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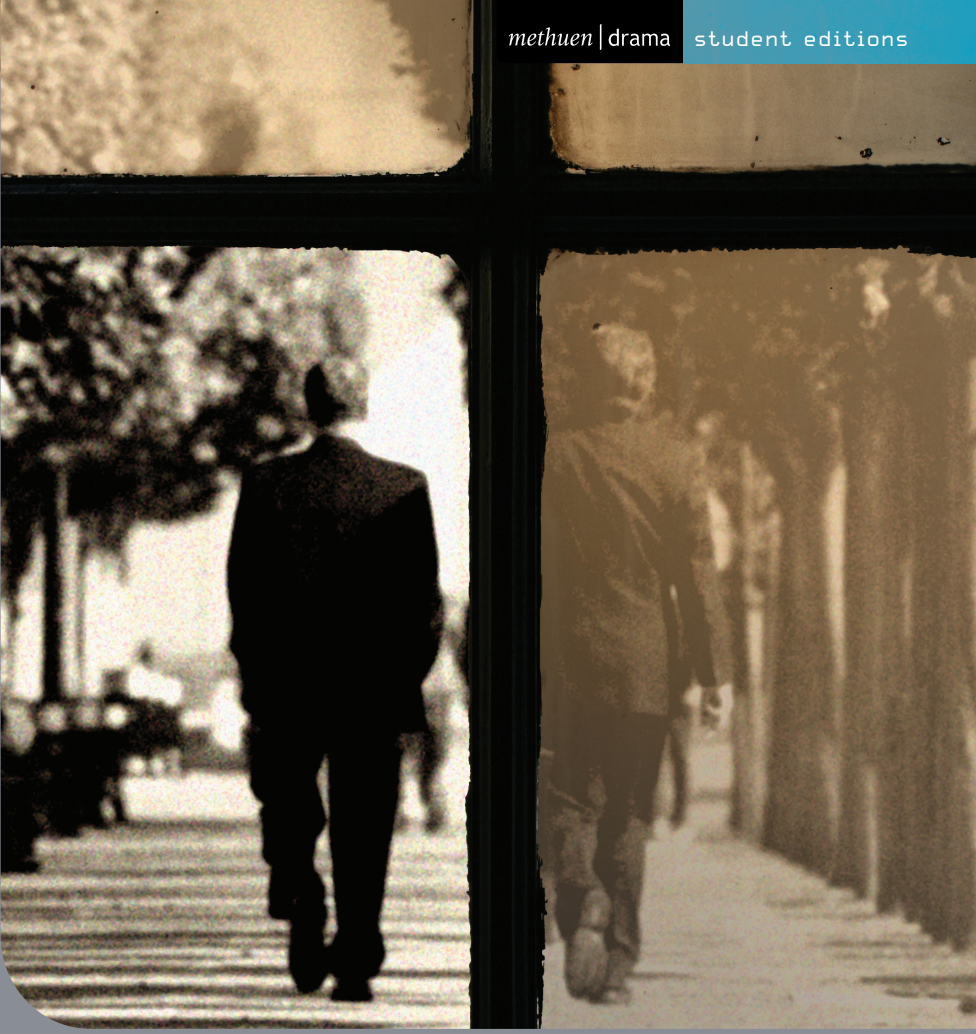

MICHAEL FRAYN

COPENHAGEN

EDITED BY ROBERT BUTLER

BLOOMSBURY

MICHAEL FRAYN

Copenhagen

with commentary and notes by
ROBERT BUTLER

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Contents

Michael Frayn

1933 8 September: born in North London. He lived first in Mill Hill, in a flat above a Victoria Wine Stores. His father, Thomas Allen Frayn, was a sales rep for Turners' Asbestos Cement, a roofing materials firm. His mother, Violet Alice Lawson, studied as a violinist at the Royal Academy of Music. She later worked at Harrods, where she occasionally modelled clothes. The family moved to Ewell, a suburb in South London.

1940 Attended 'hideous' private school in Sutton, a Dickensian establishment with bullying and beating.

1945 His mother died from a heart attack, aged forty. His father had to get a housekeeper and was no longer able to afford the school fees. Frayn went to Kingston Grammar School. 'It was my good fortune to be sent there because it gave me a good education.' Frayn swung between being a 'diligent little swot who was frightened of everything' and 'an obstreperous clown'.[1]

1948 After a brief religious phase Frayn became a militant atheist, communist and 'cultural snob'. Wrote poetry, stories and plays. As a sixth-former, 'I had a very lordly view of life.'

