Chapter IV

Politics: Concerns of Creativity in Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth and Indian Ink

Stoppard’s experiments with drama entered a new phase in the 1970s. Jumpers (1974) and Travesties (1976), two plays which set the critical world agog, established Stoppard in the thick of the British dramatic world. However, both these plays pertained more to the technical and verbal finesse which Stoppard was already known for. These works could in no way pre-figure what Stoppard had in store for his audiences. In the mid-seventies, there was a marked change in the tone and emphasis of his work. Up to this point, Stoppard had refrained from making any significant political comment as he did not want his experience of the stage to be limited by political engagements. He had consciously and consistently resisted an ideological leaning towards any side and his aversion to the didactic and the propagandist had been explicit. However, this was soon to change. Towards the end of the 1970s, Stoppard became remarkably outspoken regarding “the persecution of dissidents in the Soviet Union, in Czechoslovakia and under other totalitarian regimes” and with this “new outspokenness on public issues came a series of plays with contemporary political settings” (Delaney 83). Noticed by critics and academicians alike, Stoppard’s new pre-occupation with concerns of Eastern Europe manifested itself in a number of incidents; a rally at Trafalgar Square in August 1976, an article in The Sunday Times, February 27, 1977 about his visit to Moscow and Leningrad, and the expression of his dislike over the suppression of Charter 77, a document asking for the protection of human rights in Czechoslovakia. This new articulation of political interest also manifested itself in another article which Stoppard wrote for The Sunday Times to strongly denounce British participation in the Moscow Olympics. He also spear-headed a campaign ‘Let Misha Go’ for the release of the thirteen year old Misha, the son of a Russian dissident, so that he could join his mother in England. For once, the playwright took on the actor’s part, as he “enacted the role of
Vaclav Havel’s defence lawyer in a Munich re-creation of the trial of the Czech playwright for political dissidence” (Delaney 82).

In 1976, Stoppard visited the country of his birth, Czechoslovakia, where he met Vaclav Havel, a playwright, who would later become the President of Czechoslovakia from December 1989 to July 1992. During the same visit, he also met Pavel Kohout, a playwright forbidden to work in the theatre, and Pavel Landovsky, an actor arrested with Havel. Kohout, who shares his birthplace, Zlin, with Stoppard, had attempted a condensed re-working of Macbeth, designed for performance in a living room. Stoppard could not resist the idea and hitched it on to his already written Dogg’s Hamlet, thereby, coming back to Shakespeare and his canon to write a political play spiced with experimentation and dexterity. Though Dogg’s Hamlet and Cahoot’s Macbeth were separate pieces initially, written at separate times, yet Stoppard calls them “integrated” plays. Dogg was a pseudonym for Ed Berman, the American Director of Inter-Action, a community arts organization. Stoppard wrote four pieces for Berman; Dogg’s Our Pet, The 15 Minute Hamlet. The (15 Minute) Dogg’s Troupe Hamlet and New-Found-Land. Dogg’s Hamlet is the combination of two short pieces; Dogg’s Our Pet (1971) and The Dogg’s Troupe 15 Minute Hamlet (1976). Dogg’s Our Pet was an anagram for Dogg’s Troupe, while the 15 minute version of Hamlet was written on Berman’s request to be performed on the roof of a bus.

These two playlets were combined with Kohout’s idea and the result was Dogg’s Hamlet. Cahoot’s Macbeth. Kohout becomes Cahoot as Stoppard is now in cahoots with Kohout. Because of his penchant for textual revisions and re-writings, the script of Dogg’s Hamlet. Cahoot’s Macbeth evolved over a number of years from 1971-79. Cahoot’s Macbeth contains an abbreviated version of Macbeth and was inspired by the Czech regime’s oppression against artists in Czechoslovakia since the publication of Charter 77. Pavel Kohout wrote to Stoppard regarding the circumstances in which they were forced to perform, that is, in living rooms. Living-Room Theater literally meant “five actors with one suitcase” who perform in private homes (Preface). Stoppard dedicated Cahoot’s Macbeth to Pavel Kohout, “the Czechoslovakian playwright” and
Dogg’s Hamlet to “Professor Dogg and The Dogg’s Troupe of Inter-Action.” In the combination of these two different contexts of the usage of Shakespeare, Stoppard depicts how Shakespeare has been used at different moments in academic and national history. Terence Hawkes elaborates ‘Shakespeare is a powerful ideological weapon, always available in periods of crisis, and used according to the exigencies of the time to resolve crucial areas of indeterminacy” (Drakakis 44). Stoppard uses Hamlet because it is the epitome of English tragedy and Shakespeare’s most famous work. Macbeth is used as Stoppard wanted to draw “a direct parallel between Macbeth’s usurpation of the Scottish throne and the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia” (Diamond 594). Stoppard’s devices to manipulate Shakespeare include borrowing, pasting, quoting (within and without context), collaging and conflating. However, Stoppard’s purpose in this text continues to be elusive. He is playing games with language as well as his reader but at the same time he also has an axe to grind about censorship, state control over art and other such issues. Not unexpectedly, Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth comes across as a piece of “chaotic incomprehension” (Hodgson 106). It is problematic to consider it as a major play, yet it is by no means insignificant either, as Stoppard reflects on the debate between the rights of the individual and the rules of the state.

The first combined performance of all three pieces (Dogg’s Our Pet, The Dogg’s Troupe 15 Minute Hamlet and Cahoot’s Macbeth) was at the Arts Centre, University of Warwick on May 21, 1979, followed by performances in London, Washington and New York (Hodgson 105). It was intended as a double bill consisting of Dogg’s Our Pet and the shortened Hamlet as the first half and an illegal performance of Macbeth in Czechoslovakia as Cahoot’s Macbeth as the second half. This collaboration with Shakespeare across the barriers of time had Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead as its predecessor and was to be followed by Shakespeare in Love. The former, however, is thriving in the critical and academic world, while the politics of Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth confines it to the time and context for which it was written in the first place. Both Hamlet and Macbeth become the play-within-the-play and the audience becomes the-audience-within-the-audience as they watch role-playing-within-the-role, as will be discussed later in the chapter.
The first piece in this ensemble, Doge's Hamlet is based on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations (1953), where he put forward the thesis that “different groups of people might use the same words to mean fundamentally different things” (Kelly, Craft 130). Following Wittgenstein, Stoppard creates his own primitive language called “Dogg” which functions as his metaphor. However, he uses a much larger vocabulary than Wittgenstein. This language “Dogg” looks like English but positive words in English have a negative tinge in Dogg and the result is comedy bordering on the farcical because of the confusion resulting from the two different languages and their inter-currents. The text gives translations from Dogg to English in square brackets along the dialogue. As is evident, Stoppard’s intertextual frame of reference gets significantly wider as Hamlet and Macbeth delve into philosophical investigations to tackle issues like oppression, censorship, totalitarianism and a school play.

The play depicts a group of school boys rehearsing Hamlet for a function in their school. For these children, Shakespeare is a language beyond their comprehension and the school authorities, particularly, the headmaster Dogg, imposes this performance on them. The boys are named after English alphabets; Abel, Baker, Charlie, other characters include Dogg, the headmaster, Easy, the lorry driver and Fox Major, another school boy who walks away with all the prizes. The names are sequential, not psychological. This performance of Shakespeare is meant for a school function with a chief guest, prize giving, speeches etc. Stoppard’s intention here seems to be to convey how Shakespeare has become a staple and mandatory part of British academic culture and how he is almost synonymous with English culture and a must in all formal occasions. A highly condensed and miniature version of Hamlet follows, but with all the important parts in place. This is followed by a three minute encore but none of the lines of the 15 minute Hamlet are repeated in the encore. Incidentally, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are absent in this production.

