimus Hodge and Relationship

Tom Stoppard is born on 1937. He is a Czech-British playwright and critic. He belongs to the the group the theatre of Absurd and his all plays investigate various themes such as Absurdity, Meaninglessness, Past and Present, fate v/s free will, chaos v/s order and time. He is very popular for his *plays Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Arcadia* and *Travesties*. He has won numerous awards for his plays, including an Academy Award and several Tony awards.

Arcadia first premiered on April 13, 1993 in the Lyttelton stage of the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain. The production was greeted with tremendous eagerness by critics and the public alike. In London the play gather the important Olivier Award for best play while in America *Arcadia* received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Even the small handful of critics who found error in *Arcadia* unwillingly hailed it as Stoppard's greatest play to date.

The development Thomasina Coverly makes in *Arcadia* is from intelligent to poignant. She begins the play as the nearly 14 year old daughter of Lord and Lady Croom the owners of Sidley Park. Thomasina knows and presumes at truths far beyond her years. While learning about her mathematics, she asks her master Septimus Hodge with mock blamelessness, "What is carnal embrace?" Sometimes she is uncomplicated and impish, while at other times her lethal seriousness is enchanting.

Thomasina is the central character of *Arcadia*. She finds for truths, in people, in mathematics and in poetry. Her genius is spontaneous. She finds difficulty to learn things, such as Latin, but

she can distinguish things and draw conclusions that others cannot. For example, she understands while eating her rice pudding that the jam can be enthused outward and into the pudding, “making red follows like the picture of a meteor in my exorbitant atlas.” But she notes, you cannot stir rearward and bring the jam jointly again. From this experimentation, Thomasina terminated that if every particle in the cosmos could be temporarily stopped in its place and scrutinized, a stunning mathematician could write a method for all the future, just by envisaging the activity of matter.

Thomasina spends much of the play trying to establish her theory to Septimus, who simply tries to keep up with his young responsibility and repeatedly challenge her with new ideas. It is not until 3 years later all through the final scene of the play that Septimus at last begins to recognize what his student has staggered upon. In trying to clarify chaos and thermodynamics, Thomasina has created a theory that suggests the world is strengthening external, cooling off, and will one day grow cold and die. By this time, teacher and student have begun to enlarge a physical relationship. In the play’s lingering final moments, they dance and kiss, just hours before Thomasina’s seventeenth birthday, when she is intended to die in a fire in her bedroom.

As the action rebound back and forth in time, Stoppard discovers the nature of truth and history, the conflict between Classical and Romantic contemplation, mathematics and chaos theory, English countryside architecture, and finally love both familial and memorable. It is a play that holds up brilliantly not only on the stage but on the page.”

Tom Stoppard’s plays are an excellent case of creative use of and dialogue with literary tradition, although the liberties he takes with it are probably not quite what Eliot envisioned. In his opinion, Stoppard follows in the footprints of Brecht and Samuel Beckett in expanding the potential of the medium: “... I think Tom has sort of taken Brecht with whom he has no kindness at all and Beckett and has simply seen, ‘Yeah, this intermediate: you can expand and convention, it’s a poetic medium that is tremendously flexible; you can throw your thoughts at it and it’ll rebound back and intensify it.’”

One of Stoppard’s key methods of opening up the theatre to new options is throwing his imagination at fictional and cultural convention. Stoppard’s basically postmodern play with fictional and biographical material produced some of the most important works in his

composition: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Arcadia*, *Travesties*. *The Invention of Love*'s story is based on the life of A.E. Housman demonstrate well the character of Stoppard's ingenuity: textualised history and fictional texts freely mix together, giving rise to the powerfully self-conscious literariness of the play. Due to its important biographical theme Housman's concealed homosexual love for a fellow student the play has typically been interpreted as a likeness on the duality of Housman's life and character, generated typically by his socially intolerable proclivities. According to Lawrence Frascella the play has its top secret centre in "Housman's struggle, his isolation and his oppression of his gayness through the detection of sky-high educational standards."

Kate Kellaway describes in a evaluation of the play that it is "not about the discovery but the repression of love." Robert Brustein somewhat annoyed at the extreme allusiveness of the text, created that "what Stoppard really wants to create, aside from his own cunning is how gay men suffered under a repressive sexual regime." Likewise, Richard Eyre recalls that his initial response to the play was "the sense of the unconsummated love"; though, subsequent readings and re-readings exposed to him that "the whole thing was a tremendously complicated structure." In declining to focus on the illustration of Housman's life in terms of the clash between his inner and external selves or the supposed representation of his professional career as a sublimation of his displeased personal desires this paper will treat the play as a observations on the invented quality of literary and literary tradition. The discrepancy inherent in the title of the play implies that the most powerful human emotion may have its origin in civilization rather than nature; by extension, the play questions the concept of ritual as a natural accumulation of human achievements over the course of following ages. The choice of a textual critic and renowned classical scholar as the central character enables both unambiguous and implicit comments on the extent to which the arrangement of tradition is subject to random decisions, to inadvertent errors of broadcast and deliberate mispresentations, to historical emergencies which determine the continued existence or loss of artifacts and to the predictable misunderstandings which normally obstruct human communication.

