WORDS on PLAYS
INSIGHT INTO THE PLAY, THE PLAYWRIGHT, AND THE PRODUCTION

Arcadia

By Tom Stoppard
Directed by Carey Perloff
The Geary Theater
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Dan Rubin
Editor

Elizabeth Brodersen
Director of Education

Michael Paller
Resident Dramaturg

Cait Robinson
Publications Fellow

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**COVER** Paint elevation for the *Arcadia* set, by Douglas W. Schmidt

**OPPOSITE** Costume renderings for Septimus Hodge (left) and Thomasina Coverly (right). All costume renderings by Alex Jaeger.
Characters, Cast, and Synopsis of
Arcadia

_Arcadia_ premiered at London’s National Theatre in April 1993 and transferred to the West End after an eight-month run. It received its U.S. premiere at New York City’s Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in March 1995, the same year Artistic Director Carey Perloff opened A.C.T.’s 1995–96 season with the play at the Stage Door Theatre.

**Characters and Cast of _Arcadia_**

**Nineteenth Century**

THOMASINA COVERLY, *aged 13, later 16...........* Rebekah Brockman
SEPTIMUS HODGE, *her tutor, aged 22, later 25...* Jack Cutmore-Scott
JELLABY, *a butler.........................* Ken Ruta
EZRA CHATER, *a poet ....................* Nicholas Pelczar
RICHARD NOAKES, *a landscape architect ..........* Anthony Fusco
LADY CROOM, *Thomasina’s mother ...............* Julia Coffey
CAPTAIN BRICE, R.N., *Lady Croom’s brother.....* Nick Gabriel
AUGUSTUS COVERLY, *Thomasina’s brother ........* Titus Tompkins

**Twenty-First Century**

HANNAH JARVIS, *an author ......................* Gretchen Egolf
CHLOÉ COVERLY, *aged 18..........................* Allegra Rose Edwards
BERNARD NIGHTINGALE, *a don....................* Andy Murray
VALENTINE COVERLY, *Chloé’s older brother.....* Adam O’Byrne
GUS COVERLY, *Chloé’s younger brother ..........* Titus Tompkins

**Setting of _Arcadia_**

A room on the garden front of a very large country house in Derbyshire, England.
Act I

Scene 1: April 10, 1809. Thomasina Coverly and Septimus Hodge are engaged in a mathematics lesson. While trying to prove Fermat’s last theorem, Thomasina tells Septimus that she overheard the servants gossiping about Mrs. Chater (the wife of a visiting poet), who was seen in a “carnal embrace” in the garden gazebo with a man other than her husband. Septimus does his best to explain higher mathematics and carnality to Thomasina, but is interrupted by Jellaby, who brings him a note from the outraged Mr. Chater, who has accused Septimus of carnally embracing his wife. Septimus puts off Jellaby to continue Thomasina’s lesson.

The lesson is again interrupted, this time by Chater himself, who demands satisfaction for Septimus’s “insult” to his wife. Septimus tries to calm Chater by implying that Mrs. Chater was simply trying to seduce Septimus into writing a favorable review of her husband’s most recent (and abominable) poem, *The Couch of Eros*. Impressed by his wife’s apparently selfless sacrifice on behalf of his literary aspirations, Chater inscribes a grateful note into Septimus’s copy of the poem.

Mr. Noakes, a landscape designer, enters, followed by Lady Croom and Captain Brice, who bewail Noakes’s plans to redo the beautiful symmetry of Sidley Park in the newly fashionable irregular style, eliminating the gazebo and other lovely aspects of the grounds in favor of a hermitage, dark forest, and other picturesque elements. Thomasina playfully draws a hermit into the hermitage in Mr. Noakes’s sketch book. She delivers a note from Mrs. Chater to Septimus; he inserts it into the pages of *The Couch of Eros*. 
Scene 2: The Present. Hannah Jarvis, an author who recently published a book about Lady Caroline Lamb, the infamous lover of Lord Byron, stands at the window comparing the modern view of the garden to the drawings in Mr. Noakes’s sketchbook. She is working on a book about the identity of the hermit depicted in Noakes’s sketches, whom she believes lived in the hermitage in the nineteenth century. Hannah goes out to the garden as Chloë Coverly enters with Bernard Nightingale, a visiting Byron scholar.

When Hannah returns, Bernard at first assumes a false name; he has published a scathing review of Hannah’s book and fears her wrath. Chloë blurts out Bernard’s true identity, however, and he reveals the true purpose of his visit: he possesses the copy of The Couch of Eros that bears Chater’s inscription. It was once part of Byron’s private library. Tucked inside its pages he found three notes to an unidentified man—two from Chater and one from his wife—which seem to refer to the wife’s infidelity and the husband’s duel with the recipient at Sidley Park. Bernard believes he has discovered the answer to a mystery that has puzzled generations of Byron biographers: why did Byron leave England so abruptly in the summer of 1809? Bernard posits it must have been to escape punishment and scandal for shooting Mr. Chater in a duel over an affair with Mrs. Chater. He has come to Sidley Park to prove his theory.

Scene 3: April 11, 1809. Thomasina and Septimus are again engaged in a lesson, this time Latin. Jellaby brings Septimus yet another note, which Septimus ignores. Thomasina tells Septimus that she saw her mother in the gazebo with Lord Byron, who is a houseguest. Thomasina announces that for her next math lesson she will deduce the equation that describes an apple leaf. As she runs out,
Chater storms in with Captain Brice. Chater has discovered Septimus’s deception and challenges him to a duel. By the session’s end, Septimus has agreed to fight both Chater and Brice, consecutively, on the following morning.

**Scene 4: The Present.** Hannah and Valentine Coverly examine Thomasina’s lesson book. It seems that in trying to plot her apple leaf, she discovered a technique for calculating feedback equations about 160 years before it was developed by twentieth-century chaos theorists. She used the same mathematical process that Valentine has been using to analyze the fluctuating population of grouse at Sidley Park. He does not believe that an early-nineteenth-century schoolgirl could have been capable of developing this procedure, which is a fundamental part of a revolutionary new trend in mathematics and physics requiring the aid of computers.

Bernard enters in the middle of Valentine’s passionate exposition on the future of scientific inquiry with the news that he has found a passage penciled in the margin of Byron’s famous satire, “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,” ridiculing Chater and *The Couch of Eros*. That—together with Valentine’s revelation that Byron’s name appears in the Sidley Park game book for 1809 and Hannah’s discovery that in 1810 Mrs. Chater (by then a widow) married Captain Brice—convinces Bernard that his theory is correct.

**Act II**

**Scene 5: The Present.** Bernard proudly reads to Hannah, Chloë, and Valentine a draft of the upcoming lecture in which he plans to reveal his brilliant Byronic discovery to the world. Hannah scornfully warns him that he has insufficient proof for his speculations; they quarrel. Bernard, resentful of modern society’s rejection of humanists in favor of scientists, also picks a fight with Valentine. Hannah and Valentine console each other with new information about Hannah’s hermit—they have found evidence that he was a mathematical genius who was trying to refute the second law of thermodynamics, which predicts the eventual dissipation of all the energy in the universe.

**Scene 6: April 12, 1809.** At dawn, a gunshot is heard. Septimus enters with a rabbit he has shot for Thomasina. Jellaby informs him that, during the night, Lady Croom and Mr. Chater discovered Mrs. Chater leaving Byron’s room. Byron and the Chaters were banished from the house at 4:00 in the morning. The Chaters embarked with Captain Brice on a botany expedition to the Indies. Byron left with the copy of *The Couch of Eros* he had borrowed from Septimus. Lady Croom arrives and flirtatiously confronts Septimus with a letter he had left, to be read in the event of his death, declaring his love for her. (He left another letter for Thomasina.) She invites him to visit her room later.

**Scene 7: The Present and May 1812.** In the present, Hannah, Chloë, and Valentine discuss the splash Bernard’s discovery has made in the tabloids. Chloë and Valentine debate Newton’s notion of a deterministic universe; Valentine shows Hannah the fractal he has generated on his computer screen by iterating Thomasina’s apple-leaf equation. They discuss Thomasina’s doomed young genius: she is known to have died in a fire the night before her 17th birthday.
As Hannah and Valentine resume their work, the centuries overlap, and Thomasina, her brother Augustus, and Septimus also enter the room. Valentine and Hannah discuss the thermodynamic fate of the universe, while Septimus and Thomasina go over an essay she has found by a French scientist who has discovered the fundamental principle of thermodynamics as applied to a steam engine. Lady Croom enters, followed by Mr. Noakes. She protests the noise of the steam engine he is using to drain the garden and the damage he has been wreaking on her beautiful estate for three years.

Bernard arrives in a snit. Hannah has found that Chater was not killed in a duel, but in fact died of a monkey bite in the Indies. Bernard’s Byron theory is therefore disproved, and he expects to be ridiculed in the press. Chloë and Valentine are in Regency attire; there is a basket of period clothes for the others to put on for a party at Sidley Park that night.

Some time later in May 1812, Septimus returns with Thomasina. It is the night before her 17th birthday, and she collects on Septimus’s previous promise to teach her to waltz in exchange for a kiss. When she prepares to leave, Septimus warns her to be careful of her candle. She tries to convince him to join her later in her room; when he refuses, she insists on another waltz for her birthday. They dance, lost in each other’s embrace. Hannah, Valentine, Chloë, and Bernard come in from the party. Bernard and Chloë have been caught making love in the hermitage by her mother; he leaves in a hurry.

Hannah, left alone, is soon joined by Gus Coverly, who hands her the final clue that identifies the Sidley Park hermit as Septimus. They slowly begin to waltz, accompanying Thomasina and Septimus.
Every Beautiful Thread
A Conversation with Arcadia Director Carey Perloff

By Michael Paller

When A.C.T. Artistic Director Carey Perloff began considering her 20th-anniversary season, she had two goals in mind: to look forward and to look back. To the first end, A.C.T. has presented two world premieres in 2013—George F. Walker’s Dead Metaphor and Byron Au Yong and Aaron Jafferis’s Stuck Elevator—and the West Coast premiere of Amy Herzog’s 4000 Miles. Now, to honor her second objective, Perloff is returning to Tom Stoppard’s masterwork, Arcadia.

Though the play is familiar to Perloff, who directed its West Coast premiere at A.C.T. in September 1995 after a lengthy battle for the production rights, the circumstances of this second production are vastly different from the first. At the time, The Geary Theater was still out of commission due to the extensive damage caused by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake; the somewhat less majestic Stage Door Theatre on Mason Street substituted for The Geary’s vast stage and 1,000 seats.

Though the production is one of A.C.T.’s most fondly remembered, Perloff relished the chance to bring Arcadia to a larger stage. A few days before rehearsals began, she sat down to talk about her collaboration with Stoppard and the passage of time—both onstage and off.

Why did you want to revisit Arcadia?

Arcadia was the first Tom Stoppard play that I ever worked on. I did it in my fourth season at A.C.T. when we were in diaspora. We performed in a small theater called the Stage Door (now Ruby Skye, the night club), which made it a somewhat smaller endeavor [than producing at The Geary]. It was one of the most joyful times I ever had, even though it was an extremely hard time at A.C.T. This was the fall of ’95, right before we reopened The Geary. I had a six-year-old and a one-year-old, we were finishing the Geary campaign, I was in rehearsal with Arcadia, and I was just about to do The Tempest. It was insane. My daughter, Lexie, was sort of a little Thomasina: she was always incredibly articulate and quite mathematical. I remember when Tom first met her, he was charmed by her because she was like a little person already. He really thought she was Thomasina.
So I have deeply fond memories of working on Arcadia. It was an absolute joy and it’s how I met Tom. When I read the play, I desperately wanted to do it, but Lincoln Center Theater said no—they wouldn’t license it because they were doing it and they wanted exclusive rights. I couldn’t figure out why a production 3,000 miles away was going to hurt theirs. I wrote to Tom’s agent and to [Lincoln Center Theater Executive Producer] Bernie Gersten—to everybody I could. Finally, I figured out how to contact Tom directly. I said, “You don’t know me, but A.C.T. has a history of doing your plays and we’re a very literate theater and I’m married to a Brit and I went to Oxford and I know this material and I was a classicist and I will treat it with great reverence and great joy and I love it and I promise you it will be worth it, so is there any way you can intervene on our behalf?” The next thing I knew, I got a call from Bernie Gersten saying “Okay, you’ve got the rights.”

Right after the A.C.T. production, I was in London and I met Tom for the first time, in the bar of the National Theatre. I had written him letters throughout the production whenever I had questions, and he wrote back the funniest, smartest replies. I thought he was hilarious. We had become epistolary friends, so when I met him in person I felt that I already knew him. It was the beginning of an incredibly fruitful and satisfying theatrical relationship and we’ve done many of his plays. He came to A.C.T. for the U.S. premieres of Indian Ink and The Invention of Love, and also for our productions of Night and Day, The Real Thing, and Travesties. He’s someone from whom I’ve learned an enormous amount and whom I adore.

When I was thinking about what I would like to do to celebrate my 20th anniversary here, the first thing I thought was, “I have to do something of Tom’s and I want it to be Arcadia because we’ve never done it at The Geary and for years our audience has been saying, ‘When are you going to do Arcadia again?’”

I interviewed José Quintero in 1988 when he was directing a revival of Long Day’s Journey into Night. He’d directed the first U.S. production in 1956. I asked him if he had changed his thinking about the play over the years, and he said, “When I was 32 and directing it the first time, I knew for a fact that the play was about the boys. Now I’m 64 and I know for a fact the play is about the parents.” Has your thinking about Arcadia changed after 20 years?

There is a thread running through this play that’s about loss. How do we accept loss in human experience? I think I saw that as a young person directing it, but I don’t think I realized what a profound thread it is. Arcadia is very deeply about time. I posted one of its most beautiful monologues on my wall because I love it so much:

We shed as we pick up, like travelers who must carry everything in their arms, and what we let fall will be picked up by those left behind. The procession is very long and life is very short. We die on the march. But there is nothing outside the march so nothing can be lost to it.
I realize what a theme that has always been for him, always. You try to live in the moment, but time is rushing past and things that are so precious to you inevitably disappear: love, childhood, relationships, literature. I love the fact that Thomasina is mourning the lost plays of Aeschylus, because I've always felt that way as a classicist. I've always thought, “How could these be lost?” and, “How random it is that we have Euripides’ *The Bacchae* because somebody wrapped a wine vessel in a play.” We should mourn that. But Tom says, “No, you don't have to mourn that. You celebrate that it happened to begin with.” There’s that beautiful speech in *The Coast of Utopia*: the child has died and Herzen says it’s like the life of a lily. You have to celebrate the moment when it actually blooms.