The boys’ rehearsal is interrupted by a lorry driver, Easy, who comes to deliver a consignment of wood and who speaks only English. Consequently, three strands of
dialogue run into each other; the conversation of the boys in Dogg, the English of Easy and the text of Hamlet. Baker, one of the boys, realizes that Easy’s words have some familiarity with the language of the play they are rehearsing:

BAKER: By heaven I charge thee speak! (Pause).
EASY: Who are you then?
BAKER: (Encouragingly.) William Shakespeare.
EASY: (To ABEL.) Cretin is he?
BAKER: (Looking at his wrist watch.) Trog-taxi.
EASY: I thought so. (Looking at CHARLIE.) Are you all a bit peculiar, then? Where’s the guvnor?
(DOGG enters briskly.)
DOGG: Useless! [*Aftemoon!]
BOYS: Useless, git! [*Afternoon, sir!]
EASY: Afternoon, squire. [This means in Dogg, *Get stuffed, you bastard.]
(DOGG grabs EASY by the lapels in a threatening manner.)
DOGG: Marzipan clocks! [*Watch it!] (152)

Paradoxically, the first intelligible words for us in the play, spoken by Easy, are totally incomprehensible to the boys. What happens borders closely on the farce because all of them are at cross purposes with each other as the words they are using have an innocent use in one language and abusive in another. Some corresponding words in Dogg and English are Cube – Thanks, Daisy Squire – Mean Bastard, Vanilla Squire – Rotten Bastard, Cretinous, git – What time it is, sir?, Useless – Good day and so on. As Easy enters, he relates what happened on his way, this story is significant because it is repeated in Cahoot’s Macbeth but in Dogg when Easy has acquired sufficient control over it. The wood that Easy is delivering is required to build a platform onstage for the boys to enact Hamlet. They also build a wall with letters on some of the blocks, to announce the play that they will perform. The words first read:

MATHS, then MEG, then GOD, and finally DOGGS
OLD SHOT SLAG HAM
EGG (158) GLAD (159) THEM (161) LET (163)
Here, I am referring to the exact way this text has been used by Stoppard. He insists on playing games with his audience and reader as they puzzle over this riddle. The 15 minute Hamlet begins only when the writing on the wall is correct and the anagram has been solved. Easy has also started grasping Dogg by now and he introduces the play-within-the-play:

EASY: Hamlet bedsocks Denmark. Yeti William Shakespeare...

*The lighting changes and there is a trumpet fanfare and DOGG enters now dressed to take his part in the 15 – Minute Hamlet.* (163)

The school boys have created their own version of Hamlet, emphasizing their freedom to create and manipulate their interpretation of Shakespeare. Dogg plays Shakespeare, Mrs. Dogg plays Gertrude and Fox Major is Hamlet. Anticipating *Shakespeare in Love*, Shakespeare himself becomes dramatis personae here and reads the prologue, which is wrung out of the most important and visible lines of the text of Hamlet:

SHAKESPEARE: For this relief, much thanks...

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
To be, or not to be, that is the question.
There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy—
There’s a divinity that shapes our ends...
The lady doth protest too much... (163-4)

This prologue consists of lines which contain the distilled essence of the whole play and they have become quotes and reference points of literature. But, this re-working of the Bard does not leave anything out; the plot and structure are completely retained. However, the effect is that of a fast-forwarded spectacle. The complete ensemble includes a seventeen line prologue, a depiction of the complete storyline of Hamlet including Osric and an encore. In a strange Stoppardian quirk, the bouquet that Ophelia enters with “in mad trance” is “wrapped in cellophane” (169).¹

¹ Anachronism as noted in *Shakespeare in Love* is a Stoppardian hallmark.
Stoppard has carried forward his own mantle of experimentation with the genre of drama. He has mixed contemporary dialogue with excerpts from the texts of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in both Dlogg’s *Hamlet* as well as Cagogh’s *Macbeth*. After having confronted Dogg, a language unknown to us as the audience we now encounter high Shakespearean tragedy in the form of a pastiche of *Hamlet*. This makes the play a mock-linguistic experiment, because it radically challenges our assumptive notions of the usage of language. For instance, when Easy asks for a plank, he wants a specific type of piece of wood. But, in Dogg “plank” means “ready.” The platform builders take this in the context of Easy being ready to receive any arbitrary piece of wood. In the process, he receives different pieces of wood, but only sometimes a plank. This idea of a man calling out for different pieces of wood is derived from an actual example of Wittgenstein. Stoppard inserts yet another word game here. Charlie turns on the radio to check the football results, but the language on the radio is Dlogg. When Easy notices the radio, he too starts checking the results “before he realizes that he can’t make head or tail of the radio.” Easy, quite uneasy, realizes that something is amiss:

EASY: (Bemused.) Do you mind if I ask you something. What wavelength are you on? (157)

Thus, Stoppard plays on the frailty of meaning. The wavelength that Easy refers to is in fact the real one on the radio as well as the language that they are using. Continuing this travesty of a school ceremony, “A Lady” presides over the function and delivers a speech in Dogg. The following words out of her speech provide some clues about what Stoppard actually intended to convey:

“brats…puke…grow up…rank socks…crib books…catch pox…swig coke…hernia…sod the pudding club...” (160)

Stoppard parodies the clichéd contents of speeches delivered at such functions. Masking his thoughts with the veil of Dogg, Stoppard’s games – verbal and visual, are designed in such a way that he delights in them and probably rubs his hands in mirth at the anticipation of our bewilderment and incomprehension. Consequently “the audience oscillates between participation and bewilderment” (Jenkins 102). The play as a whole is...
an experiment at improvisation. It is also a test for Stoppard himself, how far he can go, and in gauging his skills for future performance. Ronald Hayman, who is considered somewhat an authority on Stoppard, says that Dogg’s Hamlet gave Stoppard “new insight into the possibilities of making words and actions mutually independent” (Bareham 143) referring to his juxtapositioning of Dogg, Shakespeare and English. Keir Elam has offered the most serious statement on this relatively obscure work. Referring to the audience’s inability to keep pace with the joke about language comprehension and the games Stoppard plays with us, Elam says:

The sense of semiotic inferiority is probably one of the main masochistic pleasures offered by the play…But in any event, in reversing Wittgenstein…Stoppard seems to suggest that dramatic discourse is itself a “primitive” language-game of a kind. (Hodgson 106)

Elam also calls theater “the privileged seat of pleasurable painful ambiguity” (Hodgson 106). However, there is another view about this work, that is, it is theatre of participation and it more or less lacks description and narration. To encourage his audience to participate in this game of detection of meaning, the dramatist drops hints along the way: flags, flowers, a platform, ribbon, a red carpet all suggest that the preparations underway are for some ceremony. Michael Billington reviewed Dogg’s Our Pet for The Guardian on December 9, 1971 (10), “simply a lunatic parody of a stiffly – formal, regally – attended opening ceremony” (Page 33). Critics suggest that the context was the opening of Inter-Action’s Almost Free Theatre in Rupert Street. Involving his audience, Stoppard wants them to learn the language his actors are using, to play games with their slabs, cubes, planks, and blocks, to look for missing bouquets. Hayman pays a hearty tribute to Stoppard’s skill when he says, “Few other playwrights would have been able to develop it (the idea) in a way which raises so many laughs and leaves an audience feeling so satisfied” (93), while Ruby Cohn calls Dogg’s Hamlet a “radical reduction of an iconic play” (52) as Shakespeare’s master piece is massacred and butchered to produce a trimmer version of the same.
When Stoppard applies scissors and paste to Shakespeare, he has his dig at the verbal abundance of the Bard’s work, at amateur productions, at school functions and the fostering of an incomprehensible language on school children. The performance is perfunctory and is reduced to a dutiful affair only as the boys know not what they perform because the language is beyond their comprehension, “They are not acting these lines at all, merely uttering them, tonelessly” (150). This is Stoppard’s way of hitting at the methods adopted to teach Shakespeare and other classics at school and he is hinting at the politics of language and learning. The language of Shakespeare is inaccessible to a majority of the population of the English speaking cultures:

Shakespeare is imposed on the schoolboys by their master Dogg whose Hamlet and whose Dogg they speak. Hamlet becomes the tool of the oppressor, or at least the tool of his oppressive idea of education, and the audience becomes implicated in that oppression because hamlet produces the only discourse (besides Easy’s few words) that we fully understand.” (Diamond 598)

Easy learns not only the language of words but also the language of action. After being hurled into the wall twice by Dogg for producing the wrong words on the wall, he “throws himself” into the wall when he realizes that he has repeated his error. Whether the audience learns Dogg or not is disputable, but towards the end, Easy speaks Dogg effortlessly:

EASY: (To audience.) Cube...

