

**Douglass PARKER SENTENCES SUSPENDED:  
The Culpable Syntax of Classical Scholars in Stoppard's *Invention of Love***

Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* is a showplace for virtuoso prose: The arcane speech-patterns of classicists are vital structural items presenting the principals-the dying AEH and the fledgling Housman. This paper analyzes the text's "scholarly" sentences as they describe and diagnose at the same time.

I. AEH's Annihilatory Wit. Most distinctive to any audience are AEH's vicious excoriations of textual critics-heavily edited and juggled centos of direct quotes from the real Housman's classical papers, displayed to sum up the Scholar side of AEH. This mandarin rhetorical invective, first shown by AEH to Housman in Act I (32-34), is then foregrounded in Act II's "appointment-scene" (78-81), where they are counterpointed by AEH's Poet side, when he quotes his prison poem "Oh who is that young sinner" (82-84).

II. The Sentences of Scholars. But no scholars, not even AEH, employ lapidary psogos as quotidian speech. This we first taste in AEH's monologue to Charon at the play's beginning:

"Even so, let it be said, it is to Kennedy, or more directly to his *Sabrinae Corolla*, third edition, which I received as a school prize when I was seventeen, that I owe my love of Latin and Greek." (p. 3)

Qualification, sub-qualification, and sub-sub-qualification...these make one principal stigma of usual Professor-sprach. The second stigma, Hypertrophic Periodicity, comes after. Professors will lecture, and their sentences may be very hard to stop. The extreme of this tendency comes from Professor Benjamin Jowett of Housman's student days at Oxford, who perpetrates a huge, shaggy structure in Act I (24-25)-the Horrible Example, the "monologue incontinent" (100) that awaits both principals.

III. Housman becomes AEH. Neither youth nor old man succumb to Jowetry: But as we hear and see the young Housman grow from 18 to 26, treating and re-treating subjects already presented by his older self, his language thickens, his sentences twist themselves into near-approaches to AEH's idiolect, where vocabulary and structure swell steadily into the forbidding language of the buried life. IV. Howsomendeavours. Not, however, finally. "I have been practising a popular style of lecture...based on noticing that there are students present," sneers AEH in 1897 (Act II, 90), it is more than sarcasm. The style is set up by the "teaching scene" at Act I's close-the sentence where AEH expounds Horace Odes 4.1. Then comes the triumph: Scholar and Poet are melded in AEH's speeches at play's end, centering on the long, Joycean free-associational sentence which stretches out to the farther shore, the sentence beginning:

"And yet not dreaming either..." (100-101)

From the same speaker at the same time come all the facets of AEH's life, as he exits life and drama, as he at last talks directly to the "students" in the audience, putting his varied

languages together and, in his final lines, connecting everything in a style humane and human.

Citations by page from: Tom Stoppard, *The Invention of Love*, New York 1997.