



The Seen and the Unseen in: Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
are Dead" as a Creative Reading of "Hamlet"

المرئي وغير المرئي في مسرحية توم ستوبارد " روزنجرانتز و غدلنستيرن في عداد الموتى " كقراءة إبداعية
لمسرحية "هاملت"

Prepared by:

Kavita Jagtap

Supervised by:

Dr. Sabbar S. Sultan

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Master of
Arts in English Language and Literature

Department of English Language and Literature

Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Middle East University

July, 2012

Authorization

I, Kavita Jagtap, authorize Middle East University to supply copies of my thesis to libraries or establishments or individuals upon request.

Name: Kavita Jagtap

Signature: Kavita Jagtap

Date: 14.7.2012

Thesis Committee Decision

This thesis entitled, *The Seen and the Unseen in: Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead" as a Creative Reading of "Hamlet"* was successfully defended and approved on 14 July 2012.

Examination Committee**Signature**

1. Professor Tawfiq IbrahimYousef External Examiner
2. Dr. Fatima Abdel Haleem Jaffar
3. Dr. Sabbar Saa'doon Sultan Thesis Advisor



.....
.....
.....

Acknowledgement

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Almighty, for supporting me in this work.

Without His support, grace and mercy, I would not have finished my thesis.

I greatly appreciate the effort, dedication, and support of my advisor

Dr. Sabbar S. Sultan. I thank him for his continuous guidance, support and help in completing this thesis.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the examining committee members and to the panel of experts for their invaluable inputs and encouragement. Thanks are also extended to the faculty members of the Department of English at the Middle East University.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my father's soul, whose dream was for his children to gain as much knowledge and high degree of education as possible, to my beloved mother, my siblings, my son and my daughter who are a symbol of hope to me. I would specially like to dedicate this work to a very special person, Mohammad Jarrar. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to every teacher who taught me, because they are distinguished in their specialities. I thank them all for their effort, support and their teachings which have become a part of the fabric of who I am.

Table of Contents

Authorization.....	II
Thesis Committee Decision.....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
Dedication.....	V
Table of Contents.....	VI
Abstract (Arabic version).....	IX
Abstract (English version).....	XI
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction.....	1
1.0 Background of the Study.....	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.2 Questions of the Study.....	4
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	4
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	5
1.5 Limitations of the Study.....	6
Chapter Two: Tom Stoppard's Dramaturgy.....	7
2.0 Biography of Tom Stoppard.....	7
2.1 Trademarks of Stoppard's Plays.....	18
2.2 Stoppard's Achievements.....	19

2.3	Existentialism	23
2.3.1	Focus on Concrete Existence.....	25
2.3.2	Freedom.....	25
2.3.3	Theatre.....	26
2.3.4	The Theatre of the Absurd	28
2.3.5	Characters.....	30
2.3.6	Language.....	31
2.3.7	Plot.....	32
	Chapter Three: Research Methodology	34
3.0	Introduction.....	34
3.1	Comparative Method.....	35
3.1.1	Descriptive method.....	35
3.1.2	Reader Response.....	36
3.1.3	Analytical Approach.....	36
3.2	Procedures.....	36
	Chapter Four: Review of Existing Literature	38
4.1	Introduction.....	38
4.2	Brief Survey of Books and Articles.....	38
	Chapter Five: Stoppard's <i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern</i> and Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i>	58
5.0	Introduction.....	58
5.1	Synopsis of the Play.....	58

5.2 The Play in Question.....	61
5.3 Inspiration, Influences and Evolution of the Play.....	66
5.4 Metatheatre.....	81
5.5 Stoppard's display of wit through dialogue.....	90
5.6 Critical Reactions to the Play.....	95
5.7 Comparative Literary Analysis.....	98
5.8 Comparison of the Two Plays.....	99
Chapter Six: Conclusion.....	112
4.0 Introduction.....	112
References.....	118

المرئي وغير المرئي في : توم ستوبارد "Rosencrantz و Guildenstern في عداد الموتى " بوصفها
قراءة خلاقة في تفسير " هاملت " .

اسم المؤلف

كافيتا جاكتاب

تحت إشراف الدكتور صبار سعدون سلطان

الخلاصة:

تقدم هذه الدراسة توم ستوبارد بمثابة كاتب مسرحي الذي يُفضل إلقاء الضوء على هشاشة المغزى والعبث الموجود في العالم الذي نعيش فيه من خلال الشخصيات الرئيسية الاثنتين في مسرحيته Rosencrantz و Guildenstern في عداد الموتى (1967). وهي مُستمدة من مسرحية هاملت لشكسبير , وتؤكد مسرحية ستوبارد على موضوعات الوجودية والعبثية من خلال الحوارات الذكيّة ، مسرحية التعبير في الكلمات والتهكم والمسرحية الوصفية . ومن هنا المسرح هو مفتوح لتحليل وجهات النظر المختلفة. وستستخدم هذه الدراسة أساساً لطريقة المقارنة لتحليل البحوث في التعامل مع كل من هاملت و Rosencrantz و Guildenstern هم من أعداد الموتى. وستشمل هذه الدراسة من الناحية الأخرى على

تحليل المُستنتجة من خلال الدراسة على أساس النهج الوصفي أيضاً ، وطرح نظرية استجابة القارئ والمنهج التحليلي إلى الأمام للإجابة على المسائل في هذه الوثيقة. وتناول ستوبارد موضوعات عالمية بأن جميع البشر يستجيبوا إليها وهكذا تمكن لهذه الدراسة أن تكون مثلاً للعمل بها والتي تُركز على الانجازات لهذا الكاتب المسرحي المُبدع.

**The Seen and the Unseen in: Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern are Dead" as a Creative Reading of "Hamlet"**

By

Kavita Jagtap

Supervised by

Dr. Sabbar S. Sultan

Abstract:

This study presents Tom Stoppard as a playwright who prefers shedding light upon the meaninglessness and absurdity of the world we live in through the two main characters in his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967). Derived from the Shakespearean play *Hamlet*, Stoppard's play emphasizes the themes of existentialism and absurdism through the witty dialogues, word play, sarcasm and metatheatre. Hence the play is open to analysis from different viewpoints. This study will mainly use the comparative method of research analysis in dealing with both *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

On the other hand this study will also include analysis concluded through study

based on the descriptive approach, reader-response theory and the analytical approach to answer the questions put forward herein. Stoppard addresses universal themes that all humans respond to and so this study can be an example of a work which focuses on the achievements of this creative playwright.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

"Plays are written to entertain. . . No plays are written to be studied and discussed any more than pictures are painted to be discussed."