I felt that so acutely when I reread *Arcadia*. Because it's a time travel play, we know from almost the beginning that our heroine Thomasina is going to die, so we know that every discovery she makes is both incredibly precious and that it is going to be lost—only to be rediscovered in a different key by her heir, Valentine. Tom is saying that we have to trust that. He says that *Arcadia* is a play about wanting to know. We're always going to lose and then we're going to find again; we just have to keep looking.

It's like *Three Sisters* in that regard. In other contemporary plays of Chekhov’s time, the woman who cheated on her husband would have killed herself; in *Three Sisters*, Masha has to do the much braver thing: to live, to get up every day. The sisters acquire a certain nobility because they ask, “Why do we suffer?”

I think *Arcadia*’s joy—joy in discoveries (scientific discoveries, academic discoveries), joy in getting it wrong, joy in rectifying it, that crazy pursuit of knowledge, and Tom’s amusement with our blind alleys—seems particularly acute to me now.

I also always thought that this was the play to do at a theater that had an M.F.A. program, because it is a play that demands extraordinary young actors. The moment Rebekah Brockman walked into our school three years ago, I thought, “This is our next Thomasina.” I remember saying that to [Conservatory Director] Melissa [Smith]. When you have the right actress for Thomasina, you do the play.

You mentioned there is a thread running through a lot of Stoppard’s plays that has to do with loss. Every playwright has their small deck of cards that they reshuffle over and over again in different ways. What other themes run through Stoppard’s plays?

It really annoyed me when *The Real Thing* came out and the critics said, “Surprise! Tom Stoppard has a heart.” I think he's always been deeply romantic. He’s a very shy man who's also incredibly loving and kind, and he has a huge romantic soul that is protected by his fiercely rigorous intellect. That seeming schism between heart and mind—between Romanticism and Classicism—has always existed in his plays. If you look at *Travesties*, it's Joyce versus Tzara, randomness versus order. In some of his plays the romantic wins, and in some the rationalist wins. It depends on the mood he’s in
when he writes the play. Tom has always wrestled with that collision and I think it’s why the plays are so much fun.

In *Arcadia*, he absolutely turns the deck on its head. The romantic turns out to be the scientist, Valentine. Science has become so overwhelmingly beautiful. When you start to iterate fractals, it is magical. It is like seeing the hand of God. It is like seeing a part of a coastline and then a bigger section. That same iteration and fractal gets bigger, and it is holy, spiritual, and beautiful. It is utterly wrong to think that science is in some way unromantic and rational, just as it’s wrong to say that someone in the humanities can’t be precise and scientific.

In one way, Septimus is a naturalist: the teacher of natural philosophy and a mathematician. But on the other hand, he also becomes a symbol in Hannah’s work for how Romanticism metastasized.

That’s right. He is the Byronic hero that everyone’s in love with. In the end, he’s also very lonely; he has that Byronic quality of being alone. I think all these characters hold within them these great contradictions.
Another thread that runs through Stoppard’s plays is the battle between chaos and order.

_Arcadia_ is so much about heat. I mean that literally—desire between people, but also the second law of thermodynamics and the question of what happens to heat. The steam engine is ultimately not a closed system: heat dissipates, and that is a principle we had to learn. Valentine says that in the end the world will turn to room temperature. It’s like relationships, which always start in this very hot place, and alas: do they always end up at room temperature?

The theme of chaos and order is also reflected in the writing of the play. I once said to Tom that when I work on his plays I feel grateful because, more than any other writer, he looks after everything. He isn’t like those lazy writers whose plays are filled with holes that directors have to fill. Every thread is beautifully pulled. I asked him, “How do you do that?” He said, “You know, some plays just fall out that way. I don’t know why _Arcadia_ worked. It just fell out.”

I don’t think he said that to be falsely modest; I think he honestly always had the play in his mind. He has such a fertile, capacious imagination, with a million balls knocking against each other, and sometimes they fall out all unified into one play. _Arcadia_ just fell out. I think he would say that is chaos theory: sometimes it lines up and sometimes it does not.

For me, what’s humbling about working on this play is the breadth of Tom’s curiosity. Who else would put chaos theory, Byron, and landscape architecture together?

**Into a play that’s incredibly moving.**

It is very moving. What I love so much about Tom is that he’s always interested in everything—you bring something up and he wants to know more. He carries a library around with him. I think it’s why working on his plays is so satisfying: you know you’re with a mind that is hungry.

You’ve said that he’s a great synthesizer. Since you first directed _Arcadia_, you’ve worked on _Indian Ink, The Invention of Love, Night and Day, Travesties_, and _Rock ‘n’ Roll_. What else about Stoppard have you learned since 1995?

His Jewish heritage has really interested me. I say this with a grain of salt because he’s so cynical about biography. He’s so funny: he says biography is “the mesh through which real life escapes.” He often makes the biographers the idiots of his plays, like Eldon Pike in _Indian Ink_, who gets it all wrong. In _Night and Day_, one character says, “Perhaps I’ll get him a reporter doll for Christmas. Wind it up and it gets it wrong.”

I don’t mean to psychoanalyze it, but I do think that the fact that he’s a stranger in a strange land [the Czech-born playwright settled in England when he was nine] is really germane to Tom’s writing. He can look at England both as an incredibly grateful immigrant and as a foreigner. The fact that English isn’t his first language means that his reverence for it is acute, both because he’s grateful and because it is a borrowed language.
In his heart, though, he is an Eastern European Jew. His sense of the antic and the bizarre partially comes from Eastern European drama, like the work of [Stanislaw Ignacy] Witkiewicz and [Slawomir] Mrozek and those early Polish plays. Franz Kafka was very big for him. I feel like that legacy is very strong, and if you look at his plays through that lens, you'll see it. There is Flora, the British poet journeying to India to find out who she really is. (India is where Tom spent part of his childhood.) There is Housman in *Invention of Love*, wrestling with what it means to be an English poet and carry secrets with you. *Rock 'n' Roll* is extremely autobiographical and it asks, “What would have happened to Tom if he had gone back to Prague instead of staying in England during the war?” I think he has become a more and more interesting artist as he’s wrestled with questions of his own identity.

There’s his great TV play, *Professional Foul*, in which the philologist goes to that abstruse linguistics conference in Czechoslovakia. Outside, people are surrounded by real-life chaos and fear, and he’s asked to sneak a suppressed book out of the country.

I suppose over the years I’ve gotten to know Tom, I’ve become less intimidated by the dazzling surface of his plays, because I understand that it is only one part of them. Underneath, there is huge longing, loss, and heart to be mined and to trust.

I also love that he wants his characters to be articulate. He once was asked why Mageeba, the dictator in *Night and Day*, is so articulate, and he said, “I know. If I were to write a dustman, he’d have to be an articulate dustman.” I think, “Good for him.” Many people think the way to creative playwriting is a literal

Tom Stoppard and Carey Perloff, 2000
transcription of the incoherent speech they hear in everyday life. Why verisimilitude is necessarily interesting, I don't know, but it isn't necessarily true for Tom—although articulation is verisimilitude for Tom, because he's the most articulate person you could ever be with. He does write the way he speaks.

There's that Goethe quote: “Art is art because it’s not life.”

Well, for Tom in some ways art is life, because he is so articulate and interesting and he values intelligence.

Here is another thing that I've always deeply appreciated about him: unlike many American playwrights of his generation, he writes spectacularly interesting women and is deeply respectful of women. He never treated me like a little girl. He never wondered why he had a woman director championing his work. He was always fantastically trusting of me and respectful to me. And I love the women he writes. I love Thomasina, I love Hannah, and I love Lady Croom (I think she's one of the divine creations). I love Annie in The Real Thing, Flora in Indian Ink, the women of Night and Day. He really has an appetite for three-dimensional women, and I think that cannot be underestimated. When you look at his counterparts in America, they are not like that. I think it’s really worth noting.

What is he like as a colleague?

He’s quite different from Harold Pinter. Pinter gave notes in the room that were uncannily active, profound, and simple, because he was a great actor. He would say one thing, and you'd think, “Oh my god, that’s it!” Tom is not like that because he's not an actor. He gives really funny notes, which tend to be things like, “Oh, I'm sorry, it’s all about sex.”

Sometimes he will explain things in a really ’round-the-bend way, but what I love about Tom is that he's a playwright. I mean he is “a maker of a play,” and he understands that a play is a blueprint for a production. His favorite thing is when a designer or director or actor or choreographer or composer will solve a moment in his play that he hadn't solved. My prime example of that is Jim Ingalls, lighting designer extraordinaire. At the end of The Invention of Love, Housman says, “But now I really have to go. How lucky to find myself standing on this empty shore, with the indifferent waters at my feet.” Tom wanted somehow to reveal Housman’s spirit being given over to the world. We could not figure out how to make that clear. I kept thinking, “Is it something the actor isn't doing? Is it something in the staging?” On the last day of rehearsal, Jim Ingalls said, “I know what it needs to be.” He put these twin spinners up and the lights slowly moved so it barely blacked out—the lights just kept moving. Suddenly, you realized it wasn’t an end: it was Housman’s spirit going off into the world.

Tom was beside himself with joy. It was the lighting designer who solved the end of the play, and Tom knew that. He knows that plays are open-ended and that somebody is going to figure out a way to solve them in real time.
Arcadia is now 20 years old.

Amazing, I know.

You have said some plays, like those of Pinter and Sophocles, don’t become dated. It seems to me that this one hasn’t either.

I agree.

Even the science hasn’t dated.

I know. I’m making this production contemporary because I don’t think there’s anything in the script that says it couldn’t be. Interestingly, we are still on the journey that started in the late 1970s and early 80s that led us towards chaos theory and complexity theory and beyond. I think it hasn’t dated partly because it’s a play that asks really big existential questions. Alas or for the better, those questions are never going to go out of business. Why does the universe go to room temperature? Where does the heat go in a relationship? How do we ever know what we know? How do we reconcile loss? If we know that time stops, why do we keep going? What makes us feel that our work has any value in the larger scheme of things? Those are all questions that we’re never going to stop asking, so Arcadia feels extremely trenchant to me.

You asked what seems different to me now. Because I’ve been doing a lot of work on gender disparity lately, one of the things I have really noticed in the play is that it’s about how women’s voices are consistently muted. If Thomasina had been a man, her equations would have been taken seriously, and if Hannah were not a female scholar working on what we would now call feminist criticism about Caroline Lamb, she would have been taken seriously. The way Bernard pisses all over Hannah’s work is often how male star academics treat women.

Stoppard’s Thomasina may have been inspired by Byron’s daughter, Ada, a mathematical genius who is credited with writing the first algorithm and the first computer program.

That is an incredible story, as is that of Byron’s sister, Augusta, who was a remarkably brilliant woman. Both of them were completely ignored and silenced. I didn’t notice that theme as much the first time around and now I really do.

Another thing I think is genius about Arcadia is that the offstage characters are as vivid as the ones onstage. Byron is really the great character of the play, and he never appears. Mrs. Chater: we all know what she looks like, sounds like, what her drawers look like, and how she behaves in the gazebo, but we never meet her. I think that’s the sign of a great play.
Bringing the Wild In
An Interview with Scenic Designer Douglas W. Schmidt

By Cait Robinson

Scenic designer Douglas W. Schmidt always knew he would end up in the theater. “When I was a child, my grandmother subscribed to the New York Times, and I devoured the theater section,” he remembers. “I’ve often thought if she had been in love with movies and had subscribed to the LA Times, though, my life would be completely different.” He attended the undergraduate design program at Boston University, which he credits with much of his success. “I benefited greatly from the level of attention and personal mentorship I received,” he says. “I have always been very grateful for that.” Since then, he has tackled more than 200 productions over his 35-years-plus career, including Broadway productions of Over Here!, Veronica’s Room, They’re Playing Our Song, the original production of Grease, the 2001 revival of 42nd Street, and the 2002 revival of Into the Woods. He made his A.C.T. debut in 1987 with Faustus in Hell; since then, his sets have appeared in Diamond Lil (1988), Travesties (2006), Rock ’n’ Roll (2008), The Tosca Project (2010), and Armistead Maupin’s Tales of the City (2011).

Schmidt took a moment to discuss Arcadia—his third Tom Stoppard play with Artistic Director Carey Perloff and A.C.T.—in early April 2013, as construction on his design was just beginning in the company’s scene shop.

How did you approach Arcadia?

Stoppard calls for an empty room in a manor house looking out on a landscape. The design doesn’t want to telegraph anything, particularly, because the play takes place in two time periods: 1809 and the present day. The scenes alternate between them, so you can’t change the space. It must be not just indistinct, but noncommittal.

The sense is that the house stood for quite awhile before the 1809 family was installed, so, as a designer, you’re kind of in limbo. Are you showing what the original architect decided? Are you showing renovations that happened under a previous family? Or has the 1809 family put its own stamp on it? We know the contemporary twenty-first-century family has not done anything, because the room must look the same in 2013 as it does in 1809.
How do you choose which time period and tastes to reflect?

One of the themes of the play is a comparison of Classicism with the Romantic movement, which was just beginning to make itself evident in the poetry, literature, and painting of the early 1800s. Classicism was a product of the rational thought of the Enlightenment; Romanticism was a much more emotional response to the world. In order to maintain that concept, Carey and I decided that the architecture should be pre-1800s. It doesn’t truly reflect the styles of the family living there in 1809.

So the space precedes all of the characters. It doesn’t “belong” to any of them.

Right. The room is pretty straightforward Georgian architecture. It’s not very complicated technically, although there are some fancy period moldings. The architects that we’ve more or less lighted upon are Robert Adam and his brother [James Adam]. Their work came to embody the classical, formal style of the mid 1700s.

Do elements of the Romantic show up?

What we’ve done is design the kind of room you would expect to find in one of those big manor house piles in England—rigidly formal, symmetrical—but on the back wall will be a mural of a rather wild, Romantic landscape. We’re bringing the exterior world—the wild world—into this Classical interior as a visual representation of one of the major themes of the play.
How did you decide on a mural?

Carey wanted some way to evoke what all of this Romantic fuss was about. She suggested that we think about some sort of decorative treatment to the walls. We tried all kinds of things: wallpapers of the period, then mural wallpapers, then Arcadian scenes with a rural, pastoral feeling. But that really wasn't quite the point. We wanted to make it more Romantic, more emotional. That’s why we ended up using the English Romantic painters as references, specifically J. M. W. Turner and John Constable.

The mural is the big visual element of the set. It’s going to be a major effort for the scenic artists. They are going to paint it separately and then apply it to the set, rather than wait until everything’s built and then paint it, which would create a time problem.