(He walks out.) (174)

He has survived all the confusion and emerges out of chaos with style, unruffled. He has learnt not only the language of words but also the language of action. Such a linguistic game does try the patience of the audience, but Stoppard was commending Berman for his concept of interactive theatre when he wrote this play.

This juncture marks a transition into Cahoot’s Macbeth, which deals with “the freedom of political dissent” (Delaney 72). Stoppard’s concern with political thought was not a new phenomenon. Over the years, Stoppard had been actively involved in the work
of Amnesty International and the Committee Against Psychiatric Abuse. His early plays Every Good Boy Deserves Favour and Professional Foul (1978) combined aesthetic and political concerns. The former is about a lunatic member of an orchestra who is lodged in a psychiatric hospital alongside a political dissident. The orchestra becomes a symbol of the rigid, compartmentalized, rather orchestrated society in which we live and where aberrations are not welcome. The lunatic and the dissident both challenge this order and are threats to society. The play is thus an allegory with underlying political implications. Professional Foul, dedicated to Vaclav Havel, deals with Anderson, a Professor of Ethics who is going to an academic conference in Prague as a guest of the Czech government. Because of oppressive state control, a former Czech student of his is unable to get his thesis published in Czechoslovakia. He asks the Professor to take his thesis back to England. Consequently, the Professor of Ethics finds himself engaged in a situation of moral and political turmoil as he does not want to offend his Czech hosts. At the same time he is also unwilling to let his student and therefore academics down. He acquiesces to his imprisoned student’s request and risks his career as well as his life. Hodgson remarks, “The ethical centre, this play implies, resides in the feeling behind the reason that prompts the action” (96). Anderson’s justification in taking the thesis back to England is that he wants to free academics from political control and he betrays his hosts. This reflects Stoppard’s overarching concern of the freedom to express which totalitarian regimes seek to control, “the ethics of the State must be judged against the fundamental ethic of the individual” (EGBDF 55). Therefore, in EGBDF and Professional Foul, Stoppard “attempts to demonstrate a universal consensus as to what constitutes fairness, goodness, ethical behaviour” (Delaney 90).

Stoppard’s next “political” play Night and Day (1978) again discusses freedom of expression and forms an integral part of Stoppard’s political body of writing. It takes into account the prevalent standards of journalism and its ideals and restrictions on the flow of information. “Just as Hollar (the student) and Alexander (the dissident) in EGBDF endanger their lives by freely expressing dangerous opinions, so in Night and Day we see journalists who endanger their lives in order to obtain and transmit information” (Delaney 109).

1 Hereafter, EGBDF.
101). In fact, Professional Foul, EGBDF, Night and Day have similar concerns and they anticipate Dogg’s Hamlet. Cahoot’s Macbeth. In an interview, Stoppard comments on the genesis of Cahoot’s Macbeth, “Kohout cut the play, Landovsky played Macbeth, and a celebrated actress, Vlasta Chramostova, played Lady Macbeth. This, for obvious reasons, would match up very well with a first half consisting of a short Hamlet. So I am quite happy about the choice of subject” (Hardin 165). Stoppard takes on an antic disposition as he uses allegory to highlight the autocratic regime of Czechoslovakia. The actors who have assembled in a living room to perform Macbeth use its text to express their hostility towards the rulers. He uses Shakespeare again as a point of reference as his appeal is timeless and universal. Hence, Stoppard continues to deal with the ethics of political action and the aesthetic possibility of achieving immortality in the words of art (Delaney 13).

Cahoot’s Macbeth reverses the basic premise of Dogg’s Hamlet. Dogg’s Hamlet began with Dogg, then Shakespeare took over, but Cahoot’s Macbeth begins with Shakespeare and then disintegrates into Dogg. In both cases, the text lapses into the English we know today only occasionally. Cahoot’s Macbeth begins with the text of Macbeth but:

*The action takes place in the living room of a flat. Thunder and lightning. Three WITCHES in minimal light.* (179)

This opening is reminiscent of the opening of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. There, Stoppard placed Elizabethans in the absurdist context, here, he places Witches in “the living room of a flat.” Stoppard emphasizes the absurd environs to show how people assemble in drawing rooms to perform and see banned, unauthorized performances of plays because the totalitarian regime forbids their staging in public. Thus, Cahoot’s Macbeth deals with not only the freedom of expression but also the freedom of assembly. The actors are forced to perform in these circumstances, so that they can “keep their talent alive” (Hardin 165).
The play begins with Act 1.1 of *Macbeth* but Stoppard cuts short the latter half and the text leaps to 1.3.80. A significantly chopped and condensed version of Shakespeare follows till Act 2.2 as Macbeth enters after murdering Duncan:

MACBETH: I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?
LADY MACBETH: I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.

*(A police siren is heard approaching the house. During the following dialogue the car arrives and the car doors are heard to slam.)* (184)

The owl and the crickets of *Macbeth* which were considered omens of evil are now the heralds of the police, equally evil here. Shakespeare’s text takes on a new meaning and the porter who knocks and enters the stage of *Macbeth* now has his parallel in the Inspector who enters “an empty room. He seems surprised to find himself where he is. He affects a sarcastic politeness.”:

INSPECTOR: Oh – I’m sorry – is this the National Theatre?

*(A woman, the HOSTESS, approaches through the audience.)*

HOSTESS: No. (185)

The Inspector is only pretending to be surprised; he is in effect carrying out a raid on a suspected premise. He not only insults the actors but also insists that they continue with the performance, while he checks the room for the listening devices he has planted. Anthony Jenkins draws a parallel between the arrival of Easy in *Dogg’s Hamlet* and the Inspector in *Cahoot’s Macbeth*:

His (the Inspector’s) arrival at the apartment reflects Easy’s at the school in the first part, for both confront a language (Dogg and Shakespeare) which, they come to realize, has some hidden meaning. Easy therefore becomes a reference point in taking the measure of this second intruder. (158)

Easy’s presence, however, came across as a well meaning one, though, occasioned by bouts of his own bewilderment. But the Inspector tries to brazen things out at most times. Jim Hunter says, “The State’s invasion of privacy and mistrust of artistic freedom are strikingly symbolized in the Inspector’s intrusion into *Macbeth* and his construction of a
wall across the stage” (Plays 52). Like Easy, the wall is another common element in both playlets, but, here the wall is the Iron Wall of Communism and serves a symbolic purpose. The wall which the school boys build in Dogg’s Hamlet to announce the name of their play for the school ceremony becomes a symbol of repressive forces in Cahoot’s Macbeth.

As the Inspector warns them about this illegal performance, he asserts that it is “acting without authority – acting without authority! – you’d never believe I make it up as I go along...Right! – sorry to have interrupted (188). Commenting on the Inspector, Kelly says, “The Inspector’s success in outmaneuvering the actors is most obvious in his outrageously funny lines and his strong stage presence. It is as if his comic idiom were part of his attempt to victimize the actors by upstaging them” (Craft 132). Stoppard insists on the fact that there can be no connection between universal art and a totalitarian regime; the two are incompatible. It is possible to convey this incompatibility with the celebration of art through a note of political dissidence. This question of the connection between art and politics had haunted Stoppard in Travesties as well where he asks “whether an artist has to justify himself in political terms at all.” The players in the living room are asserting their moral stand against the political stand of the authorities through their artistic stand making it a work which depicts the eternal battle between the right and the wrong. John Bull says, “For Stoppard, State Communism is the ultimate embodiment of a system that uses its rules to inhibit individual behaviour rather than to allow the expression of free will (Kelly, Companion 142). The Inspector, the State’s agent of oppression, is highly contemptuous of artists:

INSPECTOR: Sit! Here, boy! What’s his name?

“MACBETH”: Cahoot.

INSPECTOR: The social parasite and slanderer of the state?

CAHOOT: The writer.

