



# Night and Day

Tom Stoppard

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*Tom Stoppard*

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This play is set in the fictitious African State of Kambawe, a former British Colony. The action moves from the bush, to the garden and living room of the Carson's home. The time is the present.

## Night and Day Details

Date : Published August 1st 1989 by Faber & Faber (first published 1978)

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Author : Tom Stoppard

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# From Reader Review Night and Day for online ebook

## Indah says

surely a good play about journalism. how it needs a lot of sacrifice from journalists and how crazy media can be. a woman's 'other' voice is voiced too here

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## Isaac Timm says

Holy crap-snacks , Batman! A comedy in the same way Eugene O'Neils "The Iceman Cometh" is a comedy. Who the hell wrote the dust jacket description? Night and Day is an analysis of the freedom of press. Can it really mean anything pressed between business interests and a public hungry of shock value and scandal? The play could be called dispassionate but I think that Stoppard's point. The players are trying to remain outside a reality they are reporting and are blinded to the life and death struggle around them. They are in the middle of a war zone carrying on like they are watching a report on television.

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## Tony says

NIGHT AND DAY. (1978). Tom Stoppard. \*\*\*\*.

Stoppard treats us to a drama that is a cross between "The Front Page," and "Scoop." The setting is Kambawe, a mythical country in Africa, that is undergoing an internal power struggle between the current ruler, Mageeba, and a military foe that is leading a coup. The goal of each is, obviously, control of the country, but each is playing outside countries one against the other in an effort to gain their military and financial support. The country is full of newspaper reporters from a variety of dailies and weeklies. Each one is trying his best to get an interview with the current leader and get a scoop on the other correspondents. We don't get to meet the ruler until almost the end of the play, when he finally agrees to provide one of the lucky pressmen with quotable opinions. Unfortunately, what he says for attribution isn't likely to make it into the various papers as it goes against the grain of "truth, justice, and the Kambawe way." The thrust of the drama is that "news" is really made by reporters in their interpretation for personal gain in the form of by-lines. There is even a little humor in the sexual antics of one of the wives of one of the reporters – although couched in asides heard only by the audience. This is a thinking person's play on the ethics of the fourth estate, well worth the read.

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## Paul Secor says

Too much politics. Too little humanness. Perhaps if I had seen the original production with Diana Rigg as Ruth Carson and John Thaw as Dick Wagner, I might have given it three stars.

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## **Jeff says**

This was an unknown Stoppard play for me but certainly undeserving of that status. As usual, Stoppard is up to a great deal here, and to mostly successful effect. In this particular case, we are taken to a fictional African country to witness the intersection of post-colonial politics with both the practice and business of journalism. The dialogue is sharp throughout, and the entrance of the very slippery African "President" really ratchets things up nicely, but I'm not sure that everything ultimately coheres. The only female character in the play in particular remains something of a cipher.

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## **Rich Law says**

Couldn't possibly rate this one as it was only about twenty pages towards the end I had any bloomin' idea what was going on. I think this is one a real slowpoke like me would have to see to properly understand.

One thing I did take away, however, was how much I recognised my own speech habits in Tom Stoppard's dialogue. By that I don't mean to imply I'm a profound intellectual like most of his characters, but rather my mind often works in allusions to song lyrics and random stuff like that that means absolutely nothing to anyone I'm talking to i.e, I'm irritating. So, you know, that was good to know.

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## **Jenny says**

hmmmm

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## **Richard Brandt says**

The best play about journalism ever written. It examines the dichotomy between sensational and essential journalism through smart, witty, disturbing and profound discussions between journalists, a dictator and British ex-pats now living in an African country run by a dictator.

A group of journalists has arrived to cover a possible coup. One is an idealistic young reporter, another a jaded war correspondent, the third a photographer--who ends up providing the best insight into the core issues of journalism. They meet up with a British diplomat and his wife, the latter a jaded woman who has been a target of the worst of the British tabloid press.

A scathing indictment of the worst of journalism and defense of why a strong, independent press is critical for any free country.

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## **Joel says**

Arguably just a bit racist.

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## Audrey says

I love most of Stoppard's plays so much that I sometimes forget how bad some of the earlier plays are (at least this includes Stoppard's customary knowledge for its own sake thesis: "Information is light. Information, in itself, about anything, is light. That's all you can say, really.").

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## A. says

Review: *The Real Thing*, *Night and Day*, *Travesties* by Tom Stoppard

I recently hear a technically brilliant, world famous organist and composer play one of his more difficult works. As I expected, it was technically brilliant, and arid. It recalled many technically brilliant works for the piano written during, principally, the Romantic period: brilliant, but arid. Spoiler alert: if technical brilliance is your touchstone in valuing music and drama, skip this review.