Do you appreciate specific stage directions like Stoppard’s, or do you prefer to have freer rein?

Sometimes specificity is helpful, particularly if the play has bits of business that depend on getting actors in and out of a room quickly, if a door needs to be in a certain place, or if you need a certain arrangement of furniture. But what’s more interesting, really, is to find alternatives—to break expectations and find a better way to do something if you possibly can. Designers always say that our favorite playwright is Shakespeare, because he doesn’t give you anything. He won’t even tell you if there’s a chair onstage. It’s up to you to come up with solutions, and that’s one reason you will see so many approaches to Shakespeare’s plays: they are wide open to interpretation.

How do you approach working with directors?

I always start not so much with the play but with what the director wants to get out of the play. It’s always helpful when someone has a very clear vision of what the play is about and how he or she wants to address it. I can respond to that very easily. There are different kinds of designers. Some people come with an agenda; I really don’t. I respond as if I’ve never designed anything before. I think, “What does this play mean and how can I help to convey that?”

What is your collaboration with Carey like?

We’ve had a very successful career producing Stoppard in this theater together. We did Travesties and then Rock ‘n’ Roll, so Arcadia makes the third Stoppard play we have attacked. Carey has a personal affinity for this playwright, so I very much take her lead. She is right on Stoppard’s wavelength in terms of sensibilities and intellectual heft.

Arcadia is a really dense, interesting play, and many people consider it his best: the most evenly balanced between the head and the heart. I respond primarily to the emotional side of the play, so I think that, between us, Carey and I make a good match for the piece. The proof will be, of course, in the pudding, but the ingredients seem to be there.
This is her second *Arcadia* at A.C.T. Did you see the 1995 production?

No. I’ve never seen it before anywhere, actually. I do know that A.C.T.’s last production is favorably remembered. Every time I tell someone that I’m doing *Arcadia*, they say “Really? It’s coming back! I just loved it! I can’t wait to see it!”

From a design perspective, do you see any commonalities between the Stoppard plays you’ve done?

It’s odd: *Travesties*, *Rock ’n’ Roll*, and *Arcadia* are very different, but I respond to all of them monochromatically. I don’t know exactly what I mean by that; I just have this mental image of these characters in a light-colored or white (a not-so-vivid) palette. When I first met with Carey about *Arcadia*, I said, “I see it in a white room.” I guess I was taking its Classical allusions all the way to alabaster—all the way to marble. Carey said, “Oh, no! I don’t see it that way at all!” So I said, “Okay, no white room.”

We finally got a version that we were happy with. I put the model on the table, and Carey said, “This is great. I love it.” But a day or two later she called me up and said, “I woke up in the middle of the night and realized: it’s too present. It’s too bright. There’s too much color. It’s going to overwhelm the actors. This is a play that is all about faces.” I said, “I’ll take it down a little.” So I started to bring the color down and down and down more. The design has gone through various iterations; I think five or six. They show pretty much the same room, but how that room is treated has changed. It has gradually faded. It has the mural in it and a little bit of pastel color, but it’s not far from my original idea of a muted room.

Like Carey, I feel Stoppard’s plays are all about the ideas and the faces. You want to see the actors’ mouths all the time because there is so much being said, and you cannot miss anything. I feel like there shouldn’t be anything behind their heads. It should be as austere as you can make it.

Do you think that *Arcadia* would work in a totally empty space, then?

I think it would be wrongheaded to abstract it. The ideas that the characters have are so abstract to begin with that if you put it in an abstract space, many of them would get lost. I would be very cautious of setting it in an unspecific location.

What part of *Arcadia* are you most looking forward to?

The most exciting part is going to be seeing it physicalized. I don’t mean staged—that you can read in the script—I mean seeing what the actors are going to bring to the characters. That’s always the most exciting part of a production for me. I have a limited ability to read character on paper, so the real excitement is seeing them brought to life and seeing how varied the different actors’ interpretations can be. That is what I really wait for; everything else leading up to it is in anticipation.
Balancing Silhouettes
An Interview with Costume Designer Alex Jaeger

By Cait Robinson

Like A.C.T. Artistic Director Carey Perloff, costume designer Alex Jaeger—whose other A.C.T. credits include 4000 Miles, Maple and Vine, Once in a Lifetime, The Homecoming, November, Speed-the-Plow, and Rock ’n’ Roll—has a special reverence for playwright Tom Stoppard. “Arcadia is one of my favorite plays ever,” he says. “I’m thrilled just to be able to do it. Stoppard’s plays are incredibly smart and funny—and completely different. The beautiful humor is a thread that runs through his work.” Arcadia is, as Jaeger puts it, “a beautiful love story and a little bit of a mystery,” composed of scenes that alternate between 1809 and the present day. The hitch: the action unfolds in a single room of an English manor house, with no intervening scene changes.

Costumes, then, are of paramount importance as the only visual cue to indicate the shifts in time. On the first day of Arcadia rehearsals in April, Jaeger spoke to us about how his designs will guide the audience from one century to another.

The costumes have a big job to do in Arcadia: they provide the first cue that the action has transitioned from 1809 to 2013. How do the costumes make that transition clear?

Carey and I talked a lot about whether or not the modern world should be a different color pallete from the period world. How separate should they be? For example, when we did Maple and Vine last year, which also goes back and forth [between the present day and the 1950s], the modern clothes were mostly black and white with some really strong colors. The 1950s stuff was all pretty pastels. We created a real separation, which was important for that play because both of its time periods are in the twentieth century.

We don’t need that for Arcadia. The costumes [of each period] are so different that we don’t need any additional indication that it’s modern day or the 1800s. We are letting the silhouette and the actual clothes tell us what period we’re in. In general, I used colors that are harmonious across the two worlds.

How does that affect the end of the play, when the periods get muddled?

I think the idea is that they get muddled. The modern characters are having a costume ball, so they start putting on period pieces over their modern pieces, and the two worlds slowly disintegrate into one.
Are you using color to make connections between characters across time?

I’m not sure that is a story we want to tell. With the exception of Gus and Augustus, the only two characters who are played by the same actor, I do not know that there are necessarily direct correlations. Hannah is not a modern-day Lady Croom. I didn’t want to say, “Septimus is in brown and Valentine is in brown. Hannah is in blue and so Lady Croom is, too.”

*Arcadia* premiered in 1993, but in our production “the present day” is treated as 2013. Why not stick to the original date?

I don’t think there is any particular reason it needs to stay there. Setting it in the 1990s today would add another layer that is not really part of the play. It would become about *our idea of the ’90s*—so that even “the present day” would be a period piece.

It would become a double period piece, which is interesting because *Arcadia* is about transcending time.

Yes, and I think it’s important to say that its themes transcend time, too.

Another important theme in the play is heat—both literally and in terms of attraction between people. Do the period costumes play into the passion or restrict it?

The characters won’t have to play against the clothes. This is a pretty exposed period: breasts were on display and the men wore very tight pants. It is kind of a sexy period.

Were the women corseted?

Interestingly, they were. Eighteenth-century corsets were very tight and cone-shaped; they

*RIGHT* Costume rendering for present-day Chloë Coverly in Regency-era attire
altered the shape of the body a lot. Around the turn of the century, women started disposing of their corsets and wearing dresses that looked like underwear or nightgowns. But for women who grew up wearing corsets, it was actually very uncomfortable not to wear them. Their ribs had been shaped by the corsets, and they did not have the muscle structure to hold themselves up. So a new kind of corset was developed that had a straight body—much closer to the shape of a real human body. It supported the breasts. That style of corset is called *divorce*, because the breasts are pushed very far apart. This is the opposite of what we do now: pushing them together, as per the Wonderbra. In 1809, there is a completely different kind of silhouette.

**Why was there this shift at the beginning of the nineteenth century?**

It was right after the French Revolution, when there was a lot of turbulence around social issues like the separation of the classes and the plight of the super poor. There was a movement, not necessarily towards equality, but a backlash against people who dressed very extravagantly. They were seen as members of the aristocracy, and there was a sense that they were in danger politically—like the king in France, who was beheaded during the French Revolution. After that, people dressed much more simply. It was really a new era.

**Does class difference show up in the costumes of *Arcadia*?**

Class is very interesting in this period. There was much less variety of silhouette and style between classes. It was more a question of the quality of the stitching and the fabric: a Regency dress was basically the same style whether you were a maid or a lady, but the lady’s would be made of beautiful silk with embellishment on it and the maid’s would be wool. There would be a little bit of color play there, too.

There are some crazy characters in this play. Captain Brice is always showing off his military status even though he’s in the country, and Lady Croom is very grand. Their costumes can be pushed to the level of their eccentricities. The characters like Septimus and Noakes are more down to earth.

**Thomasina ages from 13 to 16—how do you show her transition?**

We have done some subtle things with the neckline of her dress. She is more covered up at the beginning. At the end, her sexuality is more present and she is in a nightgown, which is much more revealing and shows that she has become a young woman.

**Is it difficult for actors to adjust to period clothing?**

When you are dealing with corsets there’s a little bit of a learning curve for many actors. They need to know period movement and breathing, and in certain periods there were a lot of rules about who wore what and how they wore it. It’s always fun to work with actors and give them tutorials. Fittings and tutorials are different with every
actor. Some don’t have an opinion about the clothes, they just want you to tell them what they are wearing. Others have a very personal connection to them.

**How did you research *Arcadia*?**

With *Arcadia*, I started online and then I went through my personal library of costume and history books and scanned pictures. I started a folder for each character: when I found a piece of research that spoke to me about a character, I would put it in his or her folder. When I did my preliminary pencil sketches, I added them to the folder as well so that Carey could reference between the sketch and the original source.

It’s always a collaborative process. Designers take their cues from directors. Carey is so smart and she knows every play she directs inside and out. For *Arcadia*, she gave me a lot of great dramaturgical information before I even started, so I had a really strong idea of what she was looking for. We have done a bunch of shows together, so I know what kind of things she likes. A lot of that is intuitive; it does not really have any kind of logic to it.

**How has Douglas Schmidt’s set design influenced your costumes?**

The set is gorgeous. It has a big mural on the back wall, which is always tricky because we have to make sure that we can see the actors in front of it. *Arcadia* is a play about ideas, and you want to keep the focus on the actors. Douglas did several versions of the paint treatment to make the mural a little mistier and tone it down a bit, and I brought up the colors on the costumes, making them a little bit brighter. We went back and forth until we all felt like we’d achieved the proper balance.

*RIGHT* Costume rendering for present-day Bernard Nightingale in Regency-era attire
It is a mistake to assume that plays are the end products of ideas (which would be limiting): the ideas are the end products of the plays.

I write plays because dialogue is the most respectable way of contradicting myself.

—Tom Stoppard in *The New Yorker* (1977)

Tom Stoppard was born Tomáš Straüssler in Zlin, Czechoslovakia, in 1937. In 1939 his family immigrated to Singapore, which Tom evacuated with his mother and brother in 1942 before the World War II Japanese invasion. His father, who remained behind, was killed. Stoppard’s mother became a manager of a shoe shop in Darjeeling, India, where Tom met the English language at Mount Hermon (a school run by American Methodists) and his mother met Kenneth Stoppard, a major in the British Army. In 1946, Kenneth brought his new family home with him to Derbyshire, England, and gave Tom the name he still uses today.

*Arcadia* depicts the 13-year-old Thomasina as a ravenous student, consuming all the information her tutor can put on her plate; Stoppard, on the other hand, found school distasteful. “The chief influence of my education on me was negative. I left school thoroughly bored by the idea of anything intellectual.” He left school at 17 and got a job as a reporter on the *Western Daily Press* in Bristol, where his family had moved. He aspired to become a great journalist, but as a second-string critic he was slowly seduced by the theater. In 1958, he saw Peter O’Toole as Hamlet—“[It] had a tremendous effect on me. It was everything it was supposed to be. It was exciting and mysterious and eloquent”—and by 1960, Stoppard had decided to switch careers. He went down to writing just two columns a week to cover expenses and began his first play, *A Walk on the Water* (later revised and called *Enter a Free Man*). With it, he introduced himself to Kenneth Ewing, who has been his agent ever since.

It was Ewing who had the idea that “there was a play to be written about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern after they got to England.” In 1964, on a five-month Ford Foundation
grant that paid for him and 19 other young European playwrights to live and write as part of a cultural exchange in a Berlin mansion, Stoppard wrote *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*, the one-act first draft of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. After the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Court rejected it, Ewing reluctantly allowed university students to perform the play in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe on “a stage the size of a ping pong table.” *Observer* theater critic Ronald Bryden hailed it as “the most brilliant debut by a young playwright since John Arden’s.”

Kenneth Tynan, literary manager of London’s National Theatre, requested the script. After conferring with his artistic director, Sir Laurence Olivier, Tynan told Stoppard they wanted it. The National Theatre produced *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* at the Old Vic in April 1967, making the 27-year-old Stoppard the youngest playwright the theater had ever produced. In October, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* was the first National Theatre production to transfer to Broadway.

On opening night in New York, Stoppard awaited the reviews at a pub near the theater; as they started to come in, and it was clear they were positive, a bartender winked at the young playwright and said, “Ah, you’re in, kid!” The play won the Tony Award for Best Play. Back home, the arrival of the “boy genius” was likened to the Second Coming of Harold Pinter.

The Origins of *Arcadia*

Stoppard has said about his 1946 arrival to the United Kingdom, “As soon as we all landed up in England, I knew I had found a home. I embraced the language and the landscape.” (His family lived near the elegant gardens of Chatsworth, which showcased four periods of garden design.) His love of the English language and landscape are apparent in his masterwork, *Arcadia*. In 1989, after a 20-year career writing hits and misses in theater, television, and radio, Stoppard read James Gleick’s *Chaos*, and despite the lukewarm reception of *Hapgood* (Stoppard’s 1988 experiment with quantum mechanics), the playwright “gambled that those who disliked physics might nevertheless be seduced by chaos,” writes Ira Nadel in *Tom Stoppard: A Life*.

Stoppard has explained that he always begins his plays with an intellectual idea, and chaos theory—specifically the notion of geometric convergence and periodic doubling—was to be *Arcadia*’s kernel (as was the notion of entropy, or the dissipation of energy). But he found it too abstract a concept on its own. In 1990, he visited the home of his friend Paul Johnson (a British historian, political writer, and former editor of the *New Statesman*) to look through his library for inspiration. Stoppard explained in 1994:

> He has a lot of books. And looking at them I said: “I’m sure there’s a play about the difference between Romantic and Classical attitudes and eras.” He had some books on Byron on that shelf. I even think I borrowed one or two. I acquire knowledge little by little.

