

Arcadia

by Tom Stoppard



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"Good things,
when short,
are twice
as good."

Tom Stoppard



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full of "... funny little portable pieces of thought."
Susan Sontag

TRANSIT LOUNGE

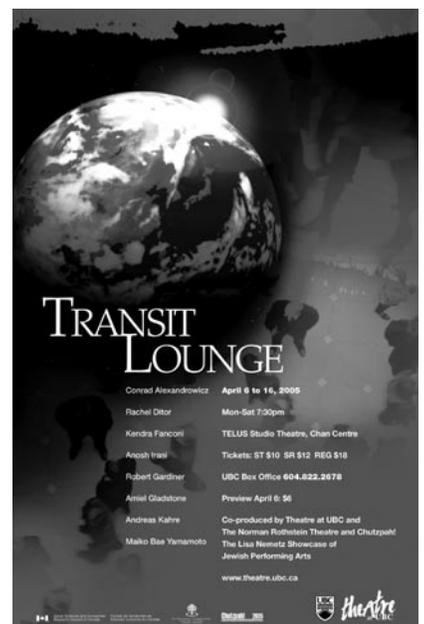
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HOME IS THE PLACE WHERE MEMORIES AND DREAMS MEET, and identity is formed. It is a concept that continues to evolve, responding to large cultural changes and intimate needs. It encompasses a vast range of ideas and feelings (i.e., territoriality, security, refuge, nostalgia, family), and it is full of expectations that often live unexamined until challenged or threatened. *Transit Lounge*, a new play by Amiel Gladstone, Andreas Kahre, Conrad Alexandrowicz, Kendra Fanconi, Anosh Irani, Maiko Bae Yamamoto and Rachel Ditor, examines themes of migration, identity, and the differences between "escaping from" and "going to." The play interweaves stories of home that ask how change affects our sense of inner continuity and cultural identity.



Arcadia

by Tom Stoppard

DIRECTED BY
Dennis Garnhum

SCENOGRAPHY BY
Ronald Fedoruk

COSTUME DESIGN BY
Alison Green

SOUND DESIGN BY
Nathaniel Wong

March 9 – 19, 2005

THE FREDERIC WOOD THEATRE



In the interest of promoting our creative work and encouraging theatre studies in our community, Theatre at UBC proudly presents this Companion Guide to *Arcadia*



ARCADIA

TIME: 1809 & 2005

PLACE: A country house known as Sidley Park, Derbyshire, England

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

IN 1809:

Thomasina Coverly Anastasia Filipczuk
a young girl

Septimus Hodge Torrance Coombs
her tutor

Jellaby Matthew Kowalchuk
the butler

Ezra Chater Christopher Murray
a poet and guest of the house

Richard Noakes Ashley O'Connell
a landscape architect

Lady Croom Johannah Khalema
Mother to Thomasina

Captain Brice, RN Keegan Macintosh
brother to Lady Croom

IN 2005:

Hanna Jarvis Niki Brown
an author investigating the house

Chloë Coverly Kerry Duff
Sister to Valentine

Bernard Nightingale David Newham
a professor researching a possible Byron connection

Valentine Coverly Ian Harmon
a scientist, brother of Chloë

Gus/Augustus Coverly Daniel Deorksen
young boy/young boy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Arts Club Theatre, Brian Havens, Rick Martin from *The Mac Market*,
The Vancouver Playhouse, Dan Wilton

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Vocal Coach	Lisa Beley
Movement Coach	Colleen Lanki
Dialect Coach	Jonathan Holmes
Assistant Director	Dan Hershfield
Technical Director	Don Griffiths
Assistant Technical Director	Mary So
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Stitcher	Helena Prentice
Costume Builders	Alicia Fruhm, Karen Mirfield
Make-up & Hair	Ashley O'Neill, Gloria Shum
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Director's Note

Dennis Garnhum
Guest Artist

Dennis has directed *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and premieres of Timothy Findley's plays *Shadows* and *The Trials of Ezra Pound* at the Stratford Festival of Canada. He premiered Maureen Hunter's play *Vinci* for the National Arts Centre, Manitoba Theatre Centre and remounted it also at Can Stage in Toronto. At the Tarragon Theatre, he had the honor of directing *Sky-light* and *Slavs*. Dennis has directed at the Shaw Festival for six seasons. His productions there include *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Still Life* and *S.S. Tenacity*. For the Manitoba Theatre Centre he has also directed *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men* (Both co-productions with the Citadel Theatre), *Closer* and *Three Tall Women*. Last winter Dennis directed a new play, *Down the Main Drag*, as part of the Play-Writes Festival at Alberta Theatre Projects. Before that directed *Blue/Orange* for the Belfry Theatre in Victoria, B.C. and Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg. He is currently writing a stage adaptation of *The Wars* by Timothy Findley which has been work shopped in New York City. This summer he directs *Rat in the Skull* at the Berkshire Theatre Festival in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Dennis is a graduate of Theatre at UBC's Master of Fine Arts Programme in Directing for Theatre. We welcome his return to the stage of the Frederic Wood Theatre.