— *Tom Stoppard*. From an interview with *Jon Bradshaw* in *New York Magazine*, 10 January 1977.

On 11 April 1967 — following acclaim at the 1966 Edinburgh Festival — the opening of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in a National Theatre production at the Old Vic made Stoppard an overnight success. "Stoppardian" has become a term describing works using wit and comedy while addressing philosophical concepts.

Tom Stoppard is one of the twentieth century's most interesting and creative playwrights. He uses his art form to criticize society's inability to handle the notion that we are governed by chaos. The modern world has invented fate as an excuse for not doing anything to shape or change our outcome. Stoppard uses his plays as a mirror held up to society, showing his audience that man's situation is determined by forces beyond his control.

Stoppard may have left school out of boredom, but he has written on extremely varied and complex subjects, including: poetry, love, history, math, philosophy, and physics. Yet he can honestly say--as he did, about *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*--that his plays are written to entertain. It was his first goal, and he has never forgotten it.

A contemporary playwright, Stoppard lives in Great Britain. He was born in 1937 and produced his first successful play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in 1966. Stoppard's absurd comedy, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is a transformation of the Shakespeare's revenge tragedy *Hamlet*. They both contain common characters and events but are separated by their historical, social and literary contexts as well as their priorities. The plays are also different in language, theatrical style, values, characters and themes. Tom Stoppard has adapted/transformed the canonical Shakespearean play, to entertain an intelligent and perceptive contemporary audience. Fate, philosophy and irony all play a part in the play '*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*' in bringing the two confused and quizzical protagonists to their deaths in the final scene.

His more recent works include *Travesties* (1974) and *Arcadia* (1993). He has

also adapted many of his stage works for radio, film and television winning extensive awards and honours from the start of his career. He has won three Tony awards, in 1968, 1976, and 1984.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* lends itself to study from various angles, depending on the perspective adopted. The play offers a complex mixture of contemporary themes, innovative language and a unique style that encourage the researcher to analyse these elements as they are skillfully revealed in this tragic-comic but witty play.

The deliberateness of Tom Stoppard's doing so in order to look at events/life from the point of view of the common man as opposed to Shakespeare's portrayal of such characters, (i.e. to make them look trivial and insignificant), is one of the main aspects the researcher will foreground in this study.

1.3 Questions of the study

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1 How does the reversal of the themes and roles in Tom Stoppard's play fit as a critique of Shakespeare's play?

2 How has Tom Stoppard devised his own play to highlight the 'absurdist' theme?

3 How are the elements used by Tom Stoppard in his play comparatively different from those used by Shakespeare in the Elizabethan era?

4 How do these elements/devices serve the play in presenting the scenes/themes as a contemporary reading of those in *Hamlet*?

1.4 Objectives of the Study:

1 To show how Stoppard has reversed the themes, characters' roles and the situations as a critique of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

2 To investigate whether the innovative techniques used by Tom Stoppard serve

the play in highlighting the absurdist theme as perceived by the playwright.

3 To demonstrate how the elements used by Stoppard in his plays are different from those used by Shakespeare in the Elizabethan era.

4 To compare the elements, situations, scenes and character roles in the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* that are correspondent to those in the original *Hamlet* and the underlying aesthetic and philosophical views behind that.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Tom Stoppard is a distinguished playwright in the sense that his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* discusses issues that are familiar to the reader/audience but at the same time have been presented from a different and unprecedented point of view. Herein lies his distinction as an outstanding figure in contemporary English drama.

The importance of the present study lies in shedding light on the uniqueness of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, in view of the aesthetic and philosophical perspective of the playwright. The present study will therefore attempt to fill a gap in the existing literature by analyzing this play from

that perspective.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Time of the study will be limited to Tom Stoppard's work as presented to a contemporary audience of the 1960's when the play was first enacted.

Place of the study will be limited to the British contemporary theatre of the 1960's.

Results of the study are limited to one particular play and therefore cannot be generalized to cover all of Stoppard's works.

Chapter Two

Tom Stoppard's Dramaturgy

2.0 Biography of Tom Stoppard

Tom Stoppard was born Tomas Straussler in Zlín, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic) on July 3, 1937. His family left Czechoslovakia to immigrate to Singapore on March 15, 1939, the day the Nazis invaded. His father, a doctor, moved his wife and two sons to Singapore when Tom was just two years old. In 1941, before the Japanese invasion Tom, his brother and his mother were evacuated to India. The senior Straussler stayed behind and was killed in 1946. Martha Straussler married British army officer Kenneth Stoppard. The very British Stoppard was an unlikely husband for a Czech woman with vaguely Jewish links. Odd or not, Stoppard senior did marry Martha and before long moved her and her boys to Bristol, England. Tom Straussler became Tom Stoppard, the namesake of a man who, according to his own recently published account about his background believed with Cecil Rhodes that to be born an Englishman was to have drawn first prize in the lottery of life.

Although Stoppard is generally considered one of the most intellectual of modern playwrights, he never went to university. In fact, he left school at the age

of seventeen after completing his "O" levels and began work as a journalist for the *Western Daily Press* (1954-58) and the *Bristol Evening World* (1959-60). "I really wanted to be a great journalist," he says, "but I wasn't much use as a reporter. I felt I didn't have the right to ask people questions." (Stoppard: 1995, 67-68). In 1960, while celebrating his 23rd birthday in Capri, he decided to quit his newspaper job and become a playwright. Three months later, he had written his first full-length play, *A Walk on the Water*. This first effort owed so much to Robert Bolt's *Flowering Cherry* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* that Stoppard has since felt obliged to dub it "Flowering Death of a Cherry Salesman." Still, the play was good enough to earn him a literary agent, Kenneth Ewing, who managed to get the play optioned within a few weeks by H.M. Tennents, a prestigious producing agency. Although that particular option would expire with the play still unproduced, *A Walk on the Water* was eventually staged as *Enter a Free Man* and also aired on British Independent Television. Stoppard continued to live in Bristol until August 1962 when, realizing that he really ought to be in London if he wanted to be a dramatist, he relocated. From September 1962 until April 1963, he worked in London as a drama critic for *Scene*, a new arts magazine, writing reviews and interviews, both under his name and under the pseudonym William Boot which was taken from the protagonist in Evelyn Waugh's novel *Scoop* (1938).