INSPECTOR: That’s him...(193)
For the Inspector, artists, rather writers, are no more than parasites and slanderers. He calls artists “bloody intellectuals” (191) and he insists that his duty is to keep an eye on them. He is particularly intolerant of Shakespeare:

INSPECTOR: You see...If I can make just one tiny criticism...Shakespeare – or the Old Bill, as we call him in the force – is not a popular choice with my chief, owing to his popularity with the public, or, as we call it in the force, the filth. The fact is, when you get a universal and timeless writer like Shakespeare, there’s a strong feeling that he could be spitting in the eyes of the beholder when he should be keeping his mind on Verona – hanging around the ‘gents’...The chief says he’d rather you stood up and said, ‘There is no freedom in this country’, then there’s nothing underhand and we all know where we stand. You get your lads together and we get our lads together and when it’s all over, one of us is in power and you’re in gaol. That’s freedom in action. But what we don’t like is a lot of people being cheeky and saying they are only Julius Caesar or Coriolanus or Macbeth... (192)

The Inspector’s vision of freedom is strangely distorted. He is “the embodiment of repressive political forces” (Kelly, Companion 165). He does see “one” of them in power, but he surely sees them in “gaol.” At the same time, he is also highly skeptical of any sort of underhand activity and he would rather that the dissidents come out in the open with their agenda. The Inspector reminds us of Inspector Hound whose arrival coincided with chaos onstage. Here, when the actors start communicating in Dogg, the Inspector panics because he thinks that this is a deliberate code to keep him out and he apprehends that it might be a secret underhand activity. Stoppard justifies his choice of Hamlet and Macbeth while accepting that Shakespeare is timeless and universal, but he also asserts that his uses are many. Thus, his approach is dual-pronged. The freedom that he wants through his usage of Shakespeare is not only for his characters but also for himself. For his characters he wants freedom of expression; for himself he wants freedom to re-write, condense or even parody a classic, this again is the freedom of expression. The actors retort that they are following the law but the Inspector thinks otherwise:
INSPECTOR: The law? I’ve got the Penal Code tattooed on my whistle, Landovsky, and there’s a lot about you in it. Section 98, subversion – anyone acting out of hostility to the state...Section 100, incitement – anyone acting out of hostility to the state...I could nick you just for acting – and the sentence is double for an organized group...So don’t tell me about the laws.(193)

Apparently, all the sections in the Penal Code deal with hostility to the state. In this play, Stoppard’s framework is intertextual. Both Macbeth and Cahoot’s Macbeth are about usurpation of power and about totalitarian regimes. The former offers a vision of a world in which power has been seized by brute force and the latter deals with rulers who are behaving like brutes. Macbeth as the play-within-the-play, thus, becomes an agent of political discourse. The Inspector himself is aware of this power of language, “Words can be your friend or your enemy, depending on who’s throwing the book, so watch your language” (191). The Inspector’s ultimate act of gagging speech is when he builds a wall across the proscenium arch and divides the audience and the stage. The wall becomes a visual metaphor of interruption in the flow of information. The wall’s purpose in Dogg’s Hamlet was to enable communication, here, the wall cuts off communication. In the end the Inspector has his way and it seems that the artists lose the fight against censorship.

Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth is built around different focal points; Easy, the Inspector, and the Wall. Consequently, none of the characters or the situations has been developed to its full dramatic potential. The first, Easy, re-enters the play first as the third murderer and then as Banquo’s ghost but he speaks neither English, nor Shakespeare but Dogg. The wood that he brings in his lorry for the school boys in Dogg’s Hamlet becomes Birnam Wood of Shakespeare’s Macbeth. This wood not only brings about Macbeth’s downfall but also walls up Scotland, that is, the stage. So, somewhere Czechoslovakia and Scotland are similar. Stoppard allows the Inspector, the second focus of attention, to be comic in order to relieve the sinister note of the authorities above him. His henchmen, Boris and Maurice could be straight out of Hollywood. By placing Denmark, England, Scotland and Czechoslovakia together, Stoppard bridges the gap between his adopted western life and his eastern origins:

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Where the Hamlet of *Dogg's Hamlet* mocks the compulsory recitation of Shakespeare by captive schoolchildren in the West, the truncated *Macbeth* of *Cahoot's Macbeth* — also parodic, but not in the mocking sense — signifies the clandestine recitation of Shakespeare by censored artists in the East. (Kelly, *Craft* 131)

Towards the end Stoppard and Shakespeare almost overlap as “EASY is hovering at the fringes, hoping to catch someone’s eye. His entrances and exits coincide with those for BANQUO’s GHOST, who is invisible, and he only appears in Macbeth’s eyeline. *Macbeth does his best to ignore him*” (198). Not only is the real Macbeth ignoring Banquo’s ghost but also the actor who is playing the role of Macbeth is perturbed at the presence of this stranger in their midst. Thus, using *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, Stoppard has established an allegorical parallel between life and art. Though political, Stoppard’s plays are full of theatricality, experimentation, verbal games and stylish stagecraft. They are not heavy and naturalistic. This differentiates Stoppard’s so-called political writing from similar works by his contemporaries. He continues to use the meta-theatrical devices of the play-within-the-play and role-playing-within-the-role. Insertions from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* prolong Stoppard’s pre-occupation with self-reflexivity in theatre as he uses their texts as inner plays inside the larger framework of his ideas. However, they are only abridgements of Shakespeare as compared to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in which a major part of *Hamlet* was used as the inner play. Continuing the meta-dramatic discourse in *Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth*, we are the audience-within-the-audience, not only of Stoppard’s play but also of the school function and of the “Living-Room-Theatre” of *Cahoot’s Macbeth*. In the first case, we are a legal audience watching a legal activity. In the second case, we are an illegal audience watching a clandestine performance. The themes of both playlets may seem to be different, but both pieces are essentially united, “The comma that divides *Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth* also serves to unite two plays which have common elements: the first is hardly a play at all without the second, which cannot be performed without the first” (Kelly, *Companion* 162).
Moreover, there is a marked difference between Stoppard’s early heroes and the protagonists of his later political plays. The former were plagued by mental paralysis and their inability to act. The latter assert their rights with certainty and with a note of dissent. For instance, Malcolm in Cahoot’s Macbeth says, “My countryman; but yet I know him not,” referring to Macbeth. The context of this reference can also be extended to refer to the Inspector who is their countryman but who is also a puppet in the hands of his masters. He bears the brunt of Stoppard’s ridicule as he is the visible agent of the oppressive rule. At times this ridicule of totalitarian regimes borders on satire. Kelly labels Professional Foul, EGBDF and Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth as satires as she draws a distinction between their surface frivolity and their “hidden menace” (Craft 54). Stoppard insists that the standards of right and wrong are fundamental and that political will should always be subservient to individual will. This is “the distinguishing characteristic of his political plays” (Delaney 86).

Commenting on the result of his linguistic experiment, Stoppard’s Cahoot says, “You don’t learn it (Dogg), you catch it” (206). The play ends on an ambiguous note:


(Silence)

Well, it’s been a funny sort of week. But I should be back by Tuesday. (211)

The doubling refers to the diptych that we have just seen but the question that remains is where is Easy going. Is he going to jail with the other dissidents who will be arrested for their illegal activities or is he going to bring another truck load of wood so that we learn another language. Stoppard likes leaving his audiences guessing.

Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth is linked to both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead and Shakespeare in Love by virtue of its form as well as content. Sharing pastichean elements, all three texts go back to Shakespeare to delve into his canon in order to fish out new tricks and the result is that Stoppard’s use of Shakespeare has served different purposes. He suggests that though Shakespeare is a cultural force and an
institution, yet he can be used to serve as well as to challenge authority. Stoppard updates Shakespeare; in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead his protagonists confront an absurdist vision of the world and hence face a dilemma. In Shakespeare in Love, Stoppard uses Hollywood style literally and metaphorically to convey the economics of media production. In Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth Stoppard comments on the use and abuse of Shakespeare, how he is a cultural monument wielding immense power and influence. In both plays Stoppard forms a link between language and power:

(Whether Stoppard intended it or not, Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth combines wordplay, parody, and travesty to criticize the institutional appropriation of Shakespeare. In this short, relatively minor work, Shakespeare, or rather the canon, is not just parodied and adapted; it is situated, both as cultural force and as cultural menace.” (Diamond 594)

In Dogg’s Hamlet language that is Shakespeare’s text of Hamlet serves power and in Cahoot’s Macbeth Shakespeare is used to subvert power. However, Stoppard has only partially touched upon the possibilities of language, meaning, interpretation, rules in this text.