1952 National Service. Trained in Cambridge as a Russian interpreter. The playwright, Alan Bennett, was on the same course. (They became close friends and would later live opposite one another in London.)

1954 Attended Emmanuel College, Cambridge, on a state scholarship. Read Russian and French in his first year and Moral Sciences (Philosophy) for the second and third years. His supervisor for his last year,

Jonathan Bennett, recalled: 'I sharply remember his saying at one session – his face expressing a kind of happy earnestness – that when he had read the opening sentence of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, "The world is everything that is the case," it made him "want to dance".'[2] Edited *Granta*. Wrote May Week Footlights revue, *Zounds*, which 'fell into the stalls like unrisen sponge cake'.[3] His contemporaries included Frederic Raphael, Bamber Gascoigne, Jonathan Miller and Leslie Bricusse.

1957 Reporter on the *Manchester Guardian*. His beat was the north of England. (He also covered Harold Macmillan's trip to Russia.)

1959 Columnist on the *Manchester Guardian*. His 'Miscellany' column appeared three times a week.

1960 Marriage to Gillian Palmer.

1962 Columnist on the *Observer*. *The Day of the Dog* (articles reprinted from the *Guardian*).

1963 In one column Frayn introduced his famous distinction between ambitious meritocratic 'carnivores' and well-meaning *Guardian*-reading 'herbivores'. *The Book of Fub* (articles reprinted from the *Guardian*).

1964 *On the Outskirts* (articles reprinted from the *Observer*).

1965 In his first novel, *The Tin Men*, computers take over human tasks. Winner of the Somerset Maugham Award. P. G. Wodehouse calls it 'brilliant'.

1966 *The Russian Interpreter*, about a love affair conducted through an interpreter. Winner of the Hawthornden Prize.

1967 *Towards the End of the Morning* ('the only fiction set in Fleet Street that can bear comparison with *Scoop*' Christopher Hitchens). First published in the United States as *Against Entropy*. *At Bay in Gear Street* (articles reprinted from the *Observer*).

1968 *A Very Private Life*, a novel set in the future and written in the future tense. First television play, *Jamie, on a Flying Visit*, broadcast. (The story came to

Frayn in a single sleepless night.)

1969 Second television play, *Birthday*, broadcast.

1970 *The Two of Us* (Garrick Theatre), four one-act comedies, with Richard Briers and Lynn Redgrave, attracts hostile reviews. 'All right, they laughed,' said Frayn of one audience, 'but why didn't they laugh until they fell helpless on the floor?'[4]

1971 *The Sandboy* (Greenwich Theatre). A newspaper dispute led to only one review appearing: a 'shattering dismissal' from *The Times*.

1973 *Sweet Dreams*, a novel about a man, waiting at the traffic lights, who finds himself transported to heaven – an attractive modern city which offers unexpected challenges to the modern liberal.

1974 *Constructions*, a non-fiction volume of philosophical reflections.

1975 *Alphabetical Order* (Hampstead, then Mayfair Theatre), with Dinsdale Landen and Billie Whitelaw. Winner of *Evening Standard* Best Comedy Award. An assistant librarian has an unexpected impact on a provincial newspaper library. *Imagine a City Called Berlin* (first of a series of documentaries). Frayn's subjects included Vienna, Jerusalem, Prague, Budapest and the London suburbs.

1976 *Donkeys' Years* (Globe Theatre) with Penelope Keith, about a reunion night at an Oxbridge college. *Clouds* (Hampstead) with Nigel Hawthorne and Barbara Ferris (then Duke of York's, 1978) with Tom Courtenay and Felicity Kendal. A journalist and a novelist travel round Cuba reporting for rival magazines.

1978 *Balmoral* (Guildford), a farce set in a royal residence after the Revolution. 'It was terrible. I withdrew it and completely rewrote it.'[5]

1979 *Liberty Hall* (Greenwich), the rewrite of *Balmoral*, with George Cole. Reviews were 'lacklustre'.