Scene went out of business in April 1963, and, according to Stoppard, he spent the next four years mostly unemployed. During this period of poverty, he scraped by with a bit of writing for TV and radio, an occasional freelance article or review, and a few short stories. He also wrote a number of plays which, at the time, remained unpublished and unproduced. In 1964, a Ford Foundation grant gave Stoppard the opportunity to live in a Berlin mansion for five months and devote himself to writing. The result was a one-act verse play entitled *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*. This short piece would eventually evolve into Stoppard's first big hit--*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*-- an absurd retelling of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from the perspective of two of its most insignificant characters. As can be readily surmised from the list of his plays, Stoppard was hardly a one-hit wonder.

He also kept up his writing credentials in the world of radio, television and film. His most recent and wildly successful screenplay, the 1999 Oscar winner *Shakespeare In Love*, brought him full circle to his first big hit which was also indebted to the Bard. "The film seems to have stirred up a renewed interest in reviving all things Stoppard." (Hodgson, 2001, p74).

Originally produced in August 1966 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival where it

was performed by a group of Oxford undergraduates, Stoppard initially felt *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was received "politely rather than with hilarity" (Stoppard, 1966). But the play was praised by critics such as Ronald Bryden, and, as a result, came to the attention of Kenneth Tynan of the National Theatre Company at the *Old Vic* who soon contacted the young playwright. With the production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in 1967, Stoppard became the youngest playwright ever to have a play produced at this prestigious theatre. The play was equally well-received in America, where *The New Yorker* called it "a dazzling compassionate fantasy." (Heilpern, *The New Yorker*, 9/4/2001). It won both the Tony and the Drama Critics' Circle awards for best play of 1967-68. Before the Broadway premiere, an interviewer asked Stoppard what his play was about. His response: "It's about to make me very rich. (Stoppard, 1995). No doubt one has to take such an answer with a pinch of salt, as there are other intellectual grounds driving Stoppard to handle such a stimulating work.

From the beginning, Stoppard's plays have been described as "plays of ideas," philosophical deliberations made entertaining mostly by their wordplay, jokes, innuendo and sense of fun. Stoppard admits:

In general terms, I'm not a playwright who is interested in characters

with a capital K and psychology with a capital S. I'm a playwright interested in ideas and forced to invent characters who express those ideas. All my people speak the same way, with the same cadences and sentence structures. They speak as I do. (Stoppard, 1990, 70)

"To his detractors," Jane Montgomery notes, "his plays are devoid of feeling and sensibility: improbably shallow people saying improbably deep things in an emotionally sterile context. But, to his supporters, his passion for theatrical conundrums has created a new dramatic style which melds the moral questioning of Shaw with the incongruity of Ionesco." (Jane Montgomery, Times Literary Supplement (29/9/1995))

David Guaspari defends Stoppard's style as follows:

In Tom Stoppard's plays, ideas can just as much be objects of aesthetic perception and delight as can sunsets or roses. Ideas can be elegant; they can seduce, tease, or strike comic poses; they can rhyme and be set ringing at selected overtones. From ideas thus at play we ask what we ask of any imaginative use of language: inevitability and surprise. (The Antioch Review, Spring, 1996)

While some early critics described Stoppard's early work as derivative, Anthony

Jenkins believes:

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern transcends even one of the masterpieces that inspired it. The games they play, while waiting for that end, are not simply a means to fill time, and here Stoppard resolves a problem that *Waiting for Godot* fails to answer. Consequently, Ros and Guil are far more articulate and intelligent than their counterparts in *Godot*. Admittedly, the two lords have been to the right school, but they also reflect our idea of the joys we find between womb and tomb. (Jenkins: 1987, 97-98).

Stoppard spent the next few years enjoying his success and overseeing productions of *Enter a Free Man* (1968) and several one-act plays, including *The Real Inspector Hound* (1961-62) and *After Magritte* (1970). During this period, he also wrote a few pieces for radio and TV, but he did not produce another full-length play until *Jumpers* appeared in 1972. This play, set in an alternate reality in which British astronauts have landed on the moon and "Radical Liberals" have taken over the British government, took two years to write and established Stoppard's reputation as an elite dramatist. It also marked a new period in his development as he began to dabble his feet in the pool of politics. He would confirm this new direction in his next play *Travesties* (1974), in parody of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* in which Tristan Tzara, Vladimir Lenin,

and James Joyce come together in a Zürich library. Here, Stoppard addresses the role of politics in art. Although each of these historical figures did visit Switzerland in 1917, they were not there at precisely the same time. Stoppard gets around this, however, by relating the story through the eyes of a somewhat senile old man, Henry Carr. (Henry Carr is the leading character in *Travesties*).

During the 70s, the prolific playwright found time to become engaged in the issues of human rights, especially in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union about which he wrote numerous newspaper articles. His political concerns were also evident in his work -- i.e. *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor* (1977), a play about a political dissident confined to a Soviet mental hospital and accompanied by an orchestral score composed by Andre Previn. In 1977, Stoppard travelled to the Soviet Union, as well as several other Eastern European countries with a member of Amnesty International, and what he saw there deeply affected him. In Czechoslovakia (then under Communist control), he met the late playwright and future President Vaclav Havel, who had been imprisoned for nonconformism. After this visit, Stoppard began to work with *Index on Censorship*, Amnesty International, and the Committee Against Psychiatric Abuse. He began to write newspaper articles and editorials about human rights. Stoppard was also instrumental in translating Havel's works into English. In 1988, fellow dramatist

and activist, the late Harold Pinter, had this to say of Stoppard's political activities:

I like Tom Stoppard enormously. I respect and admire him. He made one of the most brilliant speeches I've ever heard, about censorship and freedom in England. This was seven or eight years ago. It was a wonderful speech and I wonder what he would say now. I haven't seen him for a while, but we're very attached. I believe that he's a conservative man. He's quite entitled. Not everyone who votes Conservative in England is representative of an Evil Empire. Still, Stoppard is not considered as a playwright committed to politics. (Conversations with Pinter).

