

## A Book Salon on Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*

Wednesday, August 30, 2017, at 3 p.m.

Alumni Center Salon, Ronald Tutor Campus Center 302



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- Tom Stoppard is one of the major playwrights of our time. He was born in 1937 in Czechoslovakia. His family fled just prior to Nazi occupation, and he lived in Singapore and India during World War II, before moving to England in 1946.
- Stoppard worked as a journalist and theatre critic before he began writing plays.
- Stoppard's plays include *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Travesties*, and *Arcadia*. He has also co-written screenplays for films including *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *Shakespeare in Love*.
- His works are characterized by intellectual playfulness and sometimes critiqued for a lack of political or social commitment. However, especially after translating works by Polish and Czech authors in the 1980s, Stoppard became increasingly concerned with human rights and challenging state repression.
- A key playwright of the British National Theatre, Stoppard was knighted in 1997 and won the PEN Pinter Prize in 2013 for his "determination to tell things as they are."

### INDIAN INK

*Indian Ink* is a 1995 play based on Tom Stoppard's 1991 radio play *In the Native State*. The play takes place in two different times. In 1930, during the struggle for Indian independence from British colonial rule, a British poet named Flora travels to India to improve her health, and encounters an Indian artist named Nirad. Their relationship illuminates differences in Indian and European approaches to art, as well as colonial dynamics. In 1980, a British academic, Eldon, and Nirad's son, Anish, both seek out Flora's younger sister, Eleanor, to learn about Flora's death.

### DEFINITIONS

**COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM:** Colonialism is a practice of domination involving the subjugation of one people by another, especially involving one power settling its people on conquered territory. Colonialism has been a part of world history since at least Antiquity, but it changed dramatically in the sixteenth century, when sailing technology enabled European powers to embark on a modern colonial project of European settlement and political control all over the world. Thus, *colonialism* is sometimes defined as the modern phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world. For centuries, political theorists have struggled to reconcile the conflict between western colonial practice and liberal western thought advocating justice, universalism, and equality.

*Imperialism* and *colonialism* are often used synonymously, but many theorists define them distinctly. For some, while both terms describe political and economic control over a subjugated people or territory, colonialism more frequently involves physical

settlement in that territory, while imperialism describes a foreign government's control of a territory without significant settlement. Other theorists use the term *colonialism* to describe direct governance by a foreign nation, and *imperialism* to describe indirect forms of domination.

**CULTURAL IMPERIALISM:** The imposition of one community's culture on a subjugated community. This can include the imposition of customs, traditions, religion, language, and/or social and cultural norms, as part of a larger imperial project through which the dominating people force their way of life on the subjugated population.

**INDIAN INK:** A black pigment used in drawing or lettering. It was actually invented in China as early as the 3rd millennium BCE, but the name *Indian ink* or *India ink* was coined by the British during later trade with India.

**NATIONALISM:** The term *nationalism* is used to describe two distinct phenomena: 1) a sense of pride in national identity, sometimes akin to patriotism, and 2) actions taken by a people seeking to achieve self-determination. Further, different forms of nationalism are identified with very different political ideologies and actions, from the kind of anti-colonial nationalism advocated by Indians who fought British rule to the far-right white nationalism we see in the U.S. and Europe today.

## TIMELINE: BRITISH COLONIALISM IN INDIA

**CONTEXT** Starting around 3000 CE, the Indus Valley civilization dominates the subcontinent we know as India. For the next several thousand years, India functions as a self-contained political and cultural arena, where Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism originate, and rich literary, scientific, and artistic traditions develop. Starting around the 8th Century CE, Arab, Turkish, and Persian groups bring Islam to the area; some of them settle.

**1498** Portuguese navigator Vasco de Gama arrives in India.

**1600s** Holland, Great Britain, and France establish trading posts in India. The British East India Company is established in 1600.

**1700s–early 1800s** Anglo-Maratha and Anglo-Mysore wars; in 1772, British statesman Warren Hastings is appointed Governor-General of India.

**1829** Certain Indian religious and social practices outlawed by the British.

**1857–58** Sepoy Mutiny, Indian rebellion against British colonial presence.

**1858** India comes under direct rule of the British crown.

**1885** Founding of the nationalist Indian National Congress.

**1919** Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre, in which British troops fire on a crowd of unarmed Indians, sparks nationwide Indian revolt.

**1920–22** Gandhi launches non-cooperation movement against British rule.

**1930** The Salt March, led by Gandhi, protests British rule.

**1942–43** Gandhi and the Indian National Congress call to the British to "Quit India."

**1947** Indian independence.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How do Flora and Nirad embody their respective nations and cultures? What are the advantages and limitations of using individual characters to represent a colonial relationship?
- Is colonialism still affecting the world today? Where and how do you see it playing out? Does it take different forms in different times and places?
- Is human sexuality universal? Individual? Cultural? A combination of all of these?



"The Sepoy revolt at Meerut," from the *Illustrated London News*, 1857



THE FIRST INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, 1885.

Image of the delegates to the first meeting of the Indian National Congress in Bombay, 1885



Portion of a wall in Jallianwalla Bagh, Amritsar, Punjab, India, with bullet marks from the Massacre of Amritsar on April 13, 1919.



## TO LEARN MORE, EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES

- Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* and other plays
- The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon
- Culture and Imperialism* by Edward Said

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

**SOPHIE LESINSKA** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about playwright Tom Stoppard and his drama *Indian Ink*. Except where a call number is noted, you can access these resources through the search box on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu).

### Recommended Books

- Cain, Peter J., and Anthony G. Hopkins. 2016. *British Imperialism, 1688-2015*. New York: Routledge.  
Doheny Memorial Library: JV1011 .C17 2016
- Demastes, William. 2012. *The Cambridge Introduction to Tom Stoppard*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kelly, Katherine E. 1991. *Tom Stoppard and the Craft of Comedy: Medium and Genre at Play*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.  
Doheny Memorial Library: PR6069 .T6 Z73 1991
- Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.  
Doheny Memorial Library: DS12 .S24 1978
- Stoppard, Tom. 1995. *Indian Ink*. London: Boston: Faber and Faber.  
Doheny Memorial Library: PR6069 .T6 I64 1995  
Leavey Library: PR6069 .T6 I64 1995  
Leavey Library Drama Collection LOBBY-4

### Recommended scholarly journal articles

- Bevir, Mark. 1994. "The West Turns Eastward: Madame Blavatsky and the Transformation of the Occult Tradition." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 no. 3: 747-767.  
Database: JSTOR
- Kaplan, Laurie. 1998. "'In the Native State'/'Indian Ink': Footnoting the Footnotes on Empire (Tom Stoppard)." *Modern Drama* 41, no. 3: 337-46.  
Database: Gale Cengage Literature Resource Center
- Russell, Richard Rankin. 2004. "'It will make us friends': Cultural Reconciliation in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 27, no. 3: 1-18.  
Database: Project Muse

### Recommended newspaper coverage

- Farrar, Jennifer. 2014. "'Indian Ink' Is a Witty Mockery of Brits." *The Epoch Times*, October 03.  
Database: ProQuest Ethnic NewsWatch Current
- Felton-Dansky, Miriam. 2014. "We Regret to Inform You That Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink* Is Indelible." *The Village Voice*, October 01.  
Database: ProQuest Central
- Puri, Rajika. 2003. "Set in India, 'Indian Ink' by Tom Stoppard Premieres in N.Y." *News India — Times*, August 29.  
Database: ProQuest Ethnic NewsWatch Current