Back home, Stoppard already had books on landscape architecture, mathematics, and hermits in his own collection.
The character of Lord Byron first interested Stoppard when he read a Peter Quennell book about the poet in the 1980s; as he started to envision *Arcadia*, Lord Byron lent himself as an offstage presence. Providing his scientific expertise to the project, Oxford professor of mathematical biology Robert May drew Stoppard’s attention to Lord Byron’s daughter, the mathematical genius Ada. The playwright has denied basing *Arcadia*’s Thomasina on Ada Byron, but the parallels are notable even if—perhaps especially if—they are coincidental.

Originally, Stoppard thought to call his play by the full Latin phrase “*Et in Arcadia ego,*” which appears in two famous seventeenth-century Poussin paintings, both of which depict three Arcadian shepherds and a woman gathered around a sarcophagus with this inscription chiseled into it. The literal translation is “Even in Arcadia here I [Death] am,” suggesting that death exists even in paradise. Nadel writes, “Stoppard wanted the presence of death in the title, but brevity and box-office sense prevailed: ‘death is now in the title only by imaginative extension,’ he confessed.”

In April 1993, Stoppard opened *Arcadia*—which he called “a thriller and a romantic tragedy with jokes”—at the National Theatre, which had committed to the play before a word had been written. Trevor Nunn directed and Professor May tutored Samuel West (who played Valentine), Emma Fielding (who played Thomasina), and the rest of the cast in chaos theory and mathematical modeling. May’s graduate student Alun Lloyd even developed the “Coverly Set” for the show: a simple formula that creates the complex leaf shape Thomasina discovers in the play.

*Arcadia* was a popular and critical success. The production won both the Evening Standard and Olivier awards for best play of the year; it ran for two seasons (431 performances). The script, available for purchase at the National Theatre’s bookshop, outsold all other plays in print, including Shakespeare: 6,000 copies were sold in the first three weeks of the run. “*Arcadia* marked a watershed,” writes Nadel. “It reaffirmed Stoppard’s importance in the theater, not just in Britain but beyond.”

Chaos in Arcadia

by Elizabeth Brodersen

Arcadia is very much a play about time, about the questions we mortals—like Tom Stoppard’s characters—ask in our continuing quest to make sense of our place in the universe. Who are we? Who have we been? Who will (or can) we become? The answers to these questions, as well as the questions themselves—whether asked by biographers, scientists, poets, or playwrights—may be very different, depending on our place in time. In Arcadia, Stoppard charts for us the attempts by physicists and mathematicians to answer these questions over the last 200 years.

Septimus Hodge, Thomasina Coverly’s tutor in Arcadia, explains to his brilliant pupil that time cannot run backwards. Yet Stoppard does run time backwards and forwards in his play. And the precocious Thomasina of 1809—with her attempts to prove Fermat’s last theorem and her intuitive grasp of nineteenth-century thermodynamics and twentieth-century chaos theory—is indeed a young woman well ahead of her own time.

Newton Undone

By Thomasina’s day, the scientific chain from Aristotle to Newton had organized the forces of the natural world with a tidy, hierarchical set of laws. In the deterministic and reductionist Newtonian world view, all natural forces were believed to be predictable. Simple systems—a swinging pendulum, two planets in orbit—could be described by easily solved linear equations; apparently unpredictable systems like weather patterns and games of chance were merely more complex and required more complicated equations whose solutions were, while temporarily beyond our grasp, nevertheless predictable. As Septimus tells Thomasina, “[God] has mastery of equations which lead into infinities where we cannot follow.”

In 1814, French physicist Pierre Simon Laplace took Newton’s concepts a step further, positing—like Thomasina—that the vast complexity of the entire universe could be explained by a single equation, if only humans were clever enough to discern its terms. He wrote:

An intellect which at a given instant knew all the forces acting in nature, and the position of all things of which the world consists—supposing the said intellect were vast enough to subject these data to analysis—would embrace in the same formula the motions of the greatest bodies in the universe and those
of the slightest atoms; nothing would be uncertain for it, and the future, like the past, would be present to its eyes.

Thus, for most of the advanced thinkers of Thomasina’s era, the future and the past were fixed quantities—unchanging, interchangeable, and implicit in the present state of the universe and in Newton’s laws of motion.

In 1811, however, Baron Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier, winner of the French Academy of Sciences prize for the mathematical propagation of heat in solids, heralded the advent of the new science of thermodynamics, marking the beginning of the end for Newton’s orderly vision. “The action of bodies in heat,” as Thomasina so aptly describes it, began to worry scientists. Why, they wondered, did a pendulum not continue in its arc forever? Why could they not build a perpetual motion machine, an engine that could run eternally on its own energy? No matter what they tried, some portion of the energy produced by the machine dissipated, lost forever. They were forced to recognize some forces in nature, like friction, as indeed irreversible. Thus did the second law of thermodynamics—which states that physical phenomena tend to degenerate from order into disorder—enter the scientific canon.

In 1854, German physicist Hermann von Helmholtz developed this law to its ultimate conclusion: the energy of the entire cosmos, he announced, must be irreversibly slipping toward a state of thermodynamic equilibrium—in other words, the entire world machine was running down, destined eventually to grind to a halt. Valentine Coverly explains this process to Hannah Jarvis in disturbingly graphic terms in *Arcadia*:

Heat goes to cold. It’s a one-way street. Your tea will wind up at room temperature. What’s happening to your tea is happening to everything everywhere. The sun and the stars. It’ll take a while, but we’re all going to end up at room temperature.

A countermovement grew meanwhile among nineteenth-century scientists in other fields looking at the development of living systems. Not only Charles Darwin, but also philosophers and poets, geologists and biologists, observed that the living—as opposed to the mechanical—universe was evolving in the opposite direction: from disorder into order, toward states of ever-increasing complexity. A fundamental contradiction arose between the darkly fatalistic world view of the physicists and the forward-looking vision of the evolutionary biologists.

The linear mathematics of classical algebra and geometry, moreover, proved inadequate to the task of modeling the true complexity of the natural world. Since the nonlinear equations that described chaotic natural phenomena—like turbulent flows of water and air—were difficult, often impossible to solve, scientists pragmatically avoided them. Whenever nonlinear equations appeared, they were immediately replaced by linear approximations. Scientists became accustomed to looking only at the small range of experimental results for which linear equations could be formulated, and ignoring the rest.
The dilemma posed by evolutionary thinking was quickly eclipsed, however, by the great discoveries of twentieth-century physics—quantum mechanics, relativity, particle physics—all of which chipped slowly away at the fundamentals of Newtonian physics. Scientists did not concern themselves with the messy variables of the natural world that would clutter their elegant linear equations, and generations of twentieth-century physicists and mathematicians grew up unaware of the wondrous complexity of the nonlinear, chaotic cosmos.

Enter Chaos

During World War I, French mathematician Gaston Julia took a stab at solving nonlinear equations and plotting the results with pencil and paper. The bizarre and beautiful geometrical shapes he began to uncover, called “Julia sets,” looked remarkably like forms from nature: clouds, snakes, dust. Without a computer, however, the number of iterations (or repetitions) of an equation he could physically solve was small, and his graphs were primitive. Julia’s crude attempts went unnoticed—an obscure sideline of mathematics—for decades.

In the mid twentieth century, however, a few maverick scientists in divergent fields began to wonder again about irksomely irregular natural phenomena: Why can’t we predict weather further than seven days out? Why does a plume of smoke scatter at a specific (and apparently unpredictable) point? Why can’t we predict the fall of the next drop of water from a faucet, stock market crash, or measles epidemic? Could there be a solvable equation that describes the swirl of cream in your coffee, or the unfurling shape of a fern?

These scientists began to pirate time on the new supercomputers to play with intriguing data they had previously not had the means to analyze. Meteorologist Edward N. Lorenz looked at global weather simulations; biologist Robert May examined the behavior of fish populations and disease epidemics; economist Hendrik S. Houthakker tracked cotton prices.

Across the boundaries of scientific discipline, these researchers all discovered something revolutionary (and definitely counter-Newtonian) about the phenomena they were studying: they were all so complex that they were inherently unpredictable. They were “chaotic.” Surprisingly, however, these scientists also discovered that, upon close examination, bizarre patterns seemed to emerge out of these chaotic systems—“out of oceans of ashes” emerged “islands of order,” as Valentine says in Arcadia. As they measured the behavior of natural phenomena, scientists discovered oddly repeating patterns of periodicity, patterns that were self-similar on every scale into infinity. In other words, they were regularly irregular. The disorder of the natural world was in fact channeled into patterns with a common underlying theme. This proved to be as true for fluctuations in commodity prices and grouse populations as for the episodic flooding of the Nile and dripping of a faucet.
An important property of many chaotic systems—eloquently described by Valentine in the play—is that the nonlinear equations that describe them are characterized by self-reinforcing feedback processes, in which the result of an operation is fed back into the equation and run through again and again: for example, the total goldfish—or grouse—population calculated for one year is fed back into the calculation used to determine the following year’s population. That solution is fed into the equation for the next year, and so on.

In the 1970s, another French mathematician, Benoit B. Mandelbrot, developed a new geometry to graphically represent the mathematics of this startling new science of irregularity. As Valentine does with the calculations from Thomasina’s notebook, Mandelbrot fed Julia’s nonlinear mappings into a computer and iterated them thousands of times. Termed “fractals,” the fantastic shapes that resulted span the boundaries between science, nature, and art. Mandelbrot and succeeding fractal geometers found they could generate incredible new forms by charting specific nonlinear equations, or could conversely derive equations to describe mathematically the most common everyday objects, like mountains and coastlines, or the branching of lightning and snowflakes and the veins in the human body, or in Thomasina’s apple leaf. They found a visual language that enables us to see the order that lies deep within the seeming disorder of the natural world.

Since the first chaos conference in 1977, the work of early chaos theorists has fired the imagination of the entire scientific community and revolutionized scientific thinking. Chaos theory has been found applicable to virtually every discipline, and fractals have made their way into programs for home computers, Hollywood films, and home videos.

In 1992, chaos theorists from M.I.T. seemed to silence Newton once and for all by announcing that the entire solar system is unpredictable.

The Future Is Disorder

Valentine tells us in Arcadia:

The future is disorder. A door like this has cracked open five or six times since we got up on our hind legs. It’s the best possible time to be alive, when almost everything you thought you knew is wrong.
He may be right. Humanity’s centuries-old battle to master the unpredictability of the natural world has finally given way to a healthy respect for chaos. Long recognized as fertile ground for artistic creativity (Picasso once said that “every act of creation is first an act of destruction”), chaos is now understood to be beneficial to, even necessary for, the health of complex systems. Chaos theory has been used to help prevent heart attacks and epileptic seizures, compensate for interference in electronic transmission lines, predict stock prices and weather patterns, and manage failing ecosystems, as well as to explain the origins of life.

Chaos even seems to offer hope in the face of impending thermodynamic doom: Nobel Prize laureate Ilya Prigogine has shown, by applying nonlinear thermodynamics to living systems, that it is more efficient for nature to create islands of order (living organisms) within the cosmic sea of disorder, than for the entire world to degenerate uniformly into randomness. Complexity theorists—who examine systems that lie “on the edge of chaos”—have even generated artificial computer “life” by applying chaos theory to simulated cells. After long periods of stasis in a random state, the cells often spontaneously organize themselves into increasingly complex, evolving “organisms” that compete among themselves for the computer memory and energy necessary to survive. Life thus seems to exist on the border between order and disorder, and to be able to spontaneously regenerate out of a void.

Many of us may have thought, as Valentine says he once did, that all the answers were within humanity’s grasp. Yet the universe continues to expand and contract as scientists argue over its age, its origins, its fate, and the nature of time itself. Fermat’s theorem was finally proved in 1993 by Princeton mathematician Andrew Wiles (the proof is indeed much too long to fit in the margin of any book), only to be eclipsed by the new “Enormous Theorem” challenging contemporary group systems experts (its proof covers fifteen thousand pages and is too complex for any one individual to comprehend). And chaos theory—the “maths of the natural world”—has opened a vast new scientific frontier. The more we think we know, the more questions we uncover.

Even if we are indeed destined to end “alone, on an empty shore” in a few billion years, as Septimus fears, at least we will have plenty to occupy us in the meantime. It is, after all, the desire for knowledge, to understand the nature of our existence, which lends that existence some meaning—and inspires scientists and biographers, as well as playwrights like Tom Stoppard. As Hannah Jarvis tells us in Arcadia, “It’s wanting to know that makes us matter. Otherwise we’re going out the way we came in.”

We are indebted to Professor Fritjof Capra, Ph.D., for explaining the concepts described in this article. Capra, a physicist and systems theorist, is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley and is on the faculty of the Beahrs Environmental Leadership Program at UC Berkeley. Capra is the author of several international bestsellers, including The Tao of Physics (1975), The Turning Point (1982), The Web of Life (1996), The Hidden Connections (2002), and The Science of Leonardo (2007). He is currently working on a multidisciplinary textbook, The Systems View of Life, coauthored by Pier Luigi Luisi and to be published by Cambridge University Press. For more on chaos theory, try reading Chaos: Making a New Science, by James Gleick (New York: Viking Press, 1987); Turbulent Mirror, by John Briggs and F. David Peat (New York: Harper & Row, 1989); and Does God Play Dice?, by Ian Stewart (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2002).
Geometry and the Garden

by John Barrell

The grounds of Sidley Park, the house that provides the setting for *Arcadia*, are a palimpsest on which all three of the main styles of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century landscape garden have at one time or another been inscribed. Until the 1750s, the garden was laid out according to an aesthetic that saw beauty only in symmetry, in the geometrical pattern made by circular pools and the intersecting straight lines of avenues, allées, terraces, hedges. This formal design was then buried beneath the improvements of Lancelot “Capability” Brown, the most famous advocate of a “natural” style of gardening that saw beauty only in asymmetrical arrangements of sinuous curves and trees planted in loosely scattered informal groups. As *Arcadia* opens, this design is about to give way to the “picturesque” style favored by Mr. Noakes. The picturesque was an aesthetic of irregularity, of Romantic wildness, in which the continuous, serpentine lines of Brown were deliberately broken and obscured by sudden declivities and the jagged shapes and shadows of rocks and unkempt trees.

These different styles of gardening were treated by some contemporary commentators as mere changes in fashion, and they were frequently compared with changing fashions in dress, particularly women’s dress. For others, however, they were—like fashion itself—part of a complicated history of social and political change. As Britain became a more powerful, more confident nation, more conscious of the uniqueness of its history and constitution, the formal, geometrical style of gardening was understood as an alien and authoritarian imposition on the landscape, an expression of the attempt made by the Frenchified Stuart kings to confine the free spirit of Britain. The “natural” style of Brown was thought to be more in tune with the informal genius of the English landscape, and it seemed to give the genius of the English people room to breathe and to expand, for Brown was adept at creating open vistas that made the park and its surrounding countryside seem part of one harmonious landscape that ran unbroken to the horizon and beyond.