Some of Stoppard's other important works for the stage include *The Real Thing* (1982), which talks about love, commitment, and the place of art in society; *Hapgood* (1988), which mixes the themes of espionage and quantum mechanics, especially exploring the idea that in both fields, observing an event changes the nature of the event; *Arcadia* (1993), which alternates between a pair of present day researchers investigating an early 19th century literary mystery and the real incident they are investigating; *The Invention of Love* (1997), which explores the life and death of the American poet and classicist A.E. Housman, who died, never having allowed himself to fulfill the unrequited love of his youth; *The Coast of Utopia* (2002), a trilogy about the origins of modern political radicalism in 19th-

century Russia; *Rock 'n' Roll* (2006), which spans the years from 1968 to 1990 from the double perspective of Prague, where a rock 'n' roll band comes to symbolize resistance to the Communist regime, and of Cambridge where the verities of love and death are shaping the lives of three generations in the family of a Marxist philosopher.

Stoppard has also written extensively for film and TV. His credits include the screenplays for *Brazil* (1985) and *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) for which he won an Academy Award. He is also rumored to have helped George Lucas "polish" the dialogue for *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* (2005), (Hodgson, 2001).

"Whether on stage, screen or simply page," Amy Reiter declares in *Salon Magazine*, "Stoppard questions everything from the nature of love to the nature of the universe, from the compulsion to act to the compulsion to act out, from the impulse to create to the impulse to procreate. And while absolutes are scant in Stoppard's work, interrogatives and insights abound". (Nov, 2001) 'What a fine persecution -- to be kept intrigued without ever quite being enlightened,' observes Guildenstern in Stoppard's 1966 breakthrough effort *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.

However, Stoppard is not without his critics. John McGrath, for example, raises the following points regarding Stoppard's work and art (2000: 70-71):

That is why Tom Stoppard is so successful, because of his specious ability to mildly stir the intellect of the middle classes. I can't believe what I see when I go to a Stoppard show, in a sense that the audience think they are being intellectual listening to this vapid sixth-form philosophy, or rather references to philosophy, not even philosophising.

However, the dramatist's supporters recognize that he does, in fact, clearly deal with meaningful issues and real philosophical questions. A representative example of such defensive arguments can be seen in Schleuter's statement (1979: 53) that:

Man's confrontation with his world is a recurring theme in Stoppard's plays. Whether rendered in the form of two minor characters from a Shakespearean play assuming heroic status (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*), a professor of moral philosophy discoursing on God while his ex-showgirl wife plays surrealistic games (*Jumpers*, 1972), or a pseudohistorical meeting in a Zurich library of three radically different revolutionaries (*Travesties*, 1974), the theme of man's relationship to reality—his insignificance, exile, and search for self—is manifest.

There are 'issues' in the plays, says John Carrington (2001), such as free will, the controversial pursuit of meaning, the intersection of art and politics, and the nature of human rights, but overall if there is a central earnestness in Stoppard's plays it seems to be simply the excitement of thinking. As he aptly puts it: "The truth is always a compound of two half-truths, and you never reach it, because there is always something more to say."

In 1998, following the deaths of his parents he went back, for the first time, to Zlín after 60 years. He has expressed grief both for a lost father and a missing past, but he has no sense of being a survivor, at whatever remove or, as Gussow (1996: 27-28) puts it: "I feel incredibly lucky not to have had to survive or die. It's a conspicuous part of what might be termed a charmed life".

Tom Stoppard was appointed CBE in 1978 and knighted in 1997. He has been married twice: to Josie Ingle (1965–72) and to Miriam Stoppard (née Miriam Moore-Robinson) (1972–92). He has two sons from each marriage, including the actor Ed Stoppard. www.theatredatabase.com/20_century/tom_stoppard. (retrieved, Sep 2011)

2.1 Trademarks of Stoppard's Plays

A Stoppard play tends to overflow with ideas -- philosophical, intellectual, scientific, experimental, literary -- all the subjects that engage the playwright's fertile and ever curious mind. The play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, for instance, did emerge in the form of experimental theatre based on an intellectual frame. It is far away from the traditional well-made plays where things take a logical shape and expected conclusions. The author's concern lies in disclosing the intellectual and philosophical predicament besetting his bewildered characters. Technically speaking, the plots tend to be difficult to pin down in terms of beginning-middle-end summations. In fact he's admitted (Gussow, 41), that he has problems thinking of stories: "Every one of my plays is flawed by this. I have to exert myself enormously to construct a story and then tell it properly."

With plot or without, all are dished up with enormous wit. Puns, allusion, word play of all kinds keep audiences alert and amused. As Stoppard himself once said (Gussow, 51), about his love for words: "I really dig words more than I can speak them. There are no words to say how much I love[words]."

2.2 Stoppard's achievements:

Early Minor Works

Stoppard's first two plays, *A Separate Peace* (TV 1960) and *A Walk on the Water* (TV, 1963, adapted for the stage as *Enter a Free Man* in 1968) are concerned with the problem of the individual as a 'private' being, having to exist in a society which does not agree with him. John Brown of *A Separate Peace* and George Riley of *Enter a Free Man* are different from ordinary people; neither wants to participate in the conventional routines of life, and both see themselves as fundamentally opposed to the rest of society. George Riley is the prototype Stoppardian 'hero', and John Brown is an embryonic George Riley.

Stoppard is not the first playwright to mix seriousness with humour, of course, but whereas for example a Shakespearean tragedy may have brief comic interludes, in Stoppard's plays the humour and seriousness co-exist as intertwined strands. Shakespeare's comic interludes serve to heighten the tragic climaxes and the tragic setting heightens the impact of the comedy, but in Stoppard's work the comic and the serious are so close that they tend to compromise one another. Stoppard himself said (Gussow, 52) "Is my seriousness compromised by my frivolity? . . . Or my frivolity redeemed by my seriousness?"

Such a ticklish question is not easy to answer whether by the author himself or his recipients. However it is quite evident that Stoppard's art is part and parcel of this comic-serious duality, a technique that brings to mind those famous dramatists who wrote in this way such as Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw.

The serious thoughts are often hidden behind, or within, the comedy and one has to see or read a play several times before being able to see through the wit and ingenuity, down to the moral, social, and philosophical concerns lying below. Stoppard's themes are generally of an intellectual, philosophical nature; there seems to be a consensus among critics (Jenkins, 1987) that his plays, "while having dramatic merit, are also vehicles for the exploration of such themes as the relationship between chaos and order, or free will and determinism."

By transforming a revenge tragedy into an absurdist play, Tom Stoppard has been able to extract ideas from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to construct new meaning for a contemporary audience. This is done through a shift in focus from those at the top of the social hierarchy (the Royal family of Denmark) to the common man. This change in focus reflects a change in societies values and provides a new perspective with which we can analyse the issues confronted such

as fate, destiny, and death. The context each play was written in has largely determined the plot of the plays, which acutely echo the values and perspectives of society.