IT IS ONE THING to read and study *Arcadia*; it is in fact a whole different experience to put it up on the stage. How do we take Tom Stoppard's intelligent thoughts and word play and find the actable life that lies underneath? After clarifying the meaning of every word, every scientific notion, and charting who knows what (he does not make it easy for us, does he, this Mr. Stoppard?) we then have set a course that is easier said than done: to present this play to our audience as clearly as possible.

The root of most intellectual thought can be tied to the passions by which they are fueled. For the people of our play, to share with one another the excitement of a mathematical equation is the equivalent of someone else describing their joy of conquering the slopes of Whistler. While one young girl dreams of charting the equation of the leaf, we may dream of our debut upon one of the great stages of the world. It's no different than that. It is our passions which inform everything we do. Listen for the passions of the characters currently visiting this house known as Sidley Park.

But wait: there is more! Taken one step further, we uncover what is truly at play here: sexual love unrequited (and sometimes requited!), and the scandals which follow. We also glimpse moments of heartfelt and pure love. Sex and Literature indeed!

Imagine as you watch this play unfold, a British playwright scribbling madly as he enjoys these characters and ideas fall from his imagination. Stoppard has said he was just as surprised as anyone else that the characters from the two time periods would converge into the final overlapping scene. He belongs among the geniuses that he describes: passionate, inquisitive, and ever curious of how things work and what might be. This is a passion which we hope to rub off onto you. Tonight we celebrate the joy, and dare I say desperate need, of speculating, examining, and dreaming.

— Dennis

'The Couch of Eros,' or, Literature in *Arcadia*

Ira Nadel
Department of English
The University of British Columbia



Lord Byron in Travelling Costume.
Private Collection.
Photo Newstead Abbey, Nottingham Museums

“SEX AND LITERATURE. LITERATURE AND SEX. . . . like two marbles rolling around a pudding basin. One of them is always sex.” (63). Hannah Jarvis’s dismissive attitude colors Tom Stoppard’s comic view of literature in *Arcadia* with irony. From Septimus’s opening definition of carnal embrace — “the practice of throwing one’s arms around a side of beef” (1) — to Lady Croom’s anxiety that the sexually charged Byron might leave her estate unfulfilled, *Arcadia* links the sexual with the poetical. Science and landscape gardening may vie for our interest but it is the sexual undertow of literature which pulls us overwhelmingly into the deeper and often comic depths of desire.

Reputation, the only currency of value for poets and critics, jousts in importance with carnal knowledge in the play. Challenged to a duel by the poet, Ezra Chater, for making love to his wife, Septimus responds by flattering the second-rate poet as one of the best in the world and declaring that he would hardly shoot him “over a perpendicular poke in a gazebo with a woman whose reputation could not be adequately defended with a platoon of musketry deployed by rota” (7). Chater relishes the compliment and forgets the insult. Bernard, in his weak defense of his scathing review of Hannah’s book on Caroline Lamb, similarly reverts to sexual innuendo, while Hannah, in reporting on the poor reception of her work, vividly describes how the “Byron gang unzipped their flies and patronized all over it.” (22). Her reference to the poet reaffirms his importance as the essence of literature and licentiousness, his supposed bisexuality adding zest to an already spicy mix. His affair in 1812 with Lady Caroline Lamb, partly discussed by Hannah, lends further importance to Byron whose reasons for leaving England in 1809 remains a mystery at the heart of the work.

But if literature and the impetus to write in *Arcadia* finds itself entangled with sex — the title of Chater’s book is *The Couch of Eros* — the purpose of literature remains quite different according to Stoppard. It is as if language pulls in one direction (sexual) and function in another (instruction). But literature *per se* has a higher goal which Bernard, in his enthusiastic offense against science, makes clear: “a great poet is always timely. . . . There is no rush for Isaac Newton” (61). He reinforces his attack by announcing, “I can’t think of anything more trivial than the speed of light” (63). But the justification of literature finds expression in ways other than Bernard’s posturing. Throughout the play, Stoppard documents its survival through the exposure of scholarship’s pretensions, frequently more fiction than fact. By contrast, literature lasts. Poetry, often misread if not misunderstood, nevertheless contains truths.