Like many stylistic innovations that become popular in Britain, the “picturesque” style offered the simultaneous pleasures of modernization and antiquation; picturesque gardens looked new by looking old, as if they had been neglected for centuries, or had never been touched by the human hand. An advantage of such gardens was that, once created, they were much cheaper to maintain than those they replaced. But the popularity of picturesque gardens, like that of their predecessors, can be understood also in terms
of a changing politics of taste. By the end of the eighteenth century, English liberty was no longer defined—at least not by those who could afford to think about styles of gardening—against the authoritarian geometry of European absolute monarchies; it was the Jacobins, it was Thomas Paine, who now threatened to force the English to adopt what Edmund Burke described as the geometrical principles of government, newly discovered in the United States and France. Against this new threat, the stability of England and Englishness was staked on a reverence for the age-old, “Gothic,” or feudal institutions of England. Like the decaying oaks and Gothic ruins in a picturesque landscape, these should be propped and patched up, but it would be sacrilegious as well as dangerous simply to sweep them away. The picturesque landscape garden was a visual emblem of all that was threatened by the new democratic politics.

It was an emblem, however, of change welcomed as well as change resisted. The formal, symmetrical landscape garden was conceived as a social, even a public space, a setting in which the members of an aristocracy showed themselves to each other; the same was true in a different way of the open vistas of Brown, landscapes waiting to be animated by figures, like the paintings of Claude Lorrain on which they were modeled. The picturesque landscape, on the contrary, was full of shadowy and secret places that offered the pleasures of solitude and of not being seen. Garden design, like domestic architecture at the same time, was increasingly acknowledging the value of privacy, of interior life, and this was part of the process by which it was the polite middle class rather than the aristocracy that was beginning to exert the most powerful influence on manners and morals. If the gardens of the earlier eighteenth century seem to endorse a
characteristically aristocratic notion of personal identity, as something to be displayed, picturesque gardens endorse the more characteristically middle-class notion that we are truly ourselves only when we are alone.

But just because it was conceived as wild and empty space to be enjoyed in solitude, the picturesque garden could be freely populated with figures supplied by the imagination. The grounds of Sidley Park, one of the characters of Arcadia points out, are being remodeled as the landscape of the Gothic novel—in which the gloomiest, most overgrown places of nature are the picturesque settings for lovers’ daydreams, for long-awaited meetings of those who love in secret, for terrifying encounters between the heroine and her would-be seducers and abductors. When it is complete, Mr. Noakes’s garden will be a landscape where the dangers of solitude can be enjoyed in safety, and where romantic reverie can wear the mask of serious contemplation. To the women of the house in particular, Sidley Park, like the Gothic novel itself, will offer new opportunities to enjoy a new kind of freedom. It won’t be a political freedom, of the kind enshrined in rights and institutions, for though versions of that freedom are imaged, as we’ve seen, in the picturesque as well as in the “natural” style of gardening, that was a freedom to be enjoyed only by men. It will be the freedom of fantasy, a space in which women can imagine other selves and other futures, perhaps less constrained, certainly more exciting, than those that usually awaited them.

John Barrell is the author of a number of books and essays about landscape. This article was originally commissioned by London’s National Theatre for the 1993 world premiere production of Arcadia.
Romanticism: Free and Individual

By Michael Paller

New artistic styles tend to arise in reaction against older, dominant ones, and Romanticism was no exception. Aesthetically, Romanticism was a revolt against the reigning style of the day, Classicism, which itself rejected the previous style, the Rococo or late Baroque. In music and architecture, the Rococo generally favored much ornamentation and exuberance; in art and architecture that exuberance was expressed with asymmetricality and great dynamism in color, light and shade, rhythm and movement. More was more. Classicism, as the artistic expression of the Enlightenment, the great intellectual movement spanning the mid seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries that saw the rise of science and rationality, rejected Rococo and looked back to the aesthetic values of Greek and Roman antiquity. It favored balance, harmony, proportion, and restraint. In turn, Romanticism threw off all that order and sought a new way to depict the human condition in a world that was leaving Classical values behind.

The differences between Classicism and Romanticism are expressed well by Arcadia’s Lady Croom when she describes the grounds of Sidley Park as they are at the beginning of the play and as they will be when redesigned by Noakes, the “picturesque” landscape architect:

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.

All is regular, proportional, harmonious. By contrast, what Noakes proposes, and what Lady Croom abhors, is irregular and unrestrained:

Here is an eruption of gloomy forest and towering crag, of ruins where there was never a house, of water dashing against rocks where there was neither spring nor stone . . . . My hyacinth dell is become a haunt for hobgoblins, my Chinese bridge . . . is usurped by a fallen obelisk overgrown with briars.

What accounted for the shift in aesthetic tastes? As Classicism stood alongside developments in philosophy and science, Romanticism responded not only to a new expressive need but to larger world events. At the end of the eighteenth century, one
particular force stood out in Europe: revolution. This was the political and social fact with which Romanticism would become most closely associated.

“The Whole of Europe Is in a Napoleonic Fit.”

Again, Lady Croom, who is advising against European travel, is correct. The European revolutionary movement got its start in France, although the French had been inspired by recent events in the United States. The French Revolution began in 1789 as a relatively modest appeal for a constitutional monarchy along the lines of Great Britain’s. But the demands of the revolution’s leaders soon became more radical and other European nations, afraid that the revolutionary fever might spread, declared war on France. As a result of these pressures, in 1792 the French Revolutionary Convention declared France a republic. The following year, Louis XVI and his family were guillotined, and the Wave of Terror began: thousands of people were executed for being merely suspected of harboring nonrepublican sentiments. The next few years were marked more by confusion and chaos than by any kind of government—enlightened, despotic, or anything in between.

Then, in 1799, Napoleon seized command of the French armies, and the real possibility of continent-wide revolution swept Europe. Over the next dozen years, he conquered Spain, Holland, and many of the German and Italian states. He abolished what was left of the Holy Roman Empire and reorganized the 300 German states into fewer than 40. Along the way, however, his republican beliefs were tempered by a taste for empire. In place of the old kings and princes he installed new ones, mostly members of his family. In 1804 at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, he declared himself emperor of France and, at least according to legend, seized the crown from the hands of Pope Pius VII, whom he’d imported from Rome especially for the occasion. On the plus side, he abolished serfdom throughout much of the eastern parts of the new French Empire and ended the religious persecution of Jews, and of Catholics in Protestant countries and vice versa.

The other European governments, led by Great Britain and Austria, and later joined by Russia, were terrified that Napoleon would bring revolution and the new French Empire to their soil. Between 1800 and 1815 they launched a series of wars against him that resulted in his ultimate defeat and death. Although most intellectuals and artists felt betrayed by Napoleon’s establishment of an empire with himself as its unquestioned head, they despised the rest of reactionary Europe more. As a result, many of those who had initially supported Napoleon took up the nationalist and revolutionary sentiments that would dominate much of the rest of the nineteenth century in Europe after Napoleon’s fall in 1815.

How the Artists Responded

Faced with this churning political landscape, it seemed to many artists that the Classical style was worn out. The upheavals sweeping Europe required an art that rejected
Classicism’s repose, balance, and harmony, its insistence on decorum and rules. A new art was needed that embraced the whirlwind of change and responded to the new urge for freedom and personal liberty with forms that were equally free, equally individual. This is what Romanticism was all about.

Allied to freedom as a political notion was the idea that art also needed to be free: free of the arbitrary rules of Classicism. In theater, for instance, French Classicism dictated that a play must be written in five acts, in verse, observe the unities of time and place, and keep high emotions tightly in hand. The Romanticists rejected all this. The only rules that governed a work of art would be its own that had arisen organically, products of the pressure of its own demands and the artist’s perception of the world. Personal expression mattered more than arbitrary rules. So, in theater, Shakespeare, with his multiple plots, settings, and scenes, was the preferred Romantic model over French Neoclassicists such as Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire. In general, Romantic playwrights valued character over structure, which—although their ranks included Schiller and, for a time, Goethe—produced a couple decades’ worth of incoherent plays and led in turn to the rise of the non-Romantic, overly coherent well-made play.

To call Romanticism a “movement” is a bit misleading. It embraced many strands and trends, some contradictory. If any ideas unified them, they were political and artistic liberty and the belief, in the words of historian J. Christopher Herold, “that reason touched merely the surface of things, while feeling, instinct, and intuition plumbed their depths.”
The Romantics rejected the Enlightenment’s empiricism and rationality, and, what was, to them, its puny image of God as a benevolent mechanic. They embraced the existence of an Absolute Being who created all things and whose scope was far beyond our limited ability to comprehend. Proof of this Being would be located in an instinctive reaction to the universe’s infinite variety and beauty, not in the Enlightenment’s verification of objective experience, which the Classical style reduced to soft colors, geometrical shapes, and amiable harmonies.

Such variety was to be found foremost in nature. The closer a thing was to its natural state the more likely it was to reveal fundamental truths. Landscape painting, therefore, became a pillar of the new movement. While all of nature was its purview, the Romantic imagination wasn’t limited to dappled hillsides or waving fields of sunflowers. It was fascinated more by lashing thunderstorms and rocky landscapes; the stunning power of nature’s dark destructive force became a recurrent subject for Turner, Géricault, Delacroix, and others. In music, Beethoven, followed by Schubert, Schumann, and others, found nature an important inspiration and subject, as did the poets Goethe, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, the last combining with it a belief in the poetic value of everyday people and experience.

The attraction to nature included an attachment to those who were closest to it: peasants or, in Germany, where so much of the Romantic spirit originated, the Volk. One of the earliest Romantic theorists, Johann Gottfried Herder, was perhaps the first to collect on a large scale folk songs and stories from virtually every nation. His contemporaries the Brothers Grimm did the same in Germany. That people had a valuable folk culture went hand-in-hand with the Romantic ideal of independent nations.

Also from Germany came a new interest in medieval, or Gothic, culture, which celebrated the romance of chivalry. Alongside this love of the Gothic came a fascination with the irrational, the mysterious, the grotesque, the supernatural, all beyond the reach of understanding. The British authors Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe were among the earliest to exploit the new allure of night terrors (Walpole as early as 1764); the Gothic tale Wieland, by Charles Brockden Brown, published in 1798, was one of the first American novels, and Edgar Allan Poe carried on the tradition. In 1816, Frankenstein was the result of a ghost-story competition between the author Mary Shelley; her husband, Percy Shelley; Lord Byron; his former lover, Claire Clairmont; and John Polidori, who went on to write one of the first vampire stories in English.

Where Classicists sought unity and balance, the Romantics saw division everywhere and championed the richness of experience it suggested: body vs. soul; temporal vs. eternal; finite vs. infinite. We may yearn for a glimpse of divine truth and perfection, but because it belongs to a realm beyond our understanding, it is forever beyond our grasp. But this fact makes art especially important. It is primarily through art that people can be made whole, since an aesthetic experience frees us from the divisive forces of everyday experience by giving eternal truths a concrete, perceptible form. Art, then, is a key not to mere Enlightenment “improvement,” but to Romantic fulfillment.
If art provides glimpses of eternal truth, it follows that the artist who makes those moments possible is a superior being. Clearly, just as such a being is exempt from the old artistic rules and formal procedures, this person also is exempt from the strictures of social decorum and behavior that apply to ordinary people. Before Romanticism, an artist might be a respected craftsman. Beginning with Romanticism, he was transformed into a different sort of being: divided, difficult, heroic—a genius.

Byron and Beyond

Lord George Gordon Byron, the offstage genius and serial seducer of Arcadia, wasn’t the first British poet to be swept up by Romanticism; his predecessors included Wordsworth, Blake, and Coleridge. He was, however, the first to embody the impulses of Romanticism in his own life and become famous for it. He lent his name to the solitary, melancholy, fiery, sensuous social outlaw: the Byronic Hero. This figure, partly fictional, partly autobiographical, appears throughout his work, most centrally, perhaps, in the four-part Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage and Manfred, the tortured lyric drama Byron wrote in the aftermath of his scandalous affair with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. These works, like so much of Byron’s, had enormous influence not only in literature but across the arts. The Romantic composers Berlioz, Schumann, and Tchaikovsky, to name just three who fell under Byron’s spell, used these works as inspirations for their own. The image of the solitary man confronting the vast scope of the natural world became common in Romantic art and can be seen in works like Friedrich’s The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog of 1818.

The story of European and American art and culture of the nineteenth century is largely the story of Romanticism. Its many incarnations and impulses can be seen across the decades, from Sir Walter Scott to Charlotte Turner Smith to Mary Robinson, Victor Hugo, and Pushkin; from E. T. A. Hoffmann, Kleist, and George Sand to Baudelaire and Walt Whitman; from Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, Anton Weber, and Chopin to Mahler; from Constable and Goya to Bierstadt and Mary Josephine Walters, one of the women of the Hudson River School.

Romanticism lived long enough to become decadent, its original revolutionary impulses domesticated to suit the tastes of the rising middle class. The inevitable revolt against it began late in the nineteenth century as the world began industrializing on a large scale, the working class began making itself heard, and revolution was stirring again. Romanticism would not be the style to suit the new times. Twentieth-century modernism would be a set of movements diverse in its aims, ways, and means, all intensely devoted to being Not Romanticism—a sign of just how strong the Romantic influence was.

Lord Byron
A Life Well Lived

By Margot Whitcomb

One of the intriguing aspects of Arcadia is that Byron, whose shadow looms mysteriously over the play, never appears onstage. In drama, as in reality, the details of Byron’s life remain a seductive enigma.

Just what is it about Byron that so captivates our imagination? We may have passing acquaintance with his celebrity in the most general sense, though for most of us his image is no more than a fragmented composition that evokes the spirit of his age: distinguished nineteenth-century poet, notorious womanizer, free-spirited adventurer, irreverent eccentric. Some of us, perhaps, may know enough to believe we have a clear, even accurate, picture of him.

The science of biography is, like all investigative pursuits, a very subjective process of asking questions and interpreting data. In the case of Byron, who made a science of the creation of his own persona, the reconstruction of his personal history has proven particularly fecund ground for investigation, for his was a life always followed closely and held hostage by heated controversy, much of it deliberately fostered by Byron himself.

Indeed, the best minds in literary biography remain engaged in passionate debate about Byron’s whereabouts and activities even now, almost 200 years after his death. And within this debate, no period has proven of greater interest than the spring of 1809, when much of Arcadia takes place.