Technically speaking, the author exerts much freedom in exposing his dramatic material, allowing a free shift from the past to the present, illusion to reality. Thus mingling various contradictory elements gives Stoppard's work its characteristic touch. Gussow argues (1995: 70):

(H)is plays, have a brilliant theatricality. He is, in fact, an exemplary autodidact, and a very quick study. In the plays, things are never quite what they seem to be. (...) Time plays tricks, as past and present coexist and sometimes brush against each other on the same stage. In many of his plays, there are echoes of his previous writings. The subject matter may shift from moral philosophy to quantum physics, but the voice is that of the author caught in the act badinage, arguing himself in and out of a quandary.

Stoppard's full length stage plays are more complex than the works dealt with so far, but the underlying principles of construction are similar. The dialectical opposition at the heart of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is

between fate and free will, and interwoven with this is an exploration of reality versus illusion. In this play, the conceptual themes and the use of the medium have been more fully integrated than in any of his other works. "The play", as Jenkins (1987) argues, "is structured round a conceit in which the two characters trapped in a play is equated with Man trapped in a deterministic universe. Thus it functions throughout on two levels, and occasionally on three when the play draws attention to itself as a play, in relation to us, the audience."

Stoppard uses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exactly as Shakespeare created them, that is as undeveloped flat characters, with minimal and ineffectual roles, largely ignorant of the events into which they have been drawn, and whose deaths pass almost unnoticed. Their role in *Hamlet* is in fact similar to the role of the absurdist's anti-hero in the universe, and this, with an obvious debt to *Waiting for Godot* is how Stoppard has used them. Having no credible existence outside the plot of *Hamlet*, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have no memory of their lives beyond being summoned by a court messenger. All they 'know' is that they were born, they have been called in to play a predetermined role, and that they will die.

"The inevitability of death", (Jenkins: 1987, 84)" is the most disturbing fact about their existence. They try to comprehend it as a reality but are unable to battle

through the illusions thrown up by the mind to account for the unknown." It is this particular aspect of the play that bestows universality upon it. People throughout all times and places have been engaged with this eternal issue. Indeed this dates back to the famous Mesopotamian epic, *Gilgamesh*, and its endless exploration of this question.

2.3 Existentialism

The proper start for understanding and recognizing Stoppard's art and achievements should stem from perceiving the intellectual background of his gloomy philosophy- existentialism. Of course , he is not one of its major advocates. Indeed this lies outside the realm of art and philosophy. Existentialism, in the words of Crabb (2006), can be thought of as the twentieth-century analogue of nineteenth-century romanticism. The two movements have in common the demand that the whole fabric of life be recognized and taken into account in our thinking and acting. As such, they express a form of resistance to reductionist analyses of life and its meaning for human beings.

However there are also significant differences. Existentialism is typically focused on individual human lives and the poignant inevitability of suffering and choice for each individual whereas romanticism tended to be more oriented to the

whole of nature and saw human beings as a part of that wider picture. Furthermore, romanticism flourished before the wars and genocides of the twentieth century whereas existentialism was born amid those horrors.

The term *existentialism* was first adopted as a self-reference in the 1940s and 1950s by Jean-Paul Sartre, and the widespread use of literature as a means of disseminating their ideas by Sartre and his associates (notably novelist Albert Camus). "Existentialism was seen", (Crabb: 2006, 72), "as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical one." Among existentialist writers were Parisians Jean Genet, André Gide, André Malraux, and playwright Samuel Beckett the Norwegian Knut Hamsun, and the Romanian friends Eugene Ionesco and Emil Cioran

Existentialism, broadly defined, is a set of philosophical systems concerned with free will, choice, and personal responsibility. Because we make choices based on our experiences, beliefs, and biases, those choices are unique to us — and made without an objective form of truth. There are no “universal” guidelines (Aronson: 2004, 14) for most decisions, existentialists believe. Instead, even trusting science is often a “leap of faith.”

2.3.1 Focus on concrete existence

Existentialist thinkers focus on the question of concrete human existence and the conditions of this existence rather than hypothesizing a human essence, stressing the human essence is determined through life choices. However, even though the concrete individual existence must have priority in existentialism, certain conditions are commonly held to be "endemic" to human existence.

What these conditions are is better understood in light of the meaning of the word "existence," which comes from the Latin "existere," meaning "to stand out". Man exists in a state of distance from the world that he nonetheless remains in the midst of. This distance is what enables man to project meaning into the disinterested world of in-itself. This projected meaning remains fragile, constantly facing breakdown for any reason — from a tragedy to a particularly insightful moment. In such a breakdown, we are put face to face with the naked meaninglessness of the world, and the results can be devastating.

2.3.2 Freedom

The existentialist concept of freedom is often misunderstood as a sort

of *liberum arbitrium* (from Latin-free will) where almost anything is possible and where values are inconsequential to choice and action. This interpretation of the concept is often related to the insistence on the absurdity of the world and the assumption that there exists no relevant or absolutely good or bad values. In Kierkegaard's account of Judge Vilhelm in *Either/Or*, making choices without allowing one's values to confer differing values to the alternatives, is, in fact, choosing not to make a choice — to flip a coin, as it were, and to leave everything to chance. (Crabb, 2006)

2.3.3 Theatre

Manifestations of this type of philosophy can be felt in the works of Ionesco, Adamov, Beckett, Pinter and Stoppard himself. The Existentialist themes are displayed in the Theatre of the Absurd, notably in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, in which two men divert themselves while they wait expectantly for someone (or something) named Godot who never arrives. They claim Godot to be an acquaintance but in fact hardly know him, admitting they would not recognize him if they saw him. Samuel Beckett, when once asked who or what Godot is, replied, (Jenkins: 1987, 70), "If I knew, I would have said so in the play." To occupy themselves, they eat, sleep, talk, argue, sing, play games, exercise, swap

hats, and contemplate suicide—anything "to hold the terrible silence at bay". The play, (Jenkins: 1987, 71), "has been perceived to be exploiting several archetypal forms and situations, all of which lend themselves to both comedy and pathos." The play also illustrates an attitude toward man's experience on earth: the poignancy, oppression, camaraderie, hope, corruption, and bewilderment of human experience that can only be reconciled in the mind and art of the absurdist. The play examines questions such as death, freedom and the meaning of existence.

Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* is an absurdist tragicomedy first staged at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1966. The play expands upon the exploits of two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Comparisons have also been drawn to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, for the presence of two central characters who almost appear to be two halves of a single character. Many plot features are similar as well: the characters pass time by playing 'Questions', impersonating other characters, and interrupting each other or remaining silent for long periods of time. The two characters are portrayed as two clowns or fools in a world that is beyond their understanding. They stumble through philosophical arguments while not

realizing the implications, and muse on the irrationality and randomness of the world. (Jenkins, 1987)

Critic Martin Esslin in his book *Theatre of the Absurd* (1962) pointed out how many contemporary playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Arthur Adamov wove into their plays the existentialist belief that we are absurd beings loose in a universe empty of real meaning.

2.3.4 The Theatre of the Absurd

The “Theatre of the Absurd” is a term coined by Hungarian-born critic, Martin Esslin, who made it the title of his 1962 book on the subject. The term refers to a particular type of play which first became popular during the 1950s and 1960s and which presented on stage the philosophy articulated by French philosopher Albert Camus in his 1942 essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Here he defines the human condition as basically meaningless. Camus argued, as suggested by Esslin (2004), that humanity had to resign itself to recognizing that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach; in that sense, the world must ultimately be seen as absurd.

Esslin (Esslin, 27), regarded the term “Theatre of the Absurd” merely as a "device" by which he meant to bring attention to certain fundamental traits discernible in the works of a range of playwrights. The playwrights loosely grouped under the label of the 'absurd' attempt to convey their sense of bewilderment, anxiety, and wonder in the face of an inexplicable universe. According to Esslin, the five defining playwrights of the movement are Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter, although these writers were not always comfortable with the label and sometimes preferred to use terms such as "Anti-Theater" or "New Theater". Absurd drama uses conventionalised speech, clichés, slogans and technical jargon, which it distorts, parodies and breaks down. In Culik's phrase, (Culik: 1952, 38-39), one of the objectives of the Theatre of the Absurd is that it tries to make people aware of the possibility of going beyond everyday speech conventions and communicating more authentically.”

The mode of most "absurdist" plays is tragicomedy. As Nell says in *Endgame*, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness ... it's the most comical thing in the world". Esslin cites William Shakespeare as an influence on this aspect of the "Absurd

drama." Shakespeare's influence is acknowledged directly in the titles of Ionesco's *Macbett* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The title is taken directly from the final scene of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In earlier scenes, Prince Hamlet ordered the deaths of the two messengers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. By the end of Shakespeare's play, Prince Hamlet, Laertes, Ophelia, Polonius, King Claudius and Gertrude all lie dead. An ambassador from England arrives to bluntly report "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead" (*Hamlet*. Act V, Scene II, line 411) and so they join all the stabbed, poisoned, and drowned key characters. By the end of *Hamlet*, Horatio is the only main figure left alive.

2.3.5 Characters

The characters in Absurdist drama are lost and floating in an incomprehensible universe and they abandon rational devices and discursive thought because these approaches are inadequate. Many characters appear as automatons stuck in routines speaking only in cliché. Characters are frequently stereotypical, archetypal, or flat character types as in *Commedia dell'arte*. The more complex characters are in crisis because the world around them is incomprehensible. Characters in Absurdist drama may also face the chaos of a world that science and logic have abandoned.

Critic Cahn, (1979, 84) asserts that characters may find themselves trapped in a routine or, in a metafictional conceit, trapped in a story; the titular characters in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, for example, find themselves in a story (*Hamlet*) in which the outcome has already been written.

2.3.6 Language

" --- the Problem of Communication is believed to be the concern of the Twentieth Century alone. When in Fact, --- as is found in the words of the Preacher, son of David and king of Jerusalem: There is no New Thing under the Sun; --- that is, that every New Thing is old: --- the Problem of Communication is as old as Language itself." (Bethel, 1986)

Despite its reputation for nonsense language, much of the dialogue in Absurdist plays is naturalistic. Characters resort to nonsense language or clichés—when words appear to have lost their denotative function, it is obvious that the author deliberately creates misunderstanding among the characters, a point that suggests profound intellectual implications. Language in Esslin's view (2004, 28) frequently

gains a certain phonetic, rhythmical, almost musical quality, opening up a wide range of often comic playfulness. The lucid and musical aspect of this theatre hides many states of confusion, disorder and pathetic failure to learn what is going on.

2.3.7 Plot

The two characters may be roughly equal or have a begrudging interdependence (like Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* or the two main characters in *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*); one character may be clearly dominant and may torture the passive character (like Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* or Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*); the relationship of the characters may shift dramatically throughout the play (as in Ionesco's *The Lesson* or and in many of Albee's plays, *The Zoo Story* for example). Traditional plot structures are rarely a consideration in the theatre of the Absurd. Plots can consist of the absurd repetition of cliché and routine, as in *Godot* or in Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*. As Esslin, (2004, 32), sums up these themes, "Absence, emptiness, nothingness, and unresolved mysteries are central features in many Absurdist plots."

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead is a complex example of absurdist plot structure where the two minor characters from *Hamlet* are set in a world of bewilderment and these in turn, have various encounters with the characters from *Hamlet* and the players who perform *The Mousetrap*, the play-with-in-the-play in *Hamlet*. It is this theatricality and endless references to the self-enclosed world of drama that gives Stoppard's play its unusual appeal and fascination, a point to be explored in detail in the following pages.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This study made use of different methods of investigation. Being an interdisciplinary approach, it mainly used the comparative method in dealing with both *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

In this section of the thesis, the researcher clarifies the methods she has followed in conducting this study. First, the researcher sheds light on the comparative method since this study is mainly a comparison between the two plays, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Hamlet*. Then the researcher provides an explanation of the descriptive method which is used in the analysis of the literary text. Third, the researcher describes the reader-response theory and lastly she gives an idea about the analytical method of research. Moreover, the last section of this chapter provides information about the procedures that the researcher has followed throughout her work.

3.1 Comparative method

A comparative study, simply put, is the act of comparing two or more things. This technique often utilizes multiple disciplines in one study. The multidisciplinary approach is suitable for the flexibility it offers. Hence the present study will employ a comparative analysis of both Shakespeare's and Stoppard's plays from a thematic and stylistic viewpoint, showing the success of the contemporary writer in shifting the emphasis towards the marginalized people.