Stoppard’s political plays, as discussed above, delineate cultural disparities while depicting the predicament of the artist or the writer in situations which are not conducive to the creative process. The setting in plays like Professional Foul, Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, Night and Day and Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth is exotic and the artist is deliberately depicted as an outsider. In Night and Day, Stoppard shows a “fictitious African country,” Kambawe, in the midst of political turmoil. With this setting he juxtaposes the ethics of journalism through British journalists. Stoppard’s next overtly political play, Indian Ink, offers a subtle comment on cultural and power equations in pre-independence India through dialogue in post-independence India. A recent work, this play has hardly received any critical attention unlike Arcadia and The Invention of Love. Hardly any notice has been taken of the structural parallels between both In the Native State and Indian Ink, ignoring how Stoppard adapts and re-writes his own work. While Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth deals with Stoppard’s re-enactment of our literary
heritage, his later plays like *Arcadia* and *Indian Ink* are based on the biography as a literary genre.

*Indian Ink* (1995) is an adaptation of Stoppard’s own radio play *In the Native State* (1991). Renamed *Indian Ink*, *In the Native State* was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 21 April 1991 with a cast of thirteen characters. Stoppard’s last radio play before *In the Native State* had been *The Dog It Was That Died* (1983). It is imperative to observe that Stoppard re-writes and revises his own text written for the radio to suit a new and different medium, the stage. Before re-writing *In the Native State*, Stoppard produced *Arcadia* (1993) which foreshadowed many concerns present in *Indian Ink*. *Arcadia* is about a young girl, Thomasina, living in the early 1800s and considerably interested in the laws of science and logic. She anticipates Newton through her ideas and her tutor tries to develop her ideas after her death. Stoppard brings in a twentieth century researcher on the scene who tries to piece together the details of Thomasina’s life. Thus, *Arcadia* alternates between time and action but not place.

*Indian Ink* too is based on a woman, a poetess, Flora Crewe, much ahead of her time like Thomasina. A native of England, she travels to India in 1930 and lives in the state of Jummapur for some time before moving towards the hills where she meets an untimely death. The details of her life are re-constructed through her letters to her now aged sister, Mrs. Swan, in England. Alive in 1990, Mrs. Swan, discusses Flora, her life, her poetry, India, literature, painting etc., with Flora’s biographer. In both *Arcadia* and *Indian Ink*, the worth of these extraordinary individuals is not realized till after their deaths. Flora’s life too is reconstructed through a biographer. This play alternates not only between time but also place. Stoppard’s link with India goes back to the pre-independence era. Some years of Stoppard early childhood, 1942-46 were spent in Darjeeling, India, where he went to an English medium school. In an interview, Stoppard comments on the genesis of this play:

> It began as odd pages, dialogue and stuff. I kept trying to find what play they belonged to. I thought I was going to write a play simply about the portrait of a woman writing a poem and her poem is about being painted. Then I found the
idea of her poetry so perversely enjoyable I went on writing her poetry for far longer than you’d believe. (qtd. in Hodgson 154-55)

For purposes of clarity, the following representation depicts the shared creative concerns of the three works dealt with in this chapter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotext(s)</th>
<th>Dogg’s Hamlet</th>
<th>Cahoot’s Macbeth</th>
<th>Indian Ink</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>Macbeth</td>
<td>In the Native State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophical Investigations</td>
<td></td>
<td>A Passage to India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation/genesis</td>
<td>School play</td>
<td>Living-Room</td>
<td>Poem/Portrait</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Prize giving ceremony</td>
<td>Forbidden from stage</td>
<td>Pre-independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Subversion</td>
<td>Cross-cultural</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(of authority)</td>
<td>exchange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contexts may be different but there is a creative force in all these plays, and that provides the connecting link between them. This is also true of Shakespeare in Love, in which Stoppard depicts the genesis of a play through all the stages of evolution; writing, rehearsal and performance. The analysis of Indian Ink has been conducted with this backdrop in view.

Indian Ink, with an increased cast of eighteen characters is an expanded and more elaborate version of In the Native State. Stoppard works out some ideas and details while omitting others. However, the textual construction of both plays is markedly different. While In the Native State is divided into nineteen scenes, alternating between India and England, Indian Ink is divided into two, slightly asymmetrical acts. According to the note before the text, In the Native State is “set in two places and periods: India in 1930, and England in the present day.” In Indian Ink, however, Stoppard insists that though “the play is set in two periods, 1930 (in India) and mid – 1980s (in England and India)”, yet
Indian Ink traces the sojourn of Flora Crewe, a British poetess, who travels to India in 1930 and spends a considerable part of her time in Jummapur, a kingdom loyal to the British. She visits India on an invitation of the Theosophical Society to deliver lectures about literature and current trends in British writing and subsequently dies of consumption. Thus, Stoppard creates a very imaginative context of pre-independence India with a sense of decline of the British Raj using both English and Indian dramatis personae. Felicity Kendal, Stoppard’s muse for some years played the role of Flora Crewe. While In the Native State is dedicated to Felicity Kendal, Indian Ink is “Dedicated to the memory of Laura Kendal,” Felicity’s mother. Like Stoppard, Felicity Kendal also spent her childhood in India touring with her mother and the troupe, a journey that was eventually filmed as Shakespearewallah.

Indian Ink was first performed at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford, and opened at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on 27 February 1995. Both texts open on different notes. Scene one of In the Native State depicts “the verandah of a guesthouse” in Jummapur where Flora sits writing poetry while having her portrait painted by an Indian painter, Nirad Das. But Act one of Indian Ink shows Flora’s arrival at the station platform at Jummapur and her reception by the President of the Theosophical Society and several other members of the committee. The opening scene of Indian Ink is Scene Nine of In the Native State. However, it is enacted in Indian Ink, but only described by letter in In the Native State. However, both texts make substantial use of the flashback device. This is made possible by Stoppard’s depiction of Flora’s sister, Mrs. Swan, still alive in the 1980s, in conversation first with an American academic, Eldon Pike, who wants to publish Flora’s letters and her biography, and then with Anish Das, the son of Nirad Das, the painter who had made Flora’s portrait in 1930 in India. Surprisingly, Anish lives in England and is married to an Australian. While Pike, the biographer appears first in Indian Ink, it is Anish who meets Mrs. Swan first in In the Native State. Much of the
engrossing appeal of the play comes from this alternation between India and England, past and present:

Flora “And in no time at all I was installed in a little house, two good-sized rooms under a tin roof with electric light... (She tries the electric light switch without result.)... and an oil lamp just in case...” (She looks out from the verandah.) “…a verandah looking out at a rather hopeless garden... but with a good table and chair which does very well for working…” (She tries out the chair and table.) “…and a wicker sofa of sorts for not working... and round the back...”

She has a brief look around the corner of the verandah where it goes out of sight, while Mrs. Swan turns a page of the letter. (369)

As Mrs. Swan reads from Flora’s letter on one half of the stage, Flora herself enacts the events she described in her letter. Thus, information is revealed through Flora’s letters and the enactment of the same on the other half of the stage. All the plays discussed earlier deal with the play-within-the-play as a self-conscious meta-dramatic device. Indian Ink has no such device. The play-within’s place is taken by Flora’s letters and the poem that she writes as Das paints her portrait. This portrait itself becomes a meta-theatrical device as it serves to reflect the cultural disparity between India and England, which is also Stoppard’s brief in the play (This context of the portrait has been discussed later in the chapter). Indian Ink, thus, is based on Flora’s letters and revolves around the poem. Thus, painting and poetry become metaphors for play-writing.

In the Native State and Indian Ink were written for different media. Though the basic framework and language of the texts is similar in both, yet, there are some differences. The directions are less specific in Indian Ink because everything is visible on the stage. The text of Indian Ink is more fluid while In the Native State alternates between two places and periods strictly. Elissa S. Guralnick in her essay “Stoppard’s radio and television plays” pays a tribute to Stoppard’s versatility in different mediums, “The care with which Stoppard has fine-tuned each version to the specific demands of its medium bespeaks his satisfaction, his craftsmanlike pleasure, at working in the theatre and in radio” (Kelly, Companion 78). In a structural change, Stoppard deletes portions
dealing with sexuality from Flora’s poem in *In the Native State* to shorten it for *Indian Ink*. The dramatist also omits the following references to America present in *In the Native State*: Pike has “a surprising *Gone With the Wind* sort of accent” and “a southern drawl” (18-19).

