

The Invention of Love

Tom Stoppard



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It is 1936 and A. E. Housman is being ferried across the river Styx, glad to be dead at last. His memories are dramatically alive. The river that flows through Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* connects Hades with the Oxford of Housman's youth: High Victorian morality is under siege from the Aesthetic movement, and an Irish student called Wilde is preparing to burst onto the London scene.

On his journey the scholar and poet who is now the elder Housman confronts his younger self, and the memories of the man he loved his entire life, Moses Jackson—the handsome athlete who could not return his feelings. As if a dream, *The Invention of Love* inhabits Housman's imagination, illuminating both the pain of hopeless love and passion displaced into poetry and the study of classical texts. The author of *A Shropshire Lad* lived almost invisibly in the shadow of the flamboyant Oscar Wilde, and died old and venerated—but whose passion was truly the fatal one?

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