3.2 The Descriptive Method

The descriptive approach is one which depends on collecting firsthand data from the play, such as characters, situations, scenes and literary and linguistic devices. These data help the researcher in the investigation of the play by showing how the author succeeded in combining these elements in this artistic work. This approach will help the researcher to look into and elucidate how the two plays are intertwined but have different artistic, social, historical and linguistic backdrops which help to bring out different elements in them.

3.3 The Reader-Response theory

In the reader-response critical approach, the primary focus falls on the reader and the process of reading rather than on the author or the text. The study employed the reader-response theory of criticism which enabled the researcher to put forward the preconceived notions and ideas of the playwright and how they are interpreted by the reader/audience, which ultimately underlie the main intellectual frame of the play.

3.4 The Analytical approach

The analytical approach depends on examining the components of the creative work, such as situations, scenes, language, themes and the mood of the play in this case. A comprehensive analysis of the work can be presented by categorizing it into its components so the researcher can understand and analyze how the work is built and functions.

3.5 Procedures

The researcher followed certain procedures in order to analyse Stoppard's play

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. These procedures are essential for the analysis of a literary text which identifies the playwrights' method of delivering its themes and techniques. The first procedure was choosing one of Stoppard's plays, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, from his enormous repertoire of creative and well known plays. The second procedure was the extensive reading of literature and texts related to this play. This allowed the researcher to classify the work under more than one literary school. Moreover, reading critics' opinions and judgements about Stoppard's play shed some light on the importance of Stoppard as a writer, who having a myriad past has dealt with universal issues such as the absurdity of man's existence through this play. Thereafter, the researcher raised some questions related to the study and then investigated them in order for them to be answered through this. The researcher followed this by taking into consideration the methods that would be suitable for this analysis. Here the researcher chose to analyse the text through the comparative method, the descriptive method, reader-response theory and the analytical method. The researcher then put forward certain conclusions about the playwright and his play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Finally the researcher has included a list of references, including journals and dissertations that she made use of during this study.

Chapter Four

Review of Existing Literature

3.1 Introduction

This section is the raw material underlying the present analysis of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. The authors of the books included in this section are the catalysts that help readers and researchers to understand and grasp the reasons and justifications behind the composition of any literary text. Moreover, it will be the cornerstone that supports the present analysis of the play. Therefore, the researcher will cite these critics about the play, the author, fields of knowledge, language, and themes that the play is based on as well as the favourable and unfavourable criticism regarding these.

3.2 Brief survey of the books and Articles

In his book, Sartre (1957), defends his perception of Existentialism which is a basic guide for the researcher in understanding and explaining how the play in question brings out this theme through the various elements intertwined in it.

Tompkins, (1980), is editor of this book which contains remarkable and indispensable contributions by David Bleich, Jonathan Culler, Stanley Fish, Walker Gibson, Norman N. Holland, Wolfgang Iser, Walter Benn Michaels, Georges Poulet, Gerald Prince and Michael Riffaterre. The essays collected here refocus criticism on the reader and her/his response to the text. They examine authors' attitudes towards their readers, the kinds of readers various texts imply, the role actual readers play in the determination of literary meaning, the relation of reading conventions to textual interpretation and the status of the reader's self. While they focus on the reader and the reading process, the essays represent a variety of theoretical orientations: New Criticism, structuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis and deconstruction shape their definitions of the reader, of interpretation and of the text. Yet when read in roughly chronological order, and with certain issues in view, the essays organize the critical movements they reflect into a coherent progression and point towards a new understanding of discourse.

The central issue in this progression being –the status of the literary text.

Lapointe, (1983), argues that, as it has been since his first important play, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), Tom Stoppard's dramatic language remains the most conspicuous feature of his art. The relevance of these arguments

to the current study lies in the fact that Stoppard, after all, is a reader of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, his creative writing highlights the roles of the marginalized and foregrounds their position as the victims of an uncontrollable and merciless fate. Incredibly, however, critics and scholars alike persist in celebrating his language instead of studying it for what it actually says, how it functions as dialogue, and what its consequences are for the broader dramatic contexts of character and theme.

This thesis highlights the unprecedented use of language deployed in the art of theatre owing to its different functions in the way Stoppard has twisted it, turned it and played with it. The conformity as well as the non-conformity of it to the known standard is one of the focal points of the researcher's study.

Lutterbie, (1983), argues that this work develops a method that is suitable for an analysis and evaluation of four plays by Tom Stoppard: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, and *Night and Day*. The purpose is to investigate the relationships between form, action and idea, in order to assist an understanding of how each functions in the text, thereby making a unified vehicle of communication, as well as evaluating the strengths and weaknesses inherent in

each text. The analysis of each play has been divided into three sections. The first examines the external form of the play in an attempt to outline the context of the play, while suggesting possible motivations for act breaks, marked variances in tempos and rhythms, and stylistic choices. The second section analyzes the play for structure. The method used is that of the New Critics, but has been amended by techniques of Structuralism, specifically the approach used by Claude Levi-Strauss in investigating myths. The final section is devoted to an examination of the range of meanings that resulted from the analysis of the play. The dissertation opens with an exploration of the playwright's approach to writing, based on Stoppard's speeches and interviews.

The areas of investigation in this dissertation are: Why he writes for the theatre, the process of writing (from the inception of an idea through rewriting in production), and his aesthetics of social relevance.

The researcher will make use of this dissertation in analyzing the different elements of Stoppard's plays and how they can be evaluated in relation to the other approaches. It shows that Stoppard pays equal attention to the mode of writing and its strategies and devices, and such a book is of great help for any serious reader of

this dramatists' works. Hence the emphasis that will be laid on this book throughout the current study.

Hu, (1984), argues that ever since the 1966 debut of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* to international acclaim, critics have largely examined Tom Stoppard's literary concerns, his preoccupation with linguistic phenomena and philosophic questions. However, because the theatre is a communications medium of unique, live performances, a capable playwright of necessity expresses statements through the use of non-verbal, as well as verbal, dramatic elements.

Grossman-Ziegler, (1985), argues that drama in performance may be perceived as a speech event, involving the audience experiencing spoken discourse in the temporal present of the theatre. Theatre is a creative language event that views the play as a realization of an interdependence between the audience and the stage as both participate in the accepted fiction of the theatrical situation. The mutually reflecting and dialogical relationship between living actors and audience in co-presence is central to the awareness of awareness in theatre. The audience, existing in a separate, yet shared domain, perceiving and affirming the actors onstage and becoming the existential other in the theatre, is a focus of this study.