The idea of creating fictitious literary encounters has always appealed to Stoppard. This has already been noticed in the Shakespeare – Marlowe meeting, in Shakespeare – Webster encounter in *Shakespeare in Love*, as well as, the meeting of Joyce, Tzara and Lenin in *Travesties*. In *The Invention of Love*, Stoppard splits the poet A.E.Housman into two; A E H meets his younger self Housman and converses with him for more than fifteen pages of the text. In *Indian Ink*, Stoppard inserts a fictional account of a meeting between Flora and H. G. Wells through the contents of one of Flora’s letters. Wells (1866-1946), English novelist, journalist, sociologist and historian was famous for his science fiction. Pike, picking on small details, pins down the exact dates of this liaison:

Pike FC had met Wells no earlier than December and the affair was therefore brief, possibly the weekend of January 7th and 8th; which she spent in Paris. (374)

Stoppard parodies the rather over-meticulous style of researchers who go all out like Pike to nit-pick into small details. Apart from this reference to Wells, the text, like *Shakespeare in Love* and *The Real Inspector Hound*, resounds with literary names like Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw, Robert Browning, Tennyson, Dickens, Emily Eden, Agatha Christie, Rudyard Kipling, Virgil, Housman, Shelley and of course Shakespeare. According to Das, Flora’s lecture delivered under the aegis of the Theosophical Society, was a ‘superfine portrait-in-words of the rough-and-tumble of literary life in London” (376). Richly allusive, *Indian Ink* also mentions Flora’s entanglement with a painter, who painted her nude. Flora’s fiancé discovers this portrait and burns it. This painter, according to Stoppard, was none other than Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), Italian painter and sculptor, known for his portraits and nudes with a personal touch because of the link between the artist and the sitter. The playwright
also invents a literary feud between Flora and J.C. Squire (1882-1958), English journalist, playwright, critic, editor and a leading poet of the Georgian school, resulting in Flora’s pouring a drink over Squire’s head. There are numerous references to Madam Blavatsky (1831-1891) as well. She was a Russian spiritualist, author and co-founder of the Theosophical Society to promote theosophy. Thus, Stoppard’s frame of reference gets considerably wider in this play as he bombards the audience with names of literary personages. He demands that his audiences must necessarily be “literate in precisely the same way that shares and appreciates and above all recognizes his telling points of reference” (Kelly, Companion 205). Thus, the playwright works on the assumption that the audience shares the literary heritage of the protagonists of his play and can thus draw on their knowledge for a frame of reference.

Stoppard also mentions Forster’s A Passage to India (1924) in Indian Ink as the former has exerted a considerable influence on the latter as a text. In fact, there are strong structural and thematic parallels between both works. The fictitious town of Chandrapore in Forster’s novel has its counterpart in Jummapur in Indian Ink. Mrs. Moore in A Passage to India is the literary fore-runner of Flora. Her approach to people, especially Indians, is direct and intuitive like Flora’s. Unlike the others of her race, Mrs. Moore indulges in no racial snobbery or condescension towards Indians and she is able to transcend the barriers created by imperialism. She strikes an instant rapport with Dr. Aziz just as Flora befriends Das on the spur of the moment. Flora tells Das that he sounds like Dr. Aziz in Forster’s novel and that she wanted to “kick him (Dr. Aziz) … for not knowing his worth” (408). Further, Flora is a cross between Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested. She has the humanism of the former and the youthful enquiry of the latter. However, Flora is a self-confessed non-believer, “I’m afraid I’m without religion, you see” (372), unlike Mrs. Moore, who has a strong Christian conception of the world as her bedrock. Mrs. Moore’s and Adela’s visit to the Marabar Hills has its reflection in Flora’s visit to the temples with Coomaraswami and the members of the Theosophical Society. Stoppard has tried to portray an intimate friendship between two members of different cultures, communities and two ideological groups, which is also the recurrent theme of Forster’s novels. Like Forster’s fiction, Stoppard’s plays too are not character oriented.
Forster's main concern was a study of the cultural phenomena, while Stoppard's point of origin is his ideas. In both cases, character and characterization are subservient to the creator's designs. Imitating Forster before him, Stoppard's play tries to build a "passage" between the physical East and the West, as also between the logic of the West and the wisdom of the East. The three levels of Indian Ink: art and its creation, political and racial tension and the backdrop of the freedom movement are essentially similar to Forster's approach to A Passage to India wherein he deals with personal crisis amidst the issues of race and colonialism. Interestingly, Flora's full name, Flora Crewe, especially her initials, is strikingly similar to one of Forster's critics, Frederick Crewe.

The text is woven around two sets of conversations; one between Flora and Das and the other between Mrs. Swan and Anish. As Flora sits being painted by Das in India, the scene shifts to England. Like his father before him, Anish draws a sketch but not of Flora, but of her sister. Das's son, Anish Das visits Mrs. Swan after seeing Pike's edition of "The Collected Letters of Flora Crewe" which has Flora's portrait by his father on the dust jacket. Flora's conversation with Nirad Das on the subject of being Indian is echoed in Mrs. Swan's conversation with Anish:

Mrs. Swan Your father was an Indian painter, you mean?

Anish An Indian painter? Well, I'm as Indian as he was. But yes. I suppose I am not a particularly Indian painter...not an Indian painter particularly, or rather...

Mrs. Swan Not particularly an Indian painter.

Anish Yes. But then, nor was he. Apart from being Indian. (385)

In the context of the pre-independence India of Flora and Das, being Indian meant being subservient to the British in loyalty as well as in the slavish imitation of their culture. However, Flora insists that Das be "more Indian, or at any rate Indian, not Englished-up" (p.383). For Flora, being 'Indian' means being native, belonging, not acting as a mere mirror for English ideas and values. On the other hand, in 1980 in England, Anish considers his father and himself as being Indians but not Indian painters particularly, because they do not/did not follow the Indian school of painting, the only exception being Das's nude portrait of Flora.
The backdrop for *Indian Ink* probably comes from Emily Eden’s book of letters *Up the Country* (1866). Emily Eden was a spinster “accompanying her brother, the Governor-General Lord Auckland, on an official progress up country” (In the Native State, 53). During her journey to the hilly regions of Afghanistan, Eden wrote “hundreds of letters to sisters and friends at home.” In fact, Flora’s sister, Mrs. Swan, shares her first name, Eleanor, with Emily’s sister. In *Indian Ink*, Das presents this book to Flora, “it is a book of my father’s which I would like you to have. Letters by an English lady traveling in India a hundred years ago” (388). In In the Native State, Flora discovers the book “among a box of dilapidated railway novels” at the Dak Bungalow (52). Stoppard’s purpose of fleshing out his characters in the re-write is evident as he makes Das the means through which Flora procures this book in *Indian Ink*, rather than just discovering it.

*Indian Ink* being one of the most well-rounded of his plays, Stoppard creates vivid biographies for each of his characters in the play. Flora has broken off an engagement because of the burning of her nude Modigliani portrait by her fiancé. In *Indian Ink*, Flora breaks off the engagement in a car, which coincidentally, the Rajah from Jummapur purchases at an exhibition to add to his already massive collection of automobiles. In In the Native State, Flora breaks off her engagement on a sofa which is purchased by the Rajah. Mrs. Swan has been the mistress of a communist candidate, only to later marry a British official in India, where she went to visit Flora’s grave. Her only passion is cakes. Flora and Eleanor have lost their mother on the Titanic. Nirad Das, a widower at 34 and childless, remarries after Flora leaves Jummapur and has a son, Anish. Das is shocked when he learns that Flora’s sister is the mistress of a communist who also runs a newspaper. According to the social construction of the India of those days, all these were the ingredients of disaster in the making. In a significant addition to In the Native State, Stoppard adds more details about Das’s past. Das’s son, Anish, now lives in England and is married to an artist from Australia. Stoppard has given flesh and blood to the structure of his play, a thing which he did sparsely in his early works. In a departure from the text of In the Native State, Stoppard bestows an Indian assistant, Dilip, to Pike in *Indian Ink*. In contrast to early Stoppard characters the characters in this play are well-rounded and
articulate and Stoppard differentiates between Indian and British nuances of language usage through their characterization. While the former comes across as ornate and flowery with hyperbolic and metaphoric touches the latter is more sober. Phrases like “red-letter day,” “hoops of delight” recur in Das’s dialogues underscoring his Indianness, though Stoppard does make “a concerted effort to create Indian characters who are more fully developed” (Kelly, Companion 39). Stoppard also gives the impression that Flora is irritated by Pike’s notes in a gesture which blends past and present. Ostensibly, Flora shouts at dogs, while Pike rattles off the contents of one of his footnotes.