But in *Arcadia*, even authorship is not guaranteed. *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole was “written by whomsoever I say it was, otherwise what is the point of being a guest or having one,” Lady Croom, mistress of Sidely Park proclaims and few dispute her. Who wrote what is often at stake in the play with confusions and disguises rampant (Bernard hides from Hannah his authorship of a nasty review; Septimus hides from history his authorship of the journals of the Sidley Park Hermit) but not the integrity of literature.

In the play Stoppard also deflates the unparalleled vanity of authors. They all want to be acknowledged — if not by other writers then at least by TV commentators. But reputations sometimes turn to smoke. Septimus, for example, delights in the burning of an unread letter by Byron, exclaiming “now there’s a thing — a letter from Byron never to be read by a living soul.” Bernard’s theory that Byron left England because he killed Chater in a duel collapses when it is discovered that Chater died by a monkey’s bite in Martinique in 1810. And we realize that Hannah’s idea that the Sidley Hermit will be the “peg for the nervous breakdown of the Romantic Imagination” (25) is wrong because we know that the Hermit is the grief-stricken Septimus, reacting to the fiery death of Thomasina. Over-determination is a critical vice which Stoppard relentlessly satirizes. Literary critics and writers in *Arcadia* alternate between vaunting ambition and extreme misreadings. But in a world where everyone is an author, without regard for talent, this is not uncommon.

For Stoppard, the literary bug is not confined to *Arcadia*. Writers appear in many of his works including the playwright Henry in *The Real Thing*, the poet Flora Crewe in *Indian Ink* and A.E. Housman and Oscar Wilde in *The Invention of Love*. But *Arcadia* is Stoppard’s most author-filled text, although he does not so much parody authorship as question its authority and highlight its confusions. We want literature to matter. It does, not so much in terms of texts but in their impact which we see from the first is as much sexual as it is moral and emotional.