1980 *Make and Break* (Lyric, Hammersmith, then Theatre Royal, Haymarket) with Leonard Rossiter and

Prunella Scales, about a British building components firm at a trade fair in Frankfurt. Winner of *Evening Standard* Best Comedy Award.

1982 *Noises Off* (Lyric, Hammersmith, then Savoy), with Patricia Routledge and Paul Eddington. A farce about actors putting on a farce, it ran for four years.

1983 *The Original Michael Frayn* (articles reprinted from the *Guardian* and the *Observer*).

1984 *Benefactors* (Vaudeville) with Patricia Hodge and Tim Piggott-Smith. The play drew on Frayn's experience when, with his wife and three daughters, he was involved in a housing initiative in Blackheath. (The house was designed and built as part of a small community.) In *Benefactors* an architect finds opposition to his new scheme in unexpected quarters. Winner of four Best Play awards. *Wild Honey*, after Chekhov (Lyttelton, National Theatre) with Ian McKellen.

1986 First screenplay, *Clockwise*, a comedy about a luckless headmaster (John Cleese) en route to give the keynote speech at a head teachers conference.

1989 *The Trick of It*, an epistolary novel about an academic who marries the female novelist who is his main academic subject. Marriage to Gillian Palmer dissolved.

1990 *Look Look* (Aldwych), a farce about audiences, with Stephen Fry as the playwright in Row H of the stalls. Panned by critics, the production ran for 27 performances.

1991 *A Landing on the Sun*, a novel about the death of a civil servant who has been working for the Ministry of Defence.

1992 *Now You Know*, a novel about free-speech campaigners with secrets of their own. The events are narrated in turn through the eyes of each of the eight characters.

1993 *Here* (Donmar), about a couple moving into new accommodation. Married Claire Tomalin, biographer and critic.
1995 *Now You Know* (Hampstead), a play based on his 1992 novel, with Adam Faith. *Speak After the Beep* (articles reprinted from the *Guardian*).
1998 *Copenhagen* (Cottesloe, Royal National Theatre). Winner of *Evening Standard* Best Play of the Year and Critics' Circle awards. *Alarms and Excursions* (Gielgud), short plays and sketches, with Felicity Kendal and Nicky Henson.
1999 *Headlong*, a novel, shortlisted for 1999 Booker Prize. An art historian obsessively pursues a missing Bruegel painting.
2000 *Copenhagen* opens Royale Theatre, New York. Winner of Tony Award (Best New Play). *The Additional Michael Frayn* (articles reprinted from various publications). *Celia's Secret*, co-written with David Burke, a non-fiction account of how David Burke (Bohr in *Copenhagen*) deceived Frayn with forgeries that supposedly related to events in *Copenhagen*.
2002 *Spies*, a novel about two boys during the Second World War. Winner of Whitbread Novel of the Year. Frayn's *Spies* and Claire Tomalin's *The Unequalled Self*, both nominated for Whitbread Book of the Year. (The winner was Tomalin.) Frayn received the Heywood Hill Literary Prize.
2003 *Democracy* (Royal National Theatre).
2007 *The Crimson Hotel* (Donmar Warehouse).
2008 *Afterlife* (Royal National Theatre), based on the life of theatre impresario Max Reinhardt.

[1] www.guardian.co.uk/saturday_review (14 August 1999)
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Observer* (1 April 1984)
[4] Ibid.
[5] *Frayn Plays: Two* (Methuen, 1991), p.viii

Plot

Copenhagen has a non-realistic setting. Three characters exist in an 'afterlife' from which they revisit events in the past. Without any changes in costume or make-up the characters move between periods in their lives. Time and place are fluid as the dialogue locates the action.

Act One

The play opens with the Danish physicist, Niels Bohr, and his wife, Margrethe, considering the events that occurred on a single evening during the Second World War. At the time Denmark was occupied by the Germans. In September 1941 the German physicist Werner Heisenberg, a former pupil and colleague of Bohr's, visited the Bohrs' home. Why? The visit was the end of the famous friendship between these two Nobel prizewinners. In the 'afterlife' setting of *Copenhagen*, Heisenberg agrees with the others to make one more attempt to explain his reasons for the trip.