Childe Byron

George Gordon, later the sixth Lord Byron, was born on January 22, 1788, into a financial instability that was to plague him throughout his life. George’s father, Captain John Byron, married Scotswoman Catherine Gordon largely for economic gain. Within a short time after the marriage, John’s second, the elder Byron had squandered Catherine’s considerable funds. The birth of young George exacerbated the already delicate state of his parents’ marital relations, and the captain became more and more frequently “at large.” His frequent disappearances and early demise in 1791 left Catherine as the younger Byron’s sole source of support.

Though much of his youth was unremarkable, the circumstances into which he was born figured prominently in Byron’s psyche for the remainder of his life. Born in London,
he spent his early years living modestly in Aberdeen, Scotland. The sudden death of a distant great uncle bestowed upon ten-year-old George the family estate of Newstead Abbey, near Nottingham, and membership in the peerage. At his birth, he already had a four-year-old half-sister, Augusta Leigh, from the captain’s first marriage. Although they did little but pass through each other’s lives until Byron returned from his first world tour in 1811, when they began “aggressive” relations, they were destined to share an intimacy unequalled in their lifetimes.

Byron attended Harrow as a boy and entered Trinity College at Cambridge in 1805 at the age of 17. Much of his youth was fairly typical for his time and class, save the occasional indignities he suffered on account of the club foot with which he had been born. Byron’s maverick view of the world was already in development even at this young age, marked by a pervading sense of loneliness and melancholia that infected every fiber of his being. Of the prospect of leaving Harrow for the new environs of college, he wrote in his *Detached Thoughts* in 1820:

> [I]t was one of the deadliest and heaviest feelings of my life to feel that I was no longer a boy. From that moment I began to grow old in my own esteem; and in my esteem age is not estimable.

Byron’s first poems were written during this period, and by his late teens he was invited into circles of young intellectuals, writers, and political liberals who embraced his obvious talents. In 1807, coinciding with his college graduation, Byron enjoyed the publication of his first book of poems, *Hours of Idleness.*

*George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron* (detail), by Richard Westall, 1813 (National Portrait Gallery, London)
While much of his writing was publicly praised, Byron also endured sneering attacks on his work, including a dismissive review of *Hours of Idleness* in the *Edinburgh Review*. In retaliation, he began to publish his own critiques, among them the nastily satirical “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers” (1809), which excoriated such fashionable poets as Wordsworth and Coleridge. This exchange of ideas and commentary on one another’s work eventually became a source of great pleasure, revelry, and rivalry to Byron and his fellow writers and artists.

It was also during this period that Byron began to develop a reputation for such eccentric hobbies as keeping exotic animals—which at various points in his life included a tame bear, goat, and tortoise—in his London quarters, pistol shooting, and notorious binges of drinking, gambling, and womanizing. None of these forays lasted long, however, for in 1809 Byron took a seat in the House of Lords and began preparations for the obligatory “grand tour.”

The grand tour was the centerpiece of every young, enlightened Englishman’s education, though Byron was forced to take an atypical route by the difficulties of traveling through regions controlled by the French Empire, then deeply embroiled in the social and political turmoil caused by Napoleon’s reign. Byron therefore spent the years of his travels (1809–11) mostly in the Mediterranean, journeying first to Portugal and then to Spain, Italy, and Greece.

As Bernard Nightingale emphatically points out in *Arcadia*, there is indeed no evidence of the precise cause of Byron’s urgent departure from England in July 1809. Although it is known that Byron was in residence at Newstead Abbey (not far from *Arcadia’s* imaginary Sidley Park) in April of that year, there is no evidence of his whereabouts between the 10th and 12th, when Stoppard has him visit the Coverlys. We have only fragments of his letters, suggesting something foreboding, an unnamed catalyst for his hasty escape. Byron wrote his London representative that he had secured a ticket to set sail from Falmouth in May, announcing that there were “circumstances which render it absolutely indispensable” that he “quit the country immediately.” He later wrote from Albania: “I will never live in England if I can avoid it. *Why*, must remain a secret.”

While Byron had shortly before published several caustic, satirical reviews of other popular literary figures, the fear of retaliation hardly seems in keeping with his otherwise apparently resilient nature. He was deeply and embarrassingly in debt and flamboyantly melancholy (he made a human skull into a drinking cup); yet he had only recently made his debut in literary society and begun his modest political engagement. One theory current among literary biographers (set forth by Louis Compton in his 1988 book, *Byron and Greek Love*) is that Byron was then coming to terms with his own homosexuality. Supposedly fearing exposure, he is said to have set sail for the Levant in search of a more tolerant erotic playground.
Byron’s return to England in July 1811 was followed by a flurry of events that set his by then very public life in turmoil: he suffered the death of his mother and best childhood friend, as well as of two other acquaintances; he presented his maiden speech in the House of Lords, which was received enthusiastically; and, most importantly, he enjoyed the overwhelming success of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which he had composed during his travels.

The latter event catapulted Byron into the eye of the literary and political storm then sweeping England. He was an instant sensation, sought out by the best of society. As his social prominence waxed, his political associations waned, however, until he all but abandoned Parliament. He also entered into a whirlwind of controversial and notoriously tempestuous love affairs with Lady Caroline Lamb (wife of Lord Melbourne), Lady Oxford, Lady Webster, his sister, Augusta, and many others. Though none of these women (except Augusta) ultimately meant very much to him, the rise and fall of each liaison was scrutinized by all of London in considerable detail.

Though Byron resented the possessiveness of his many lovers and ever sought to expand his romantic territory, he could not stand to be forgotten by them and insisted on their singular devotion. The affair with Lady Caroline proved his most inflammatory tryst—she called him “mad, bad, and dangerous to know”—and as a result of the surrounding controversy and strained intimacy with Augusta, not to mention the return of financial woes, Byron abruptly married the young, conservative, and moneyed Anne Isabella (Annabella) Milbanke.

Byron’s marriage to Annabella was short-lived, and she left him soon after the birth of their daughter, Augusta Ada, accusing Byron of mental illness and a host of depravities. Annabella, whom Byron sometimes called his “Princess of Parallelograms,” and Ada were both known to have experimented with mathematics. Ada, in fact, explored early computer science, until her social status as countess of Lovelace and contemporary sexual prejudices forced her to suspend her intellectual adventures. Ada died an early death, a victim of excessive gambling and blackmail.

Byron’s life continued to be dominated by women, for whom he expressed equal parts of desire and disdain, publicly as well as privately, as reflected in this keen bit of self-reflection from his journals of 1814:

> There is something to me very softening in the presence of a woman—some strange influence, even if one is not in love with them—which I cannot at all account for having no very high opinion of the sex. But yet, I always feel in better humour with myself and everything else, if there is a woman within ken.

Of the parade of women through Byron’s life—the many torrid love affairs about the globe, his single attempt at matrimony, and the mothers of his assorted children—none would prove as sustaining an influence on him as his adored Augusta. They were devoted to one another until Byron’s death, and he admitted freely that no other individual ever had a more profound understanding of him than she. Among the many
The controversies that plagued him throughout his life were the alleged incestuous affair they enjoyed beginning in 1813 and the subsequent birth of Augusta's baby girl, presumably sired by Byron.

**Artist in Exile**

His very public sexual escapades, together with the scandal of his marriage and separation and perpetual debt, precluded any possibility of privacy or comfort for Byron. Plagued once again by melancholia, he was chronically despondent amid the controversy, as the society that had once idolized him now cast him out. He nevertheless continued to write, and his output was substantial. By 1816, however, Byron grew weary of the demons of his literary genius and sent himself into permanent exile.

Byron lingered first in Switzerland, and then for years in Italy, where he again became political (supplying arms and support to the Italian struggle against Austrian rule) and continued to enjoy numerous love affairs. He added cantos to *Childe Harold* and wrote *Don Juan*, as well as several poetic dramas, while the income from his continued literary success allowed him to live in relative comfort. Always plagued by a weak constitution and weight problems, he suffered from fluctuating health, aggravated by excessive alcohol consumption.

In 1823, Byron eventually returned to Greece, the “Arcadia” he had first visited some dozen years earlier, where he had found the greatest sense of home and inspiration he was ever to know. Deeply troubled by the political situation there, he became very active in the Greek war of independence from Turkish rule, fighting for the country and its liberty as if it were his own homeland.

Byron died in Greece in 1824, mourned as a hero. For a man who had so visibly expanded his community, however, he died very much alone. The correspondence with Augusta over the years had become intermittent and painful, he had continued to lose the people he loved best (including his friend Shelley, who drowned in 1822), and he lamented the absence of those who remained at the close of his life. A national treasure in both his native Britain and his beloved Greece, he was nevertheless denied a resting place in the Poets’ Corner of Westminster Abbey. Byron left this world much as he came into it, at once distinguished and ordinary.

**Byron’s Favorite Subject**

Lord Byron straddled both sides of fame—at once revered and held in contempt throughout his life. The best evidence of the feverish controversy surrounding his activities is perhaps the fate of his official memoirs. A prolific writer who not only produced volumes of poetry and drama, Byron also maintained detailed and extensive journals, which those closest to him elected to burn upon his death.

Byron always wrote with his audience in mind: fully expecting to be remembered in coming centuries, he tailored his work for readers yet unborn, creating a comprehensive
Augusta Ada Byron was born December 10, 1815; five weeks later, her mother, Annabella Milbanke, separated from Lord Byron and took Ada with her. Worried her daughter would become a poet like her father, Lady Byron raised Ada to be a mathematician and scientist, but she could not suppress her daughter’s inherited poeticism. Professor of mathematics at Agnes Scott College Larry Riddle writes, “In her 30s [Ada] wrote her mother, ‘If you can’t give me poetry, can’t you give me “poetical science?”’ Her understanding of mathematics was laced with imagination, and described in metaphors.”

When Ada was 19, she learned of Charles Babbage’s ideas for a new calculating engine, the Analytical Engine, a mechanical general-purpose computer. He wrote in his Passages from the Life of a Philosopher, “As soon as an Analytical Engine exists, it will necessarily guide the future course of science. Whenever any result is sought by its aid, the question will then arise—By what course of calculation can these results be arrived at by the machine in the shortest time?”

Ada was touched by the “universality of his ideas”; in 1843, she translated a French article about Babbage’s plans, and when she showed Babbage her translation he suggested that she add her own notes. Her notes were three times the length of the original article. Riddle writes, “Letters between Babbage and Ada flew back and forth filled with fact and fantasy. In her article, published in 1843, [her] prescient comments included her predictions that such a machine might be used to compose complex music, to produce graphics, and would be used for both practical and scientific use. She was correct.”


and self-conscious personal record of his unique world view, at once satanically dark and smartly satirical. Consider this excerpt from his Detached Notes, written in 1821:

I have written my memoirs, but omitted all the really consequential and important parts, from deference to the dead, to the living, and to those who must be both. I sometimes think that I should have written the whole as a lesson, but it might have proved a lesson to be learnt rather than to be avoided; for passion is a whirlpool, which is not to be viewed nearly without attraction to its Vortex. I must not go on with these reflections, or I shall be letting out some secret or other to paralyze posterity.

As he would be for generations of avid biographers, clearly Byron was Byron’s favorite subject.
An *Arcadia* Glossary

**Anchorite**
An anchorite is a hermit who has retired to a solitary place for religious seclusion.

**Arcadia**
Represented as an Edenic paradise in Greek and Roman bucolic poetry and in literature of the Renaissance, Arcadia was a mountainous region of the central Peloponnesus of ancient Greece. In Roman times, Arcadia fell into decay. It was a scene of conflict during the War of Greek Independence (1821–29), in which Lord Byron was a key player.

**Archimedes (287–212 BCE)**
An ancient Greek mathematician, inventor, and physicist, Archimedes is credited with calculating pi, devising exponential numbers, developing formulas for calculating the area and volume of geometric figures, discovering the principle of buoyancy, and inventing a hydraulic screw that raises water from a lower to a higher level.

**Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820)**
Sir Joseph Banks was a baronet, naturalist, and patron of science preoccupied with botany. Banks was elected president of the Royal Society (the leading national organization for the promotion of scientific research in Britain) in 1778.

**Bathos**
In writing or speech, bathos is an abrupt change in style from the elevated to the commonplace or ordinary, producing a ludicrous or anticlimactic effect.

**Beaters and Butts**
This term refers to the members of a shooting party who drive wild game from under cover for the hunters.

**Blackguard**
A blackguard is a contemptible scoundrel or fourmouthed person.

**Broadwood Pianoforte**
John Broadwood & Sons is the world’s oldest piano company; “pianoforte” is the full term for “piano.” The terms “piano” and “forte” also mean “quiet” and “loud.”

**Brocket Hall and Caroline’s Garden**
Brocket Hall was built by renowned architect James Paine for Sir Matthew Lamb in 1760. Sir Matthew’s grandson was William Lamb, second Viscount Melbourne and the husband of Caroline
Lamb. Lady Lamb was reported to be very fond of Brocket Hall and lived there even after her husband’s political career took him to London.

“Capability” Brown (1716–83)
Considered the master of English landscape architecture, Lancelot “Capability” Brown was an avid disciple of the “picturesque” style of garden design, characterized by a natural, unplanned appearance. He disliked carved stone and architectural shapes. Instead he used only natural elements in his designs: turf; mirrors of still water; a few species of trees used singly, in clumps, or in loose belts; and the natural undulating contours of the ground. His nickname is derived from his habit of saying that each estate he was asked to redesign had “capabilities.”

Beau Brummel (1778–1840)
English socialite George Bryan “Beau” Brummel, a close companion of the Prince of Wales, became famous for his wit, manners, and flamboyant style of dress. So great was his influence on British society that his name has become synonymous with the English dandy or man of fashion.

Canard
A canard is a false or unfounded report or story.

Caro
Caro is Latin for “meat” and Italian for “dear.” It was also Lord Byron’s nickname for Lady Caroline Lamb, which she adopted publicly.

“Ce soir, il faut qu’on parle français, je te demande.”
“Tonight, we must speak French, I ask you.”

Channel Tunnel
Also known as the “Chunnel,” the Channel Tunnel is a rail tunnel beneath the English Channel at the Strait of Dover. It links Folkestone, Kent, in the United Kingdom with Coquelles, Pas-de-Calais, in northern France. Tunneling commenced in 1988, and the tunnel was opened in 1994.

Charles II (1630–85)
Charles II was the king of Great Britain and Ireland (1660–85), restored to the throne after years of exile during the Puritan Commonwealth. The years of his reign are known in English history as the Restoration period.