Stoppard re-creates the ambience of a British Residency Club in Jummapur and a dance at the club to which Durance invites Flora. Flora converses with an “Englishwoman” and the “Resident.” Many of the customs of the Club such as the British habit of “dressing up” for dinner, find their way to Post-independence India, as Pike sits alone on the verandah of the Rajah’s palace which has now been converted into a hotel. It is here that Pike’s assistant, Dilip, discovers the name of Flora’s painter:

Pike Do you mean you can’t come in here without a jacket and tie, not ever?

Dilip Not in the dining-room after sunset. Oh these rules are absurd! But – Eldon – something wonderful has come of it. I have discovered the name of your painter!

Pike You have?

Dilip I have! His name was Nirad Das. Now we can research! (434)

Here Stoppard adopts a dual approach. He first comments on the continuing customs of the British in India, despite their redundancy. And secondly, he chooses research to lash out at the over-eagerness of scholars. The three strands of the text come together here. Flora in India in 1930, Mrs. Swan and Anish in England in the 1980s and Pike’s illuminating editorial notes. These strands come closer when Pike comes to India. The dialogue comprises of sections running into each other when Flora is at the Jummapur Club, Pike in the Palace Hotel with Pike’s commentary in the background. Stoppard also shows his awareness about religion based riots and the cultural ramifications of the independence movement:
Durance It wasn’t against us, it was Hindu and Moslem. Gandhi’s salt march reached the sea today, did you hear?

Flora No. I want to know.

Durance Our Congress Hindus closed their shops in sympathy, and the Moslems wouldn’t in, that’s all it was about. (442)

In 1930, Flora talks to Das and Durance, a British military officer about the same issues that occupy Mrs. Swan and Anish in the 1980s; “of the Raj, of Indian Independence, of the Mutiny, of Moslems and Hindus, of Gandhi and the Nationalists, of the English community” (Hodgson 156). Stoppard is aware of the cultural disparities between India and England. Flora, as Stoppard’s mouthpiece, tries to bridge this gulf as she urges Das and Coomaraswami, the President of the Theosophical Society, to be at ease in her company. She plays language games with Das to convey how British and Indian cultures have overlapped. British English has rapidly become Indianised and due to the multiplicity of languages in India, English has become the mode of communication between “nationalists.” However, Stoppard does not develop the cultural issue fully. In fact, he is unable to:

Mrs. Swan I meant, in view of his “opinions”. But I spoke without thinking. Your father took part in actions against the British Raj and loved English literature, which was perfectly consistent of him.

Anish (laughs) Usually, the education succeeded admirably! In Jummapur we were “loyal” as you would say, we had been loyal to the British right through the first War of Independence.

Mrs. Swan The...? What war was that?

Anish The Rising of 1857.

Mrs. Swan Oh, you mean the Mutiny. What did you call it?

Anish Dear Mrs. Swan, Imperial history is merely...no, no – I promise I didn’t come to give you a history lesson. (389)

Stoppard handles issues relating to colonization with gloves. Anish will not and cannot delve into the history of the empire because Stoppard’s framework shares its boundary
only with the periphery of post-colonial thought. Anish tries to develop the theme further but with little progress. “We were the Romans! We were up to date when you were a backward nation. The foreigners who invaded you found a third-world country! Even when you discovered India in the age of Shakespeare, we already had our Shakespeares. And our science – architecture – our literature and art, we had a culture older and more splendid, we were rich! After all, that’s why you came” (390). But Mrs. Swan retorts, “We made you a proper country! And when we left you fell straight to pieces like Humpty Dumpty! Look at the map! You should feel nothing but shame!” (390). This insistence by Mrs. Swan shows how “Stoppard turns his preoccupation with artist characters to draw attention to the cultural dimensions of British imperialism, questioning how British rule imposed English education, arts, and language upon an already vigorous culture and established civilization” (Kelly, Companion 40).

The middle of the play comprises a lengthy conversation between Flora and Das, just after Flora asks Das to paint her nude. This significant and weighty piece of dialogue includes references to her early literary career, the Empire and its effects on India, the economics of oppression, Marxism, schools of Indian and British painting, The Gita and the dynamics of postcolonial inter-action. Stoppard depicts varied reactions to the presence of the Raj in India. These reactions correspond to the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the British. The Rajah, the representative of local politics apes British habits, customs and style of living. He is wary of the fact that the departure of the British would also herald the end of his feudal rule. The second response vis-à-vis the economics of oppression is best articulated in Coomaraswami’s criticism of the empire regarding its failure on the front of modernization and industrialization of India, “Where are the cotton mills? The steel mills? No investment, no planning. The Empire has failed us!” (428). Das is equally critical of the British policy towards Indian art, “The bloody Empire finished off Indian painting!” (427).

The play is full of cultural paradoxes, most prominently visible in Mrs. Swan who considers India her “home.” Her home in India was full of memorabilia from England. While in 1990, she lives in England with a house full of “elephants and prayer wheels.
cluttering up the window ledges, and the tea-tray is Nepalese brass” (400). She even prefers Indian tea made with “water we (they) got in the Hills. It came straight off the Himalayas” (403). In fact, this cultural complexity is manifest in the way English has been adopted in the Indian sub-continent. Stoppard debates the results of Macaulay’s Minute:

**Das** I have to thank Lord Macaulay for English, you know. It was his idea when he was in the government of India that English should be taught to us all. He wanted to supply the East India Company with clerks, but he was sowing dragon’s teeth. Instead of babus he produced lawyers, journalists, civil servants, he produced Gandhi! We have so many, many languages, you know, that English is the only language the nationalists can communicate in! That is a very good joke on Macaulay, don’t you think? (393)

Using the metaphor of English, Stoppard explores the cultural and political legacies that India and England have given each other. Values propagated by British imperialism are ingrained by people like Das and the Rajah, while Durance and Mrs. Swan have retained an imperialist nostalgia from their stay in different parts of India. To complicate issues further, it is the Rajah who is responsible for suppressing the voice of dissent from nationalists. To add a further dimension to this cultural exchange, Flora and Das discuss Indian religions, philosophy, art and even the *Rasa* theory:

**Flora** What is *rasa*?

**Das** *Rasa* is juice. Its taste. Its essence. A painting must have its *rasa* which is not *in* the painting exactly. *Rasa* is what you must feel when you see a painting, or hear music; it is the emotion which the artist must arouse in you.

**Flora** And poetry? Does a poem have *rasa*?

**Das** Oh yes! Poetry is a sentence whose soul is *rasa*...

**Flora** *Rasa*...yes. My poem has no *rasa*.

**Das** Or perhaps it has two *rasa* which are in conflict.

**Flora** Oh...

**Das** There are nine *rasa*, each one a different colour... (406-7)
Stoppard’s has obviously done his homework well, as he has himself admitted that he read in a much greater proportion than was required for writing *In the Native State* and *Indian Ink*. His meticulous craftsmanship is markedly visible as Das discusses the theory of the rasa, sounding rather exotic to Flora. The poem that Flora writes while having her portrait painted gave rasa to Das’s painting. When she starts writing a letter instead, Das’s realizes that something is amiss and his creativity is hampered. He assumes that Flora did not appreciate his effort and chose to write letters to pass her time as she sat for the portrait.

The disparity between Indian and British cultures is also reflected in the two portraits of Flora, one in which she is wearing a “blue cornflower dress” and the other, a nude. The former comes across as too showy and imitative of the European style; it is more “like an Indian cinema poster” and “ghastly” while the latter seems fresh and original, yet an accomplished work of art to both Mrs. Swan and Anish. Stoppard describes it as “a composition in the old Rajasthani style.” Rasa is missing in the clothed portrait though Das had spent a longer period in creating it while the nude was painted in one night. In the second painting and in the short-lived union of Flora and Das, ‘Some kind of harmony is achieved between the Indian painter’s observation of Flora Crewe and his knowledge of Eastern and Western pictorial traditions” (Boireau 147). Though the play does not stand within the classical meta-dramatic descriptions used earlier in this study, yet it strongly deals with and reflects on the processes leading unto creation. The portrait that Das “creates” rather than the one in which he slavishly imitates the West, is the one which appeals to the senses of the beholder.