The action flashes back to September 1941. Heisenberg arrives in Copenhagen and Bohr and Margrethe agonise over whether to invite him to their home. Bohr promises not to talk to him about politics but to stick to physics. Heisenberg struggles to remember the details of the trip. As he approaches the house the Bohrs speculate on why he wants to visit them. Bohr welcomes Heisenberg warmly. Margrethe remains detached and sardonic. The pressures of the war make social pleasantries extremely awkward. Heisenberg fails to grasp the depth of the Bohrs' hostility towards Germany. Bohr is half-Jewish. Heisenberg is working for the Nazis as director of nuclear fission research. They all know that the Gestapo are probably monitoring

their conversation. Heisenberg asks if Bohr has been in touch with mutual friends, scientists now working in the Allied countries. Bohr resists Heisenberg's advice about staying on good terms with the German Embassy.

The conversation flashes back two more decades to the first time Bohr and Heisenberg met. At the end of one of Bohr's lectures, the twenty-year-old Heisenberg had challenged the famous physicist over his maths. They recall their intense competitiveness, whether they were discussing theoretical physics, playing table-tennis or poker, or skiing. Heisenberg was the quick, impulsive one, Bohr moved slowly and carefully. Heisenberg recalls the headlong manner in which he had met and wooed his wife. There's a momentary silence. Heisenberg knows that the Bohrs are thinking about their children, two of whom died young. Bohr remembers the boating accident in which his eldest son was killed.

Bohr and Heisenberg decide to go for a walk so that they can talk. What Heisenberg has to say is treasonable. As they leave, Margrethe recalls the vast amount of time these two physicists had spent walking and talking. Within ten minutes, the two men have returned. Bohr looks furious and Heisenberg soon leaves. Margrethe wants to know what Heisenberg had to say.

The three of them realise that they cannot agree on the simplest details concerning that evening. Heisenberg says he was asking Bohr if a physicist had the moral right to work on the practical exploitation of atomic energy. Bohr thought Heisenberg was trying to provide Hitler with nuclear weapons. Bohr knew that an explosive chain reaction could never be achieved using natural uranium. Heisenberg knew that uranium could be turned into neptunium, which could be turned into plutonium. At this moment 'the bomb' goes off in Bohr's head.

Heisenberg insists that Bohr had always misunderstood the conversation. He'd told people variously that Heisenberg had tried to pick his brains about fission and the Allied nuclear programme, that Heisenberg was hoping

to persuade him that the Germans had no nuclear programme and that Heisenberg had tried to recruit him to work on it. They agree to go over the conversation one more time. They also agree to discuss it in plain language so that Margrethe, a non-scientist, can follow it. Heisenberg says that he tried to explain to Bohr that the future of the atomic bomb lay in the hands of scientists. Both sides would have to desist from building it. What should Heisenberg tell the German government if they came to him asking if it would be possible to produce nuclear weapons? Heisenberg is a patriot. He loves his country. What if the Allies were building an atomic weapon? Bohr says he can tell him nothing about the Allies' programme. Margrethe scorns the suggestion that Bohr should persuade the scientists, driven out of Germany because they were Jews, to stop work on a bomb to defeat Hitler. In September 1941 it looked very likely that Germany would win the war. Heisenberg's scheme would favour the Germans.

Heisenberg says that he didn't try and build the bomb. It wasn't until after the war, when he was detained with other German scientists in a house near Cambridge, that he heard the news about the exploding of an atom bomb. He couldn't believe it. During the war, Bohr worked at Los Alamos, where the atom bomb was developed. Yet after the war, Heisenberg was the one who had to live with thirty years of reproach. Margrethe refuses to let Heisenberg off the hook. She says that he had told the Nazis that he could produce an atomic bomb. Heisenberg insists that when he met with Albert Speer in June 1942 he was able to sideline the atomic project. Bohr scorns the research that Heisenberg had been doing at the end of the war. The three characters agree that after the war their friendship never recovered.

In the silence that follows, the question resurfaces. Why did Heisenberg go to Copenhagen in 1941? They agree to try another draft. For a second time Heisenberg approaches the Bohrs' house. As Bohr opens the door, Margrethe

reflects that from these two minds the future will emerge, which cities will be destroyed and which will survive.