Childe Harold
Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage is a lengthy narrative poem in four parts written by Lord Byron, published between 1812 and 1818. The poem describes the travels and reflections of a world-weary young man who, disillusioned with a life of pleasure and revelry, looks for distraction in foreign lands. The title comes from the term childe, a medieval title for a young man who was a candidate for knighthood.

Thomas Chippendale (1718–79)
Chippendale was a British cabinetmaker who created a furniture style defined by flowing lines and rococo ornamentation.
Christie’s
Founded in London in 1766, Christie’s is the world’s largest fine arts auction house.

Cleopatra (70–30 BCE)
Cleopatra was an Egyptian queen, the lover of Julius Caesar, and later the wife of Mark Antony. After the Roman armies of Octavian (the future emperor Augustus) defeated their combined forces, Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide, and Egypt fell under Roman domination.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)
Coleridge was an English poet, critic, philosopher, and leader of the British Romantic movement. He is most famous for his unfinished poem *Kubla Khan* (1816) and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798).

Cornhill Magazine (1860–1975)
Founded by publisher George Smith, *Cornhill Magazine* was a popular literary journal that published criticism and serial novels. Many well-known writers, including its first editor, William Thackeray, graced its pages until it closed.

Corsican Brigands
An island in the Mediterranean, Corsica has spent the better part of its pre-twentieth-century history in turbulence due to wars over its territory and long-standing family vendettas.

Coterie
A coterie refers to an intimate and often exclusive group of persons with a unifying common interest.

Curio
A curio is something novel, rare, or bizarre.

Cycle Clips
Cycle clips may refer to clips that attach a cyclist’s shoe to the bicycle pedal, or to the ankle bands worn to keep a cyclist’s pant legs from being caught in the chain.

Derbyshire
A county in the East Midlands of England, Derbyshire was where Tom Stoppard lived when he moved to England at the age of nine and is the home of *Arcadia*’s fictional Sidley Park. Derbyshire shares its western border with Nottinghamshire, where Lord Byron’s Newstead Abbey stands.

Deterministic Universe
Determinism is the theory that, in our completely rational universe, all events, including moral choices, are determined by previously existing causes and not by free will.

DNB
*The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is a print and online national record of influential British people who lived between 500 BCE and the present.

Don
A don is a senior member of a college at a British university, especially at Oxford or Cambridge. This is not the title of a position (like lecturer, reader, or professor) but a term of respect deriving from the Latin *dominus* (“master”).
Dwarf Dahlia
Diverse and versatile, dahlias are flowers prized for their large, often spectacularly-colored and shaped blooms. Dwarf dahlias are the smallest members of the family, standing at about 8” tall.

“English Bards”
“English Bards and Scotch Reviewers” is a satirical poem by Lord Byron first published anonymously in 1809. It was written in response to the Edinburgh Review's unfavorable review of Byron’s first volume of poetry, Hours of Idleness. The poem went through several editions, but Byron came to regret his vitriol and suppressed the fifth edition in 1812.

Enlightenment
The European cultural and intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Central to Enlightenment thought was the use and the celebration of reason. Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations were considered ideal and feature prominently in the art, architecture, and philosophy of the period. This period produced Europe's first modern secularized theories of psychology and ethics.

Et in Arcadia ego!
This phrase appears in two paintings from the mid 1600s, both titled Arcadian Shepherds, by Nicolas Poussin (1584–1665).
They depict three shepherds and a woman gathered around a tomb with the inscription “Et in Arcadia ego,” alternately translated as “I, who am now dead, also lived once in Arcadia” or, “I, Death, exist even in Arcadia.” It serves as a reminder that death exists in even apparently idyllic circumstances.

Eton
Eton College, near Windsor, Berkshire, is one of England’s largest independent secondary schools.

Euclid (325–265 BCE)
Euclid was a Greek mathematician who applied deductive principles of logic to elementary plane geometry and used this method (Euclidean geometry) to derive statements from clearly defined axioms.

European Journal of English Studies
The highly regarded European Journal of English Studies is dedicated to scholarly research and criticism of English literature, linguistics, and cultural studies.

Fermat’s Last Theorem
Pierre de Fermat (1601–65) was a French mathematician. Fermat’s last theorem holds that “it is impossible to separate a cube into two cubes, a fourth power into two fourth powers, or, generally, any power above the second into two powers of the same degree.” Fermat claimed to have found “a remarkable proof which the margin is too small to contain.” Mathematicians sought to find this proof for more than 350 years. Many thought it was impossible, until Princeton University–based British mathematician Andrew Wiles solved it in 1993 after seven years of concentrated effort. His discovery was announced two months after Arcadia debuted in London; Stoppard insisted the performance program be reprinted to include an article about the finding.

Henry Fuseli (1741–1825)
Henry Fuseli was a Swiss-born artist who is famous for his paintings and drawings of nude figures caught in strained and violent poses.

Galileo (1564–1642)
Galileo, the father of modern physics and observational astronomy, was the first scientist to study the stars using a telescope. His support of Copernicus’s theory that the earth revolves around the sun led to his persecution and imprisonment during the Inquisition. His experiments dealing with gravity challenged the teachings of Aristotle and anticipated Newton’s laws of motion.

Gallic Wars (50–58 BCE)
The Gallic Wars were series of offensives waged against Celtic tribes by the Roman Empire. “The Britons live on milk and meat” is a quotation from Julius Caesar’s book of commentaries on the Gallic Wars.

Gothic Novel
The European Gothic novel is characterized by its atmosphere of mystery and terror. The term “Gothic” is derived from the genre’s preoccupation with medieval architecture: ruins, castles, and monasteries, often with subterranean passages, hidden panels, and trapdoors. Iconic examples include
Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* and Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Italian*. The style’s heyday was the 1790s, but many Gothic revivals followed.

**Grouse**
A grouse is a brown bird slightly larger than a partridge found primarily in the heathers of northern England and Scotland. The British shoot thousands each autumn; the shoots, particularly in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, were massive social affairs.

**Guinea**
A guinea was a gold British coin that was in circulation from 1663 to 1813.

**Ha-ha**
A fundamental element of picturesque English garden design, a ha-ha is a sunken barrier along the perimeter of one’s property meant to keep farm animals and wildlife out without disrupting the scenery with obtrusive fences or hedges. It was invented by eighteenth-century landscape designer William Kent. The term comes from the exclamation one makes when one comes upon one unexpectedly—and falls in.

**Harrow**
The prestigious Harrow School, founded by Queen Elizabeth in 1571, is widely considered one of the best secondary schools in the United Kingdom, along with its rival Eton, against which it played an annual cricket match at Lord’s Cricket Grounds. Byron, who attended Harrow, played in the match in 1805.

**Heat Exchange**
This refers to the second law of thermodynamics, which states, in essence, that some of the energy extracted from a body to do some kind of work will not be available to do that work again: i.e., some of it will be lost.

**Hermit**
A hermit is someone who lives in solitude, especially in an ascetic manner for religious or spiritual purpose. Hermits were popular fixtures in Romantic English gardens, and many estate owners hired hermits or found suitable volunteers.

**Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)**
Hobbes was an English political philosopher who, in his book *Leviathan* (1651), declares that humans are fundamentally brutish, selfish creatures.

**Lord Holland (1773–1840)**
Henry Vassall-Fox, third Baron Holland, was an English politician. His mansion in Wiltshire became a prestigious social, literary, and political center with many celebrated visitors, referred to as “The Holland House Set.” In 1809, Lord Byron attacked Holland and his circle in “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.”

“I had a dream . . .”
This is a quote from Lord Byron’s “Darkness,” written in 1816: the Year Without a Summer. Mount Tambora had erupted in the Dutch East Indies the previous year, casting enough ash into the atmosphere to block out the sun and cause abnormal weather across much of northeast America and northern Europe.
“Darkness” is referred to as a “last man” poem: one which narrates the apocalyptic story of the last man on earth.

**Iterated Algorithm**
An iterated algorithm is a procedure that is repeated in order to solve a mathematical problem.

**Francis Jeffrey, the Edinburgh Review**
Edinburgh’s oldest literary journal, the *Edinburgh Review* was established in 1802 in the home of its founding editor, Oxford-educated Francis Jeffery (1773–1850). Jeffery, a staunch opponent of Romanticism, printed numerous critical attacks on Wordsworth and Byron.

**Just William Books**
Written by Richmal Crompton in 1922, *Just William* is the first in a series of children’s books about a young school boy named William Brown. The books are the basis for numerous television, film, and radio adaptations.

**Kew**
The garden at Kew House became the Royal Botanic Gardens in 1759; it is home to a five-story Chinese pagoda, a Chinese house, and a Chinese bridge.

**Caroline Lamb (1785–1828)**
Lady Lamb was a British aristocrat and novelist. Though married to politician William Lamb, she embarked on a well-publicized affair with Lord Byron in the spring and summer of 1812. Byron ended the relationship in August of that year, and Lamb suffered a series of emotional breakdowns that led to her ostracization from fashionable society. Nonetheless, each writer continued to influence and appear in the other’s work. Lamb’s most famous work is the 1816 novel *Glenarvon*. At the time, her writing was widely dismissed as pulp fiction, but after Lamb’s death, scholars began to consider her gifted in her own right.

**Latin Unseen**
Latin unseen refers to a translation exercise from Latin to English that a student must perform without the assistance of a dictionary.

**D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930)**
A prolific English author, Lawrence is famous for his exploration of human instinct, love, and vitality in opposition to modernity and industrialization. His best-known work is *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, a novel about an upper class woman who has an affair with her husband’s gamekeeper.

**Baron von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz**
Leibnitz (1646–1716) was a German philosopher and mathematician who, independently of Newton, invented differential and integral calculus.

**Lesbos**
An island off eastern Greece in the Aegean Sea near Turkey, Lesbos was a cultural center of ancient Greece known for its lyric poets, including Sappho. It was also home to Aristotle.

**Library of Alexandria**
The Alexandrian library and museum were founded and maintained by the long succession of Ptolemites—rulers of Egypt from 323 to 30 BCE (ending with...
Ptolemy XV, who reigned alongside his mother, Cleopatra. The library housed mainly Greek-language texts, including the work of many famous Greek poets. Its keepers pioneered the division of works into bound books (as opposed to scrolls) and introduced systems of punctuation. There were four possible occasions for the partial or complete destruction of the Library of Alexandria: Julius Caesar’s fire in the Alexandrian War in 48 BCE; the attack of Aurelian in 270–75 CE; the decree of Coptic Pope Theophilus in 391 CE; and the Muslim conquest in 642 CE.

Linnean Society
An English scientific society organized in 1788, the Linnean Society is dedicated to the promotion of the study of natural history.

“Look to the mote in your own eye.”
A mote is a small particle, a speck. Luke 6:41 warns against criticizing others before reflecting on one’s own flaws: “And why seest thou a mote in thy brother’s eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”

Claude Lorrain (1604–82)
Born Claude Gellée, Lorrain was a French artist and one of the earliest European painters of landscapes. He was famous for scenes containing both urban and pastoral elements—e.g., rolling hillsides with a city visible in the background, an ocean horizon from the perspective of a busy port.

Malta Packet
A packet is a boat that travels a regular passenger route; a Malta packet is a passenger ship that sails between England (in Arcadia, it starts from Falmouth, a town on the south coast of Cornwall) and the country of Malta (three islands in the Mediterranean Sea south of Sicily that were under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom from 1800 to 1964).

Marie of Romania (1875–1938)
The wife of King Ferdinand of Romania, Marie was queen consort from 1914 to 1927. She appears in Dorothy Parker’s poem “Comments” (1937): “Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song, / A medley of extemporanea; / And love is a thing that can never go wrong; /And I am Marie of Romania.”

John Milton (1608–74)
Regarded as one of the greatest English poets, Milton is best known for his epic Paradise Lost (1667).

Thomas Moore (1779–1852)
Moore was an Irish Romantic poet and friend and biographer of Lord Byron. He is famous for his major poetic work, Irish Melodies (1807–34).

Sir James Murray (1837–1915)
Sir James Augustus Henry Murray was a Scottish lexicographer and first editor of A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, now known as The Oxford English Dictionary.

Improved Newcomen Steam Pump
The atmospheric engine invented by Thomas Newcomen in 1712 was the first practical device to harness the
power of steam to produce mechanical work. Newcomen engines were used throughout Britain and Europe, principally to pump water out of mines, starting in the early eighteenth century. It worked by converting heat energy into mechanical energy: when water boils into steam its volume increases, producing a force that is used to move a piston back and forth in a cylinder. The piston is attached to a crankshaft, which converts the back-and-forth motion into a rotary motion for driving machinery.

While working at the University of Glasgow in 1763, Scottish inventor James Watt was asked to repair the school’s Newcomen Pump. He realized the design wasted a great deal of energy by repeatedly cooling and reheating the cylinder; by 1776, he had improved upon Newcomen’s design with a steam engine of his own.

Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire
Newstead Abbey was the ancestral home of the Byron family beginning in 1163. Byron spent much of his youth there; the estate featured a wine cellar, a library, a large menagerie (including a bear), and grounds for fencing, boxing, and shooting. Today it is a museum.

Sir Isaac Newton
In 1687, English mathematician and physicist Sir Isaac Newton published his seminal *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, which describes universal gravitation (the gravitational attraction between bodies with mass) and the three laws of motion. Newton's laws state that every object in motion will stay in motion until acted upon by an outside force, that force equals mass times acceleration (F = ma), and that every action causes an equal and opposite reaction. Newton’s work proved that both the motion of celestial bodies and objects on earth could be predicted through the same series of equations. Newton also made significant contributions to mathematics (including the development of calculus) and to the studies of light and sound. His empirical law of cooling, cited by Valentine in *Arcadia*, states that all objects will eventually cool or warm to the temperature of their surroundings.

Onan
In Genesis, Onan was ordered to take his brother’s widow in marriage. Resenting that the children she bore him would be his brother’s legal heirs, Onan withdrew before climax to avoid impregnating her. “Onanism,” therefore, is any “spilling of the seed” that is not meant to produce children, i.e., masturbation.

Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE)
Ovid was a great Roman poet known for his erotic and mythological poems, including *The Art of Love* and *Metamorphoses*. He originally trained for a career in law.

Pall Mall
Pall Mall is a fashionable London street.

Parterre
A parterre is an ornamental garden with paths between the beds.

Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866)
A British satirical novelist and poet and contemporary of Percy Shelley.
Peking Bridge
The solid granite Peking Bridge (Marco Polo Bridge) is located in what is now Beijing, China. It is decorated with hundreds of stone lions from various dynasties and bookended by ornamental columns and white marble steles.