"Henry : Or perhaps I'd realize where I'm standing. Or at least that I'm standing somewhere. There is, I suppose, a world of objects which have a certain form, like this coffee mug. I turn it, and it has no handle. I tilt it, and there is no cavity. But there is something real here which is always a mug with a handle. I suppose. But politics, justice, patriotism—they aren't even like coffee mugs. There's nothing real there separate from our perception of them. So if you try to change them as if there were something there to change, you'll get frustrated, and frustration will finally make you violent. If you know this and proceed with humility, you may perhaps alter people's perceptions so that they believe a little differently at that axis of behavior where we locate politics or justice; but if you don't know this, then you're acting on a mistake. Prejudice is the expression of a mistake." (*The Real Thing*, p. 52.)

"Ruth: How strange. I had no idea that it was the millionaires who were threatening your freedom to report, Dick [addressed to Dick Wagner, a reporter]. I thought it was a millionaire who was picking up the bill for your freedom to report. In fact, I was discussing this very thing with somebody only yesterday—who could it have been?—oh, yes, it was Alastair [her eight year old son]....(She smiles broadly at Wagner.)

"Wagner: (Sarcastically) Alastair, was it?

"Ruth: 'Alli,' I said, 'how are things in London with all those millionaires controlling your freedom to report?' 'I don't think I quite follow you, Mummy,' he said. 'The whole country is littered with papers pushing every political line from anarchy to Zen.' His theory—Alastair's theory—is that it's the very free-for-all which guarantees the freedom of each. 'You see, Mummy,' he said, 'you don't have to be a millionaire to contradict one. It isn't the millionaires who are going to stop you, it the Wagners who don't trust the public to choose the marked card.' Do you think he's got something, Dick?" (*Night and Day*, p. 83)

"Carr: No, no, no, no, my dear girl—Marx got it wrong. He got it wrong for good reasons but he got it wrong just the same. And twice over. In the first place he was the victim of an historical accident, and in the second place his materialism made a monkey out of him, and of his theory---

"Cecily (coldly): Mr. Tzara, you are insulting me and my comrades---

"Carr: —and especially of his comrades. The historical accident could have happened to anybody. By bad luck he encountered the capitalist system at its most deceptive period. The industrial revolution had crowded the people into slums and enslaved them in factories, but it had not yet begun to bring them the benefits of an industrialized society. Marx looked about him and saw that the system depended on a wretched army of wage slaves. He drew the lesson that the wealth of the capitalist was the counterpart to the poverty of the worker and had in fact been stolen from the worker in the form of unpaid labor. He thought that was how the

whole thing worked. That false assumption was itself added to a false premise. This premise was that people were a sensational kind of material object and would behave predictably in a material world. Marx predicted that they would behave according to their class. But they didn't. Deprived, self-interested, bitter or greedy as the case may be, they showed streaks of superior intelligence, superior strength, superior morality...[sic] Legislation, unions, share capital, consumer power—in all kinds of ways and for all kinds of reasons, the classes moved closer together instead of further apart. The critical moment never came. It receded. The tide must have turned about the time when *Das Kapital* after eighteen years of hard labour was finally coming off the press..." (Travesties, p.76 f)

This last, deeply flawed play has some of the best lines of the three:

"Carr: To be an artist in Zurich, in 1917, implies a degree of self-absorption that would have glazed over the eyes of Narcissus." (Travesties p. 38)

"Carr: ...I had no idea that poets nowadays were interested in literature." (p. 42)

"Carr: Unrelieved truthfulness can give a young girl a reputation for insincerity. I have known plain girls with nothing to hide captivate the London season purely by discriminate mendacity." (p. 43)

Yes, I remember when dramatic tension and poetic expression ceded to intellectual pretention in plays. The hint of a "new" idea, including the idea that one watching a drama should think, stimulated hosannas from critics. Dramas turned into scripted essays, and finally led to the absurdity of "dramas" like *Waiting for Godot*.

Mr. Graziano is the author of *From the Cross to the Church: the Emergence of the Church from the Chaos of the Crucifixion*.

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## **Chris Lilly says**

Incoherent, right wing, confused, and with a totally pointless female character. Stoppard plays should be witty arguments. This one is a series of half-arsed disconnected soliloquies, and it dies on the page. And joyless. Stoppard plays usually revel in their smartness, this one doesn't.

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## **Christopherseelie says**

A little scream about the business of international journalism, the warring cynics of the press, the qualified quantities of freedom of speech, and unfaithful wives in Africa. Stoppard peppers the dialog with some good zingers, but this is not a philosophical play like "*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*"; more like a one-room potboiler.

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## **treva says**

I'm sure actually seeing Diana Rigg performing the lead role on stage would push it up to a 5. Or 10.

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## **Eric Norris says**

Not bad. Politics and journalism clash in a 1970s post-colonial Cold War setting in Africa. Excellent writing, entertaining, well-structured drama, but something was missing for me. I found the characters either trivial or reprehensible. In this, perhaps, they were a little too life-like. A worthwhile read for Stoppard fans, certainly, or theater students.

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