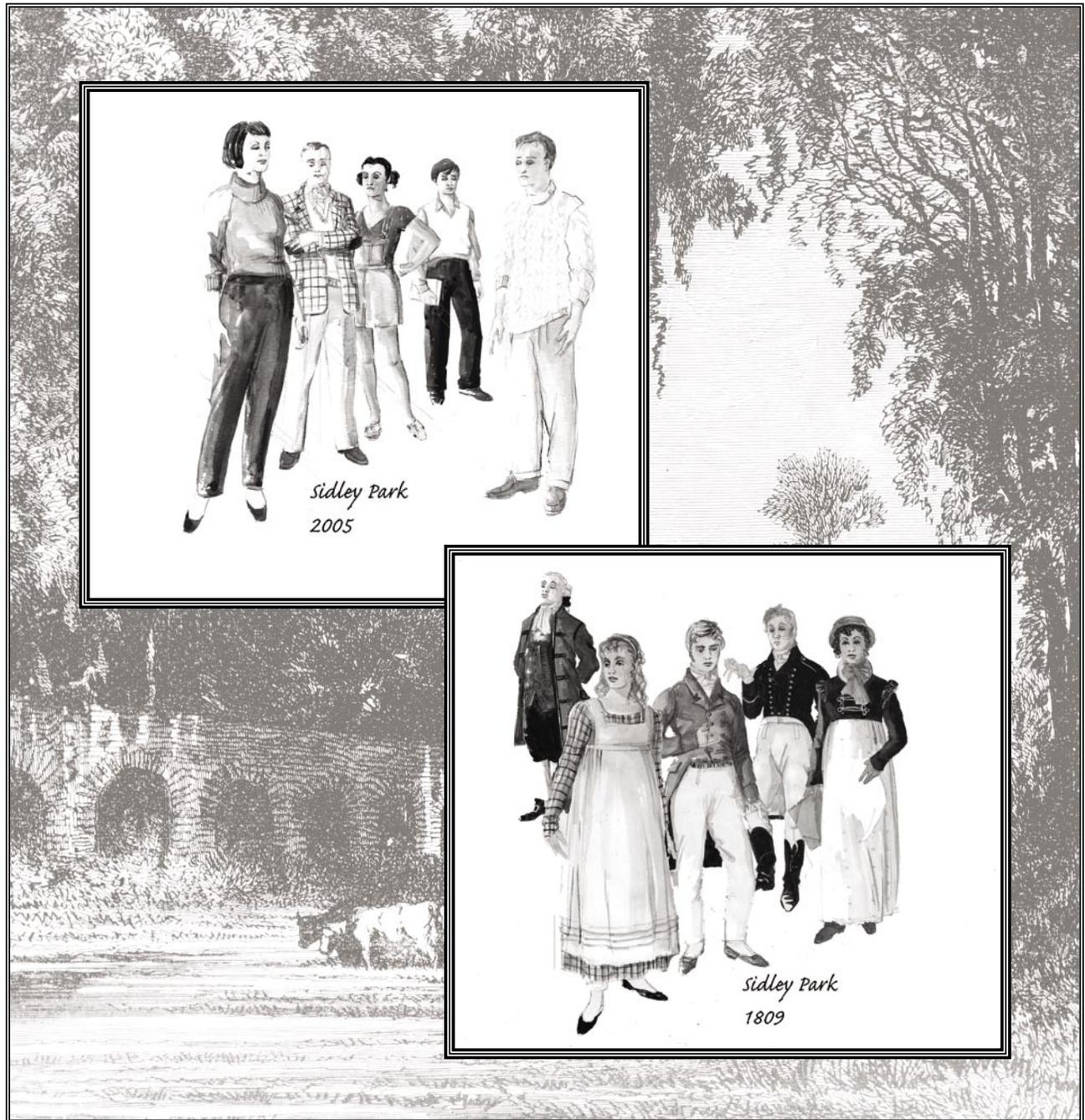
Late in the play, Hannah tells Valentine that “it’s wanting to know that makes us matter. Otherwise we’re going out the way we came in” (75). For Stoppard, it is wanting to write that matters, something we all undertake with varying success. But a sexual undercurrent is inescapable, not only in literature but in the universe. As Chloe explains to Valentine, the Oxford science student, sex was “the attraction Newton left out.” The only flaw in Newton’s world is that people fancy other people “who aren’t supposed to be in that part of the plan” (73-4). In *Arcadia*, the sex has been left in but through it literature flourishes, characters sparkle and audiences delight in the verbal excitement of the play.

Ira Nadel is the author of Double Act, A Life of Tom Stoppard (2002).



Costume Renderings for *Arcadia*

Alison Green
Department of Theatre, Film, and Creative Writing
The University of British Columbia



Et in Arcadia Ego: Stoppard Revisits Neoclassicism*

Hanna Scolnicov
Theatre Studies
Tel-Aviv University



Ino and the infant Dionysus.
Lateran Museum, Rome.

ENGLISH LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE is an art form that is especially well suited to Stoppard's overriding interest in the connection between art and nature. Here is an art form, the medium (but not the object) of which is nature. Its models are paintings and its aim, as Lady Croom puts it, is to reshape nature "as God intended." In undertaking to reshape the park, the landscape architect attempts to imitate the Creator's own activities in the Garden of Eden, or to recreate an idealized Arcadia.

The title marks the land of Arcadia as both the thematic focal point and the spatial vanishing point of the play. Arcadia is an actual geographical place in the Peloponnese, in Southern Greece, but one that has been mythologized and idealized since ancient times. It was celebrated in Virgil's *Eclogues* as a classical Paradise, the realm of the god Pan, where young shepherds and shepherdesses roam in a beautiful pastoral setting, in an eternal springtime. Arcadia is the fantasyland of the Golden Age, and it has been said that "Arcadia was antiquity's antiquity."

Stoppard does not revive the neoclassical interest in Arcadia merely for its pastoral charm. The idea of Arcadia is charged with depth and meaning through the two references in the play to the *et in Arcadia ego* theme.

This well-known art-historical theme introduces an elegiac awareness of mortality into the carefree pastoral life, superimposing the Judeo-Christian Fall from Paradise onto the classical myth of a Golden Age.

Lady Croom eulogizes the already doomed present look (of her about-to-be-renovated garden):

But Sidley Park is already a picture, and a most amiable picture too. The slopes are green and gentle. The trees are companionably grouped at intervals that show them to advantage. The rill is a serpentine ribbon unwound from the lake peaceably contained by meadows on which the right amount of sheep are tastefully arranged — in short, it is nature as God intended, and I can say with the painter, '*Et in Arcadia ego!*' 'Here I am in Arcadia.'