Pericles (495–29 BCE)
Pericles was a statesman noted for advancing democracy in Athens. He was a great patron of the arts, encouraging music and drama, and ordered the construction of the Parthenon.

Piccadilly Recreation
This is a fictional publication in Arcadia that reviews and satirizes literature.

Picturesque Style
By the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the picturesque style of landscape design (which involved imitating paintings, especially those of Claude Lorrain) had established itself as a standard of beauty. It was characterized by its emphasis on disorderliness and roughness: open and irregular views, meandering streams, and rambling wooded hills were complemented by artfully scattered Classical or Gothic temples, bridges, follies, and ruins.

Placeman
A placeman refers to a person appointed to a position, especially in the government, as a reward for political support of an elected official.

Portmanteau
A portmanteau is a large leather case that opens into two hinged compartments.

QED
Quod erat demonstrandum literally translates: “which was to be demonstrated.” The acronym used to convey that a fact or situation demonstrates the truth of one’s theory or claim, especially to mark the conclusion of a formal proof.

Quantum
Quantum mechanics drives modern physics. According to Newton, physical properties are continuously variable and energy travels in the form of waves. Quantum theory is based on the supposition that energy and other physical properties exist in tiny, discrete particles.

Queen Dido
In Roman mythology, Dido is the founder and queen of Carthage, Africa. In Virgil’s Aeneid, she falls in love with Aeneas and then kills herself on a burning pyre when he abandons her.

Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823)
Radcliffe was an English novelist who enjoyed popularity in the 1790s. Her work employs the vivid descriptions typical of the Romantic period and pioneers many characteristics of the Gothic novel, most notably supernaturalism. Her The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) is often cited as the quintessential Gothic novel.

Rationalism
Rationalism regards deductive reasoning as the chief source and test of knowledge and discounts sensory experience as unreliably subjective. According to
Rationalist thought, all the truths of physical science and even history are, in principle, consequences of self-evident premises. This view is opposed to systems that regard the mind as a *tabula rasa* upon which the outside world imprints itself through the senses.

**Recording Angel**
In Judaic, Christian, and Islamic theology, a recording angel is a being charged with tracking the deeds of individuals for future reward or punishment.

**Regency Style (1795–1820)**
Regency style is a type of decorative arts produced during the regency of George IV and inspired primarily by Greek and Roman antiquity, with motifs borrowed from traditional Egyptian and Chinese design. Clothing during this period was increasingly simple and utilitarian. Women’s fashions abandoned full skirts and bustling in favor of the classical ideal of the natural figure.

**Relativity**
The theory of relativity was introduced by Albert Einstein in 1905. It states that the speed of light remains constant for all observers regardless of the observer’s motion or of the source of light. Although the Newtonian laws explain most physical phenomena, they are insufficient at speeds approaching the speed of light—the maximum speed possible, according to the theory of relativity. Other aspects of the theory: mass and energy are equivalent and convertible; objects and time transform with motion.

**Humphry Repton (1752–1818) and His Red Books**
Humphry Repton was the leading landscape architect of his day, famous for his intricate and eclectic style. He presented his plans to his clients in Red Books, named for their characteristic red leather bindings. A typical album contained his observations on the present state of a client’s property and his recommendations on how it might be improved. Watercolor illustrations would accompany the text, some of them furnished with hinged or sliding overlays making it possible to compare before-and-after views of the same scene.

**Rill**
A rill is a small stream, brook, or rivulet.

**Samuel Rogers (1763–1865)**
Rogers was an English poet famous for *The Pleasures of Memory*, which he published anonymously in 1792.

**Romantic**
The Romantic movement in European art occurred between 1800 and 1850. Romantic art gives increased attention to the elements of nature that suggest power, struggle, fear, anguish, horror, frustration, and other intense emotions.

**Salvator Rosa (1615–73)**
Rosa was a noted Italian Baroque painter, poet, actor, and musician. He is best known for his Romantic landscape paintings, turbulent and rugged scenes peopled with shepherds, brigands, seamen, and soldiers, which supposedly inspired the picturesque movement in English landscape design.
Rota
A rota is a period of work or duty taken in rotation with others.

Royal Academy
Founded in 1768 by George III, the Royal Academy of Arts is a prominent private arts society. Its headquarters, art museum, and educational facilities are located in Burlington House, in the borough of Westminster.

St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness
*St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* is an undated oil painting by Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch (1450–1516). It depicts John the Baptist with one finger extended towards a lamb, which may symbolize John himself—an innocent victim of the wickedness of mankind—or Jesus Christ.

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832)
Sir Walter Scott was a Scottish writer, poet, and historical novelist.

“She Walks in Beauty”
Among Lord Byron’s most famous poems, “She Walks in Beauty” appears in *Hebrew Melodies* (1815). The first stanza reads, “She walks in beauty, like the night / Of cloudless climes and starry skies; / And all that’s best of dark and bright / Meet in her aspect and her eyes: / Thus mellow’d to that tender light / Which heaven to gaudy day denies.”

Snipe
The snipe is a small brown wading bird common in Britain. It lives primarily in marshlands or along streams, but occasionally frequents urban areas.

Sod
“Sod” is a common British expletive and insult derived from “Sodomite.” “Sod all” means nothing or none. “Sod’s Law” is the British equivalent of the American “Murphy’s Law.”

Robert Southey (1774–1843)
A contemporary of Coleridge and Wordsworth, Robert Southey was a lesser-known Romantic poet who wrote *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and *Madoc* (1805).

Sub Rosa
A Latin phrase that literally translates as “under the rose,” *sub rosa* is understood to mean “confidentially.”

Sussex/Brighton
The University of Sussex is in a county that neighbors the city of Brighton.

“The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne . . . ”
This is a quotation from Act II, Scene 2 of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The Breakfast Hour
This may refer to a fictional version of the popular BBC One morning show *Breakfast Time*, which was on the air 1983–89 and broadcast a mix of news and features.

The Close Season
In hunting and fishing, the close season refers to the period of the year when killing certain game is prohibited.

The Observer
*The Observer* is liberal British Sunday
newspaper. Its sister daily is *The Guardian*.

**The Scientific Academy in Paris**
Académie des Sciences was founded in 1666 under the patronage of Louis XIV to advise the French government on scientific matters.

**William Thackeray (1811–63)**
Thackeray was an English journalist, novelist, and contemporary of Charles Dickens. Famous for his satirical works, particularly the novel *Vanity Fair*, he was also the first editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*.

**Theodolite**
A theodolite is a sixteenth-century surveyor’s instrument for measuring horizontal and vertical angles.

**Topped and Tailed**
A piece of writing that has been “topped and tailed” has had its beginning and the end cut during the editing process.

**Trinity**
Trinity College of Cambridge University was attended by the fictitious Septimus Hodge and the actual Lord Byron.

**Twickenham, Middlesex**
Twickenham is a large suburban town ten miles southwest of central London.

**Virgil (70–19 BCE)**
Born to peasant farmers, the Roman poet Virgil is credited with establishing Arcadia as a poetic ideal in *Eclogues* (also known as *Bucolics*). Virgil’s other major works include the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*.

**Horace Walpole (1717–97)**
An English historian, member of Parliament, playwright, and novelist, Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), often called the first Gothic novel. Walpole also penned the influential essay “On Modern Gardening” (1780), which called for a more progressive and natural approach to garden design.

**Waltz**
The waltz became popular in the courts of Vienna at the turn of the nineteenth century and quickly spread to France via Napoleon’s troops, and onward to the rest of Europe. Its introduction caused quite a stir: other dances of the day favored group dancing to partnered couples and kept significant distance between men and women. The waltz, however, required a man to place his hand on a woman’s waist and lead her in a series of twirls. This raised moral objections from the more conservative members of the aristocracy. Nonetheless, the dance became so popular that by 1815 it was widely accepted as an appropriate dance for members of fashionable society.

“When Father Painted the Parlor”
“When Father Painted the Parlor” is a popular song, written and composed by R. P. Weston and Fred J. Barnes in 1910.

**William Wordsworth (1770–1850)**
Wordsworth was the British poet who, with Coleridge, helped establish Romanticism in England. He wrote *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 with Coleridge, and in 1843 he was named poet laureate.
Arcadia Correspondence
Between Carey Perloff and Tom Stoppard for A.C.T.’s 1995 Production

September 29, 1995

Dear Tom,

Just a quick note to tell you what an exhilarating time we’re having on Arcadia. As we begin to discover the intellectual and emotional and even physical stamina it takes to do justice to the intricacies of this text, I imagine with amazement what you must have gone through in the writing of it! Mostly I think it’s all making sense. I do have a few questions/moments I would love some elucidation of (forgive my grammar . . . it’s been a long week!) if you’ve got time:

—p.5 Septimus’ line “Time must needs run backwards . . .” Is this a quote?? It seems so formally stated for Septimus at this moment, I can’t quite figure it out.

—pp.13-14 I’m interested in the tone of the end of Scene 1. With the “calendar of slaughter” and the premonition of death it seems to get quite dark, and yet Thomasina exits the scene “cheerfully, an uncomplicated girl.” Is the death sequence just a fleeting dark cloud that is resolved by the end of the scene?

—p.23 Bernard: “No, no—a freebie. The joke that consoles . . .” Help! This one is too remote from our American brains. Is Bernard making sort of sexual references here (“You turned him down”)? What does the “freebie” refer to?

—p.57 “April the tenth.” Etc. Is Bernard’s explosion the result of the accumulated interruptions/insults? Why is “April the tenth” so particularly outrageous to him? (i.e. is Hannah just trying to get him back on track or is she making a joke of the date in reference to Chloe’s line about date rape?)

—p.83 Lady Croom is having trouble with the transition in Sc. 7 into “For the widow’s dowry of dahlias” . . . it’s such a radical change of subject . . . just motivated by seeing the flowers on the table?

—p. 84 Lady Croom’s line “The Chater would overthrow the Newtonian... continued ...
system in a weekend” seems to betray a level of knowledge about things
Newtonian that is quite different from her questions before and after this
line about geometry . . . I’m not sure I understand how the line plays . . . is it
to Septimus? To herself? Is she showing off that she does in fact get what’s
going on?

—p.87 Lady Croom “. . . as a courtesy to the count.” The count being
Zelinsky? Is he being groomed for Thomasina? Or is this another count?

—p.94 Septimus: “When we have found all the mysteries . . .” meaning when
we have answered all the mysteries (and then lost those answers in the
endless search for meaning)?

Forgive these questions if they seem idiotic to you . . . remember that
it’s a different culture!! (You can’t imagine the amount of time I have spent
recounting the details of my tutorials at Oxford so that they will get some
sense of the verbal aerobics and sheer bullshit so prized by that particular
corner of British culture . . . Americans are so confessional, it’s hard for them
to think of language in any terms other than honest transparency. . .)

Anyway, it’s a marvelous and very alive cast, very sexy, very compassionate,
and I think they are finding exciting things. We’ll keep you posted, and we
still hope you’ll make it over to see this production. I think you’d be pleased.

By the way, did I write you how much I adored Indian Ink? Ever since I
worked with Tony Harrison on his Phaedra Britannica I have been fascinated
by the Raj and I found your play so richly evocative and so sad . . . Jean
Stapleton (whom Harold Pinter loved as Meg in my production of The
Birthday Party in New York) longs to play the Margaret Tyzack role. I know
that Lincoln Center is once again in the driver’s seat with this one, but we
would certainly jump at the chance to put Indian Ink onto the stage of the
gorgeous newly renovated Geary Theater next season . . . I asked Bernie
if they’d like to co-produce it and he replied emphatically “Lincoln Center
doesn’t DO that” . . . but I thought I’d let you know of our interest just in
case.

Many thanks again for all your help.
All my best,
Carey

October 4, 1995

Dear Carey,

It’s nice to hear from you, and particularly to hear that you’re having a good
time with Arcadia. Your questions are perfectly reasonable—I guess you
have a copy of your letter so I’ll refer to them in numerical order.

continued . . .
1. (p 5) No, it’s not a quote. “Must needs” does sound a bit formal, I guess: but the phrase exists somewhere in my subconscious. I think (hope) it’s fairly normal kind of construction for Sept.

2. (p 13-14) Yes it is. (fleeting etc.)

3. (p 23) Yes—sexual reference. Trevor Nunn didn’t understand it either. He cajoled me into a rewrite: “No, no, a quick one behind the pavilion.” You can use it if you like. However, it does not refer to a pavilion at Sidley—it’s not specific. It’s like “behind the cricket pavilion”—or “behind the bikeshed”—schoolboy talk.

4. (p 57) Bad news. It’s a pun on date rape. Perhaps it’s less stupid in England.

5. (p 83) I think this is okay . . . not such a radical change of subject considering that she’s killing a few minutes waiting for Noakes; “the widow” would be brought to mind by the coded exchange “Your ladyship’s approval . . .” “Do not despair of it”—And the repeated reference to Noakes.

   Anyway, I have no secrets here.

6. It goes like this: “The action of bodies in heat” . . . . “The Chater would overthrow etc”—she knows nothing about Newton or geometry; and she knows it. She is making a sort of joke—deliberately misunderstanding—pretending that the author of Thom’s book overthrew Newton by using sex; so she says “Well, Mrs. C. could have done that, no problem!” Or “If bodies-in heat overthrows the Newtonian (whatever that it is) system, Mrs. C could do it in a weekend.”

7. (p 87) Yes. Zelinsky. Yes. Maybe he’s the man for Thom.

8. (94) Yes, sort of. “Found” = found out, seen through, solved, answered. But in solving the mysteriousness of mystery (by, for example, maths) we lose its deeper meaning, psychic meaning. It’s like . . . NASA can’t solve the meaning of the moon, they can only demonstrate it’s not made of cheese. (I found, to my slight embarrassment that the whole sentence says the same thing to me even if you transpose “mystery” and “meaning.”)

   Don’t hesitate to come back for more, and please convey my best wishes to the company.

   I’m so pleased you like Indian Ink. I would love you to do it if it ever fitted A.C.T.’s plans. I’m “sorry” about LC but you understand I owe them for giving Hapgood a New York chance—a Jack O’B again.

Love,
Tom
Questions to Consider

1. Which characters in *Arcadia* subscribe to Classicism? Romanticism?

2. How do science and poetry converge in *Arcadia*. How does *Arcadia* explore chaos?

3. *Arcadia* has a number of vividly drawn offstage characters. How do you picture Mrs. Chater, Lord Croom, and Lord Byron? How do you imagine Sidney Park’s garden?

4. How does *Arcadia* treat time? How does it treat history?

5. How has *Arcadia* influenced your thinking about determinism versus free will?

For Further Information . . .