The experience of the invention is made possible thanks to the interruption of chronology as well as abrupt shifts between particular episodes in turn leading to conflicts of settings and of cultural and linguistic registers. The action of the play enlarging between Housman's young age

& old age and spanning two acts, is probably a matter of mere minutes, or seconds, in reality. This is as much time as may reasonably pass between Housman's opening line "I'm dead, then" 12 on the bank of the Styx and his closing words "But now I really do have to go." Yet, in the words of Deryl Davis, the only visible time and place settings in the play exist in the protagonist's mind. Images from his earlier period; together with references to his traditional scholarship, appear in his realization in the fleeting moments preceding death. Sprinkled throughout the play are infrequent references to a nursing home, incompatible in the context of the dialogues, but most perhaps reflecting the central character's actual situation. His last impression of standing "on this unfilled shore, with the indifferent waters at my feet" is untrue up by his prospect of the Styx, quite comprehensible in a man mentally engrossed in the ancient world, but may be simply an sign of his pitiful bodily incontinence. The fundamental compression of time in the protagonist's mind, his bewilderment of interposed images, relations and reminiscences, often arbitrarily sealed and linked are a small-scale picture of some of the mechanisms which shape literary tradition. The chronological disruption plays mayhem with the arbitrary build of the Golden Age as the perfect originating instant of mankind's history before it began to depreciate. Catullus looked back pensively on the age when gods allegedly still visited humans; Ruskin saw the arrival of the railway and industrialization in terms of society decline.

As the old Housman interpretation, "We're constantly living in someone's golden age, it turns out: even Ruskin who acquired it all when asked previously about the origins of Arcadia, Tom Stoppard replied that he had been interrelating *Chaos*, a book about mathematical theory and at the same time speculating about the contrasts between Classicism and Romanticism in style, personality and art. Some playwrights find source material in subjects as various and doubtfully as Stoppard and his literary accomplishments are often considered more astonishing for someone who left school at the age of seventeen and never went to a university.

For some, *Arcadia* symbolizes a apex in Stoppard's career. After years of writing intelligent, witty plays with rational appeal, he supervises to produce one that tugs at the heart as well as the mind. Vincent Canby talked about *Arcadia* in the New York Times, "There's no hesitation about it. *Arcadia* is Tom Stoppard's richest, most witty comedy to date a play of humor, intellect, language, brio and new for him, sentiment."

In *Arcadia* Tom Stoppard uses a method known as combination to place characters and thoughts next to each other for the spectators to compare and difference. This happens each time the scene changes from the chronological past to the modern. It seems there is typescript in Sidley Park's past who have complements in the modern scenes. They may share character traits express similar ideas, or share the same wellbeing. Who do you presume is Septimus's complement in modern day Sidley Park? How about Ezra Chater's? Does anyone in the present come close to similar to Thomasina and her powers of perception? Compare two or three sets of character counterparts and clarify how the combination of these characters helps your understanding of the play.

In the end each fighter learns a lesson about the other's point of view. Bernard rushes ahead to publish and endorse his theory before learning all the facts and is in public embarrassed to discover he was totally wrong. A little more psychoanalysis and a little less gut character would have served him well. For his part Valentine must admit to the survival of genius, a human desire that surpasses science, when he works his way from side to side Thomasina's lesson book and finds she apparent a theory for chaos long before scientists knew one existed.

Tom Stoppard's love towards language is tremendously evident in his 1994 work *Arcadia*. "Septimus, what is carnal embrace?" the young intelligence Thomasina asks her best tutor. "Carnal clinch is the perform of throwing one's arms approximately a side of complain," comes the cautiously chosen reply. It is a simple clever piece of verbal comedy, with layers of meaning prowling beneath the outside. As John Lahr famous in his consideration of the play for the New Yorker, "The complexity reflects the image of Paradise regarding to be lost and Stoppard's play goes on to reply her inquiry. To squeeze the flesh is also to clinch all the sins that the flesh is heir to the sins to which Stoppard's complex plot, whose resourceful twists and turns involve rapacity, skullduggery, greed, vainglory, cruelty, confusion, delusion and genius bears ample witness." All this assures and the play has only just begun.

While analyzing *Arcadia* critics admiring Stoppard's use of language and comparing him to other great writers. Brad Leithauser describes "It is a engage in recreation that holds up pleasantly not only on the stage but on the sheet When Thomasina starving for a new mathematics cry out, 'If there is an equation for a arc like a bell there must be an equation for

one like a bluebell,' we may have stepped interested in an Auden poem. When a formidable lady stillness her brother by snapping, 'Do not experiment in paradox, Edward it puts you in danger of accidental wit,' we can hear Wilde whispering, 'I wish I'd understood that.' As for concerted lyricism, the scene in which Thomasina laments the burning of the classical library of Alexandria a doomed girl genius lamenting the fire of ancient genius is totally spectacular."

This play is perfect example for the representation of past & present. How the characters always thinks about their past and its connections towards present. The development of modern society and its relationship with past is depicted in this play. Tom stoppard's wrote about history and modern world how they are connected with present. In this particular Play Playwright successfully presented the idea of past and present.

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