The description provides, in a gently ironic tone, the essential features that characterize Capability Brown's landscape designs. Significantly, Lady Croom not only describes a contrived pastoral scene ("the right amount of sheep are tastefully arranged"), but also introduces the *et in Arcadia ego* theme into the play and offers her translation of the Latin. A different translation

is offered by Septimus, tutor to her daughter Thomasina: “Even in Arcadia, there am I!” He is responding to the approaching gunshots of the hunting sportsmen, and Thomasina exclaims, “Oh, phooey to Death!” thus reminding the listener of the presence of Death in Arcadia.

Clearly, it is Septimus who has offered the correct translation of the phrase. Lady Croom’s version attests to her blissful unawareness of its tragic implications. Through a pointed reference to the interpretive crux of *et in Arcadia ego*, Stoppard has charged the play with the whole weight of the cultural tradition that lies behind the phrase.

It is through the reference to the *et in Arcadia ego* theme that the shadow of death enters the play. The childish gaiety of Thomasina and her sexual awakening, along with the sexual cavorting of her elders, the wit and sparkle, the comfortable life in Sidley Park, the beauty of its grounds, all these will vanish, for death is also there, in the English Arcadia ... poignantly demonstrated through the accidental death by fire of Thomasina, the night before her seventeenth birthday. Her death is remembered by a memorial in the park and recounted by Hannah Jarvis, the historian researching Sidley Park. Recounted from the perspective of people who did not know her and who live many years after her demise, the story of Thomasina’s death becomes elegiac rather than tragic. The memorial stone in the park parallels the monument encountered by the shepherds in the *et in Arcadia ego* paintings [by Il Guercino (1618) and Nicolas Poussin (1627, 1638)].** The inscription on the memorial to Thomasina awaits the later generation of curious young people to decipher it.

*Excerpted with the permission of the author, and the editor of *Modern Drama*, from the article “ ‘Before’ and ‘After’ in Stoppard’s *Arcadia*” (XLVII, 3, Fall 2004), 480 – 499.

** These paintings have been reproduced in the article above.

Hanna Scolnicov is Associate Professor of Theatre Studies in the Faculty of Arts, Tel-Aviv University.



Will the Heat All Go into the Mix?

Steven Savitt
Department of Philosophy
The University of British Columbia

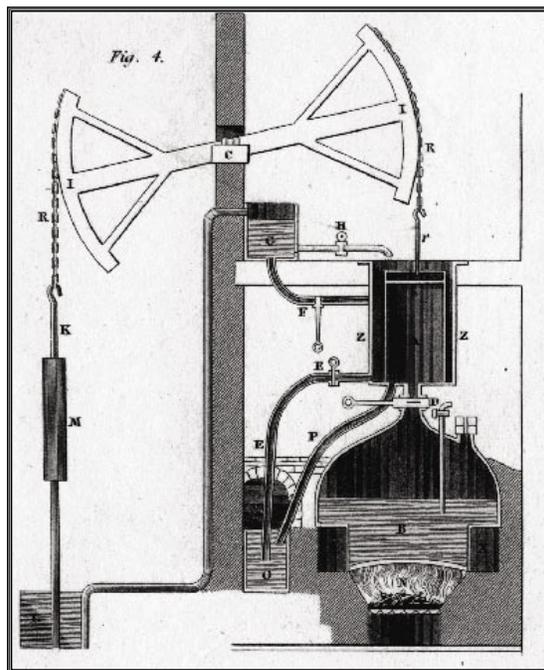
IT MIGHT SEEM OMINOUS that the program of a play contains essays explaining the esoteric bits. Relax. *Arcadia* is neither a lecture nor a sermon. It's a witty, charming, and moving play about sex and literature—or maybe order and disorder—or is it truth and time? Tom Stoppard does, however, weave a number of ideas from physics and philosophy into both the thinking of his characters and the structure of the play, and we can enhance our appreciation of this dazzling tapestry by unweaving a few of these strands. Let's look at some of the ways the notion of time appears in this play and so, inevitably, we begin with the physics of Sir Isaac Newton.

At the end of the seventeenth century Newton brought together in one grand synthesis the laws governing the motions of the planets discovered by Kepler and the laws governing the motions of projectiles on the surface of the Earth discovered by Galileo. Aristotle had thought of the heavenly and the earthly as two separate realms, with the order of the motions of the heavenly bodies contrasting with the disorder we see around us. Newton produced one simple set of mathematical laws that seemed to account for all.