In this dramatic treatment of cultural differences, Stoppard also allows the Rajah to have his indulgence in erotic art, a token of which the Rajah gifts to Flora. Both Flora and Pike meet the Rajah and his grandson, the present Rajah respectively, at the same juncture in the text. In the Rajah, Stoppard may be clichéd, especially in his opulence. Flora is witness to a procession of automobiles, an antique collection of erotic art, the Rajah’s detailed descriptions of his British education, his South of France home and his furniture from London. Strangely enough, after Flora’s visit to the Rajah, the
Theosophical Society is suspended. After this suspension, Das leaves Flora’s portrait unfinished, a fact known to only Anish and Mrs. Swan. Flora leaves Jummapur for Simla, a hilly town in the North, where she meets an untimely death as her persistent pulmonary disorder catches up with her. The play ends with Mrs. Swan visiting Flora’s grave in Simla and with Flora’s voice reading from Emily Eden:

Flora (recorded) ‘Simla, Saturday, May 25th, 1839...and we one hundred and five Europeans being surrounded by at least three thousand mountaineers, who, wrapped up in their hill blankets, looked on at what we call our polite amusements, and bowed to the ground if a European came near them. I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off and say nothing more about it.” (481)

Both In the Native State and Indian Ink end with this particular quotation. Flora traces Emily’s footsteps as she travels. The issue of the colonizer and the colonized which preoccupied Emily continues to torment her literary successor, Flora. The reason why the natives of these hills do not cut off the heads of the Europeans lies in the creation of people like Coomaraswami and the Rajah, who think that India has not been exploited “enough” (428). In both cases, Emily Eden and Flora, the letters that these two women wrote reveal their thoughts as they charted this unfamiliar territory.

Flora, free-spirited, “scandalizes prim Brits and Indian Anglophiles with her delight in native Indian art and interest in the rasa of erotic love” (Kelly, Companion 34). Very subtly, Stoppard tells us that Das spent the night with Flora when he painted her. This revelation is made through Durance, who encounters Das on the way as the latter is leaving the house. Flora’s character dominates the play, “The character of Flora took a powerful and somewhat unexpected grip on the play within the world of empire that encloses her and about which Stoppard feels that there is still a play to do” (Hodgson 155). Nobody paid much attention to Flora while she was alive and she only rose to the heights of fame posthumously. After her death, her poems and letters have made her an important subject for literary research:

Mrs. Swan Far too much of a good thing, in my opinion, the footnotes; to be constantly interrupted by someone telling you things you already know or don’t
need to know at that moment. There are pages where Flora can hardly get a word in sideways. Mr Pike teaches Flora. It makes her sound like a subject, doesn’t it...Flora has become quite a heroine... (401-2)

Increased academic interest in Flora disturbs Mrs. Swan and she feels that Flora is being treated like a commodity. Pike’s Collected Letters have failed to impress Mrs. Swan. Stoppard ridicules the entire cult of biographers and editors:

Pike (gaily) The notes, the notes! The notes is where the fun is! You can’t just collect Flora Crewe’s letters into a book and call it “The Collected Letters of Flora Crewe”, I’m not even sure if it’s legal where I come from. (371)

Stoppard emphasizes the distinction between various creative activities. While poetry and painting are the high and sublime types, biography writing and editing do not find favour with Stoppard. He conveys this dislike through the rather caricatured presentation of Pike, who in his enthusiasm butts in wearing his “editor’s hat. To enlighten the darkness” (371). This distrust of biography extends beyond Stoppard’s personal life and biographers in Stoppard’s plays constantly misunderstand, misinterpret or misconstrue the past (Nadel 160). Flora’s sister, Mrs. Swan insists that Pike should not write a biography, “The Collected Poems was a lovely surprise and I’m sure the Collected Letters will be splendid, but biography is the worst possible excuse for getting people wrong” (373). However, Pike is waiting for Mrs. Swan to die ‘so he can get on with Flora’s biography” (401) which he thinks Mrs. Swan does not know he is writing. Stoppard’s distrust of the genre of biography is aptly expressed by Mrs. Swan. Both Mrs. Swan and Anish decide not to tell Pike about the existence of the second nude portrait and about many other details of Flora’s life which they consider too personal to be revealed. Dilip sums up posthumous biography writing as he cautions Pike about the pitfalls of his enterprise, “You are constructing an edifice of speculation on a smudge of paint on paper, which no longer exists” (452). Stoppard himself has been very distrustful of this particular genre, “In his plays and in many interviews, Stoppard consistently dismisses the value of biography. He feels uncomfortable with the genre because it is (a) invasive and (b) invariably incorrect” (Nadel 158).
Stoppard has woven the whole play around the twin themes of creativity and death. The poignancy of the play comes from Flora’s death soon after she leaves Jummapur for the hills. Pike tells us that Durance also dies in a battle some ten years after Flora’s death. Hodgson comments on the Stoppard’s realism in this play, a tag seldom applied to his works, “The history of empire, the smells and sounds of India, pi-dogs fighting, the sweat and heat and the beggars, create a strong sense of reality” (162). Indian Ink is about being “Indian,” truly native Indian. The “Native State” in the title of In the Native State is both a geographically demarcated area as well as the physical and mental space and state of its characters. The characters of Durance and the Rajah serve to add to the pre-independence aura of India as do Pike and Dilip to the academic angle of Flora’s legacy.

Another reading of Indian Ink could be based on the Stoppard’s purpose of dramatizing the debate on the “ethics of empire.” Josephine Lee in “In the Native State and Indian Ink” (Kelly, Companion 38-52) has given a theme based post-colonial perspective of the play:

Stoppard integrates dramatic tropes and devices familiar from his other plays – a fascination with the politics of art, an interest in language games and debates, a gradual revelation of the past by characters operating in the present as “detectives” – into a more sustained effort to explore “the ethics of empire,” the colonial interaction between India and England. (39)

The process of colonization included the imposition of a new language and culture on the native civilization. This resulted in the production of a paradox – the nationalists communicate in English, the artists are enthralled with European schools. Amidst all this, the question arises as to how “real” is the India that Stoppard depicts in Indian Ink. Lee discusses the social, cultural and economic ramifications of the British rule in India, drawing attention to the inherent debate in the text regarding the dimensions of colonialism. Her essay details the stereo-types depicted in the play through Flora’s poem, “Flora’s poetry is the play’s strongest statement of how India becomes imagined as
sexualized, feminized, illicit, and transgressive" (45) and how India is “in need of the British Empire’s regulation, governance and cultural reform” (43).

Towards the end, Stoppard moves towards a process of mutual assimilation of both cultures and some relaxation of the rigid confines of “Indian” and “British” dichotomies. In this play, Stoppard forges a political, psychological and artistic link between India and England which is the result of his sustained interest in dramatizing political and cultural differences. Flora and Das’s interracial relationship projects such a desire to bridge the cultural difference between India and England. “Perhaps even the staging of Indian Ink through the conflation of English and Indian landscape, with its permeable boundaries between India and England as well as past and present, indicates the hope that English and Indian might merge into some newer sensibility” (Kelly, Companion 49). In the end, coming back to the play’s origin, Stoppard says in an interview:

Certainly the main one was a rather generalized idea to write about the empire, and more particularly the ethics of empire. And I’m not saying that In the Native State is that. In a way I still want to do that. This play is some sort of introduction to the subject for me. (qtd. in Hodgson 155)

Both Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth and Indian Ink deal with politics and oppression. Stoppard has traversed a huge distance to cover phenomenon as diverse as East European politics and Oriental politics even though the frame of reference is similar – the creation of a work of art. In both plays, Stoppard experiments with form and style to arrive at a statement articulating his political concerns. He has not made form subservient to theme as is evident from the meticulous construction of both plays. Stoppard’s form carries forward his intertextuality with the layers well in place. The political edifice that Stoppard has constructed still bears his hallmark brilliant craftsmanship and technical virtuosity.