Act Two

We see Bohr and Heisenberg on a walking holiday in Denmark in 1924. These are the early days of their friendship and collaboration. The discussion moves to the three years they spent together working on quantum mechanics, the 'uncertainty principle' and 'complementarity'. By following the discoveries they made in theoretical physics other parallels emerge. Their work led to the realisation that there can be no precisely determinable objective universe. Margrethe challenges their memory of making their discoveries together; in fact the most important ones were made alone. She also points out that the one person you can have no objective view of is yourself. It is therefore no good asking Heisenberg why he came to Copenhagen. Heisenberg's motives, she says, have not always been admirable. Perhaps in returning to Copenhagen he wished to show off his success to his old mentor. Perhaps it was fear of failure that stopped him obtaining large resources from Speer. Later she asserts that Heisenberg didn't build the bomb because he didn't understand the physics. Though Bohr suggests that if Heisenberg had known how close he was he might have made a bomb, Heisenberg maintains that he was never trying to build one. If he wasn't trying to – the question comes up again – why did he go to Copenhagen?

For the third and final time they go through the evening's events. This time round the three characters concentrate on what it was that they were thinking and feeling. Margrethe states that Heisenberg wanted Bohr to understand him and that Bohr's final act of friendship was to leave Heisenberg misunderstood. Heisenberg describes how he survived at the end of the war, when he was nearly shot as a deserter by an SS officer, by offering him a packet of cigarettes. It was a simple solution to a life and

death problem. Bohr says that uncertainty and knowledge are inextricable. Heisenberg agrees that the meeting at Copenhagen might have gone a different way and history been very different, there is a final core of uncertainty at the heart of things.

Commentary

The playwright's themes

Of the many successful playwrights and novelists working in Britain, some of the playwrights have written a novel and some of the novelists have written a play. Only one writer has achieved notable success in both fields. By 2003 Michael Frayn had written ten novels and fourteen plays, winning literary awards for his novels and theatre awards for his plays. As one reviewer put it, 'Nobody since Chekhov has been as good at both plays and fiction, or as productive.'[1]

How has Frayn achieved this double act? There is only one tip about how to be a successful writer that Frayn has so far volunteered, and that is 'to write the same thing over and over again, changing things very slightly and going on delivering it until people accept it. Very simply, people want reliability and continuity in a writer. If you buy cornflakes you want cornflakes.'[2] When Frayn made this suggestion he was not speaking about his own work. He was referring to more commercially successful novelists whose books are a recognisable brand. No one has ever accused Frayn of writing the same thing over and over again. No one till now, that is.

In fact, Frayn has been praised and censured for doing the opposite. When *Copenhagen* opened at the Royal National Theatre in May 1998 the *Evening Standard*'s theatre critic welcomed the play as 'the most astonishing departure in Frayn's theatrical career'. The *Daily Telegraph*'s critic was not so keen on the change of direction: 'It is impossible not to mourn the fact that Frayn has, temporarily I trust, mislaid his sense of humour.'

As a playwright Frayn had been pigeon-holed in the category marked 'sophisticated light comedy'. He had

written the most successful farce of the eighties. In *Noises Off* actors mislay sardines, hide whisky bottles behind radiators and present bunches of flowers to the wrong person. It seems worlds apart from *Copenhagen* in which two physicists discuss neutrons, photons, fission and wave equations. And yet, when these two plays are seen in the context of Frayn's career, evidence can soon be found of reliability and continuity. The subjects and the genres vary wildly but a closer inspection reveals many similar ingredients. Frayn has been following his own advice.

Even before he had the idea of *Copenhagen* we could have listed some themes that we would have expected to see:

- how we shape the world through work
- how we describe the world
- how subjectivity affects that description
- how versions of events conflict
- how memory works
- how we mask our thoughts from others
- how descriptions of events are always subject to rewrites
- how this complexity affects our moral judgements

Frayn's philosophical interest in these questions has been a constant feature of his writing. *Copenhagen* is one more stage in a long line of enquiry that stretches back to Cambridge in the 1950s, if not further still, to his London childhood in the 1940s. Michael Blakemore directed the Royal National Theatre and New York premières of *Copenhagen.* He has also directed six other plays by Frayn. 'I think good writing,' Blakemore says, 'mostly comes out of the preoccupations of a lifetime.'[3]

The spark that first set Frayn thinking about a new subject for a new play, one that would provide a startling and illuminating focus for his interests, came in the mid-nineties when he read a recent book by the investigative journalist Thomas Powers. The title was *Heisenberg's War: The Secret History of the German Bomb*. A hundred pages in, Frayn found his subject.