The Newtonian laws have two features that reverberate throughout the play. First, these laws seem to be deterministic. If you know, for example, the state of the sun, moon, and earth at some given time, you can predict when future eclipses will occur. Given the present state of the system, the occurrence (or non-occurrence) of an eclipse at some given future time is fixed—fixed by the present state of the system and the laws that govern its evolution. If the Newtonian laws are basic and universal, then all the future is fixed, as Thomasina (later echoed by Chloë and Valentine) says:

If you could stop every atom in its position and direction, and if your mind could comprehend all the actions thus suspended, then if you were really, really good at algebra you could write the formula for all the future; and although nobody can be so clever as to do it, the formula must exist just as if one could.

Second, one can not only predict when eclipses will occur, but, using Newton's equations, one can also "retrodict" when in the past eclipses must have occurred. As Thomasina remarks,



Newcomen's Atmospheric Steam Engine.
From the 1832 *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*.

“Newton’s equations go backwards and forward, they do not care which way.” The equations are said to be time symmetric or time-reversal invariant. If you watch a film of one billiard ball striking another, it will make no difference, you will not be able to tell, whether the projector is being run forwards or in reverse.

Not so, if you were to watch a film of jam being stirred into rice pudding. As Thomasina says to her tutor:

When you stir your rice pudding, Septimus, the spoonful of jam spreads itself round making red trails like the picture of a meteor in my astronomical atlas. But if you stir backward, the jam will not come together again. Indeed, the pudding does not notice and continues to turn pink, just as before. Do you think this is odd?

Septimus says “no” (though one takes what he says at face value at one’s peril), but reflective individuals have for long been puzzled by the mismatch between the time symmetry of the basic laws of physics and the time asymmetry of experience. Valentine raises the same problem. “Your tea gets cold by itself, it doesn’t get hot by itself.” We grow older, not younger. Causes work to the future, but not to the past. We know much more about yesterday than we do about tomorrow. Indeed, we have records of the past but not of the future, like the game books and letters that fuel the theories of Bernard and Hannah. If we do have something like records of the future, they, like the artifacts from the present day action of the play that sit on the table invisible to Thomasina and Septimus, are equally invisible to us.

Valentine continues the thought above by saying to Hannah, “It’ll take a while but we’re all going to end up at room temperature. When your hermit set up shop nobody understood this.” “This” is the second law of thermodynamics, the first apparently basic time asymmetric law in physics, derived from reflection on devices like the noisy Improved Newcomen Steam Pump that we hear in the distance. Thomasina says that the pump “repays eleven pence in the shilling at most.” The second law appeared in roughly this form in a short book by a French engineer Sadi Carnot, *Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire*, in 1824. The second law of thermodynamics in general says that entropy, a quantity that may be thought of as disorder or the inability of energy to do work, increases in all but some very special physical processes. A modern, and highly relevant, form of this law is that, through time and on the whole, information always decreases (like the burning of Byron’s letter or the inability of Bernard and Hannah to get the story of Sidley park in April, 1809, quite right).

Must we then reach a time when there is no more usable energy, when the heat has gone entirely into the mix, when the Improved Newtonian Universe must cease and grow cold? Are we, as Septimus says, “all doomed”? When Thomasina laments the loss of the library of Alexandria, Septimus replies that nothing is ever really lost. “The missing plays of Sophocles will turn up piece by piece, or be written again in another language.” In a structural parallel, ideas and bits of dialogue from the early story turn up or recur in the modern episode. These two ideas, loss and recurrence, which echo in the contrasts of fate with free will and Romantic pessimism with Enlightenment optimism, are left in perfect counterpoise at the end of the play with Hannah and Gus celebrating the discovery of the true identity of the Hermit of Sidley Park while, in a fusion of the two times, Septimus dances with Thomasina shortly before the loss of her nascent genius.

Steven Savitt is Professor of Philosophy at the University of British Columbia. His general interests are in philosophy of science and metaphysics.

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Graphic Design

Ian Patton

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The Companion Guide to *Arcadia* is sponsored by **Theatre at UBC** and generously supported by the **UBC Faculty of Arts**.



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A Theatre at UBC companion guide to Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* / Errol Durbach ... [et al.].

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-88865-631-9

I. Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*. I. Durbach, Errol, 1941-. II. Theatre at UBC PR6069.T6A844 2005

822.914

C2005-900951-9