Copenhagen is the story of two physicists who meet for a conversation during the war. After the war neither can agree on what was said. Within this tight framework Frayn investigates questions that he has been considering since he was an undergraduate at Cambridge. These philosophical questions revolve around what we know, feel and think and the uncertain foundations upon which we base these perceptions. In philosophy this area is called epistemology.

As theoretical physicists, Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg are involved in unravelling the enigma of the atom. Yet they are unable to agree on basic facts as to what took place during the course of a ten-minute walk. As Bohr's wife, Margrethe, says: 'You reasoned your way, both of you, with such astonishing delicacy and precision into the tiny world of the atom. Now it turns out that everything depends upon these really rather large objects on our shoulders' (p. 76).

The focus in *Copenhagen* narrows down, even further than this, to a particular branch of philosophy known as the epistemology of intention. This examines what we think we are doing and why we think we are doing it. It's a very basic question. The play states it in the opening line. 'But why?' asks Margrethe. Her second line gives the question its context. 'Why did he come to Copenhagen?'

Copenhagen concerns the uncertainties that surround motivation. Every actor knows about motivation. It is what actors ask over and over again in rehearsals. Why am I doing this? At drama school actors are often trained to motivate a line of dialogue with a single *action*. The character is doing this or that action because of this or that *objective*. The actors also learn to motivate the *arc* of a character's journey. They do this by thinking of a *super-objective*. The idea underlying this approach is that an audience won't believe in what the character is doing unless the actor believes in what the character is doing. In a well-rehearsed production each line the actor delivers, each move the actor makes, will appear to be logical and intelligible. In this respect, theatre is quite unlike real life,

where people are often unable to clarify their objectives, arcs and super-objectives.

Why did one of the world's leading physicists make a particular journey? The answer that Frayn provides in *Copenhagen* takes the audience on a challenging journey of its own. It explores nuclear physics, philosophy and history. For scholars and students each of these academic disciplines has to be approached on its own terms. To discover what goes on inside an atom and what goes on inside the human mind requires separate investigative and analytical skills. A playwright is allowed to take more liberties. A playwright has the licence to play with ideas and subjects and to highlight parallels, analogies and metaphors that fall outside the academic approach to subjects. 'One of the things about the theatre, and fiction, is that you can play,' Frayn told an interviewer. 'You can actually investigate situations that don't exist, and you're not bound by the actuality of the world.'[4]

In *Copenhagen* Frayn plays with the idea of Bohr, Margrethe and Heisenberg meeting up in an 'afterlife' and holding the conversation that they never had during their lives. This situation allows Frayn to combine his interests in philosophy and physics. These two disciplines have been transformed during the twentieth century as our understanding of what goes on inside atoms and what goes on inside the human mind has been revolutionised. More than that, the developments in the first area influenced the developments in the second. Since Frayn explores the relationship between the two in his work, it is worth taking a step back to consider how far-reaching these developments were.

The modern world is often said to have begun in 1905, when the twenty-six-year-old Albert Einstein, a clerk in a patents office in Berne, published 'On the electrodynamics of moving bodies'. This paper became known as the Special Theory of Relativity. Einstein's astonishing revelation was that when one goes at very high velocities (approaching the speed of light), lengths contract and clocks

slow down. Einstein rapidly followed up his discovery with the quantum theory of light (which proposed that light was composed of 'wave-packets' called photons), for which he won the Nobel Prize. That very same year, his research into Brownian motion provided a powerful argument for the existence of atoms. Although his work had a profound effect on the twentieth century, he couldn't possibly have foreseen what some of these consequences would be. Einstein was dismayed when he realised that his work had paved the way for the invention of the atomic bomb. 'It starts with Einstein,' says Heisenberg in *Copenhagen*. 'It starts with Einstein,' agrees Bohr (p. 71).

Philosophy had undergone its own revolution in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1911 a young aeronautical engineer from Vienna had gone to Cambridge to study mathematics and logic. Three years later he had to return home to fight in the First World War. During the war, in which he fought on the Russian and Italian fronts, Ludwig Wittgenstein completed his masterpiece, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). The book overturned the way we think about the mind and the body, inner and outer experience and how we differentiate between our knowledge of ourselves and others.

In 1929 Wittgenstein came back to teach at Cambridge. His impact was immense. One area in which he was highly influential was his analysis of private experience. He attacked the idea that the mind and the body were separate entities. He denied that we always know what mental states we are in. He stated that introspection is not the same as perception. He could no more look into his own mind than he could look into the mind of someone else. Introspection does not grant us a privileged access into our own minds. Introspection is a form of self-reflection: 'the calling up of memories; of imagined possible situations, and of the feelings that one would have if . . .'[5]

Wittgenstein's ideas significantly affected the idea of motive and intention – the theme in *Copenhagen*. If we can be certain about *what* someone has done and *why* he or she

has done it, we can be fairly confident in describing the intention and the action as either a good thing or a bad thing. That's easy enough. But if we don't know exactly what that person was doing or why they were doing it – or to take this one stage further – if we can't be sure that they knew exactly what they were doing or why they were doing it, we would have to think a lot harder before describing the intention or the action as good or bad. Those questions relate to the epistemology of intention. They lie at the heart of *Copenhagen*.

Wittgenstein died in 1951. Two years later his second masterpiece, *Philosophical Investigations*, was posthumously published. One Wittgenstein scholar writes: 'His thought dominated Anglophone philosophy for the next quarter of a century.'[6] In 1954 Frayn went up to Cambridge. In his second and third years he read philosophy. The one book of philosophy that Frayn has published, *Constructions*, pursues many of the questions that Wittgenstein raises. It discusses the nature of perceptions, dreams, memories, love, ambition and belief. It examines these concepts through elegant discussions of photographs, toy cars, clouds, animals, Punch and Judy, Robinson Crusoe, masks, alcoholism, audiences and writing. In a humorous column he wrote for the *Observer* Frayn finds himself watching a literary quiz game on the television. He despairs as he realises how many books he hasn't read compared to the members of the panel who appear to have read almost every book that has been mentioned. His wife cheers him up: 'Anyway, you know all about all sorts of things they don't. You know about Wittgenstein, and – well – Wittgenstein . . .'[7]

The playwright's career

When Frayn was a fifteen-year-old schoolboy at Kingston Grammar School he wrote poetry and stories. He was also a communist. His enthusiasm for communism was short-lived, but his interest in Russia and Russian remained. (Frayn's Chekhov translations have been highly acclaimed.)

Before he went to university he had to do his National Service. The fifties was the height of the Cold War, when British foreign policy was dominated by a deep distrust of the Soviet Union. Frayn went on a course to train as a Russian interpreter. It was based at Cambridge and the recruits wore civilian clothes. The playwright Alan Bennett was on the same course. Frayn and Bennett became close friends and put on revues together. Frayn also shared a billet with someone who was passionate about theoretical physics and his enthusiasm sparked Frayn's interest. 'If you study philosophy,' Frayn said, 'you have to be interested in quantum mechanics, because quantum mechanics has so many philosophical implications, very difficult implications, for philosophy.'[8]

The day after he completed his National Service he went to university – back to Cambridge. As an undergraduate he wrote a column called 'Saturday Sermon' for *Varsity* and guest-edited an issue of *Granta*. The writer and broadcaster Bamber Gascoigne was a contemporary. 'He was almost exactly the same man then as he is now,' Gascoigne recalled. 'His quality is as a cool observer and he is interested in seeing life happening and then turning what he sees either into humour or drama.' Gascoigne's memory of Frayn touches on a theme that would surface in *Copenhagen*. 'He is essentially a thinker and an observer and if you make too much noise as an observer it kills it as people start observing you.'[9]

Frayn also wrote the Footlights May Week Revue. Unfortunately this was the only time the Footlights Revue didn't go on to the West End. Frayn's disappointment with the Cambridge Footlights dampened his interest in theatre. It was only after thirteen years as a journalist and novelist that he returned to the theatre. His first professional stage production, *The Two of Us*, was an evening of four short comedies. In the second of the four, Frayn manages to slip in a little physics and philosophy. In this one-act play, *The New Quixote*, Kenneth explains to Gina that he organises his love life round the principle that nothing is what it seems.