This dissertation is key in understanding how Stoppard who is not Aristotelian, unlike Shakespeare, has chosen the central characters in his play to be laymen rather than aristocrats and how this trend has led to the emergence of the best known plays of the contemporary era.

Ward, (1987), states that her dissertation is a comparative study which is an analysis of the Russian Formalist concept of defamiliarization and Bertolt Brecht's theory of distanciation (alienation) in the selected dramas of Eugene Ionesco, Tom Stoppard, and Antonio Buero Vallejo. Her objective behind this attempt is to underscore the positive evolutions of the protagonists' individual, social, and existential pursuits in their search for a definitive truth.

Jenkins (1990, 99-100) insists that the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* has been the subject of all sorts of critical interpretations, notably as a statement of existential or absurdist intent or as a serious critique of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and those views that have led to what might be called the *Catch 22* of Stoppardian criticism:

Stoppard's theatrical fireworks masquerade as important ideas; his important ideas are trivialized by theatrical trickery. The fallacy behind this comes from supposing that frivolity and seriousness are incompatible opposites (and Stoppard has always sought to unite the two) or, in the particular case of *Rosencrantz*, to mistake the farcical framework (derived from *Waiting for Godot* and *Hamlet*) as the play's serious thesis.

Thus this book will provide the researcher with a fair idea about one of the central themes in the play i.e the meaninglessness of life and the ultimate truth faced by man i.e death. These are the ideas that Stoppard has underlined in his play and which he expects the audience to grasp and unravel.

Zeid, (1989) argues that according to the theoretical perspective of this research, a belated dramatist's version may be judged to be as original as his precursor's original if the belated dramatist manages to swerve away from his precursor by so reading his precursor's play as to execute a corrective movement in his own play. In the truly new play, the playwright creates a movement of discontinuity with the parent-play through an antithetical proceeding.

This dissertation provides critical information about Stoppard's style of theatre, witty language and unconventional techniques which have helped him to rise to his present status of one of the best known and respected playwrights of Britain. It is also interesting to note that Edward Bond, discussed in this book, is another renowned dramatist who has written at least two plays which capitalize on Shakespeare's classic texts. Like Stoppard, Bond gives his own reading of Shakespeare in a contemporary light.

Haddaway's, (1994) argues that if the language of *Hamlet* may be said to provide a voice for human concerns, then, likewise, the tragic struggle of its namesake "against a sea of troubles" may be understood to represent the struggle of any person of conscience who confronts a brutal, often cynical world. So why shouldn't twentieth-century literature continue to reformulate the *Hamlet* dilemma, as kin if not in kind? What the following study examines is how and why certain works of modern and contemporary comparative literature construct versions of the *Hamlet* dilemma, and why some choose to resolve it as *Hamlet* does, with submission to grief and despair, while others affirm the need to resist despair by leading a productive, loving existence.

The value and usefulness of his study lies in understanding selections from a variety of absurdist treatments of Hamlet's dilemma and how they are related to the play designed by Stoppard, incidentally another absurdist play based on *Hamlet*.

Fleming, (1996), argues that known for his linguistic mastery, theatrical inventiveness, and intellectual subjects, Tom Stoppard is considered a major contemporary British playwright. This work aims at "defining Stoppard" in a manner beneficial to scholars, teachers, readers, spectators, and producers. Stoppard himself is central to this study as it offers the most comprehensive biographical coverage to, and seeks to locate Stoppard in his plays. Where and how did the central ideas originate? How and why did Stoppard revise his texts? Where does Stoppard personally stand on the issues addressed in his plays? This dissertation utilizes archival research at the Royal National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company, numerous published interviews, and draws extensively on Stoppard's personal papers at the University of Texas' Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center which include correspondence, drafts, and unpublished scripts, material not previously available to scholars.

This dissertation is invaluable in drawing information about Stoppard regarding his life, career, plays (published and unpublished), his views, ideas and much more.

Genette, (1997, 162), has this to say about Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Since the argument of this French critic is influential and comprehensive, it is worthwhile to quote his views in detail as they relate much to the discussion presented here:

Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is often described as a crossbreed between *Hamlet* and *Waiting for Godot*- and rightly so. But this formula should not be taken literally: *Godot* is evoked neither directly nor explicitly in the text; and the action of *Hamlet* enters the stage only by fitful snatches, although the *dramatis personae* of both plays are rigorously identical. It would be more accurate to define Ros and Guil as a paraleptic continuation or a transfocalization of *Hamlet* (they are often one and the same), written to a large extent in the manner of Beckett, more specifically the Beckett of *Godot*.

This book will substantiate the researcher's views, particularly with regard to relieving Stoppard of the burden of some criticism which indicates that the play in consideration is derivative in nature and cannot stand on its own.

Culler, (2000), steers a clear path through a subject which is often perceived to be complex and impenetrable. Culler, an extremely lucid commentator and

much admired in the field of literary theory, offers discerning insights into such theories as the nature of language and meaning, and whether literature is a form of self-expression or a method of appeal to an audience. Concise yet thorough, his book also outlines the ideas behind a number of different schools: deconstruction, semiotics, postcolonial theory and structuralism among others. From topics such as literature and social identity to poetry, poetics and rhetoric, this book is a welcome guide for the researcher in understanding the importance of literature in its many genres and the debates surrounding it.

Kelly, (2001), has attempted a comprehensive editorial project with a versatile collection of essays introducing practically all aspects of Stoppard's work. The chronology and bibliography are elaborate, making it a useful reference for the researcher.

Derrida, (2002), has provided the reader with a collection of three interviews held with this distinguished thinker and critic. These illuminate and make more accessible the complex concepts and terms treated extensively in such works as *Writing and Difference* and *Dissemination*. Derrida takes positions on his

detractors, his supporters, and the two major preoccupations of French intellectual life, Marxism and psychoanalysis.

Nadel, professor of English at Vancouver University, has produced a biography of Stoppard (2002). Curiously enough her subject (Tom Stoppard), who offered little help and refused to read the typescript, doesn't believe in biographies. In Stoppard's view, biographers see the past through the wrong end of the telescope. He is equally suspicious of history and its bogus certainty. Stoppard is interested in the bit players in the human drama - like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, lurking furtively on the outer edges of *Hamlet* - and the people who disappeared from history. The book quotes many views and judgements pertaining to Stoppard's work and achievements. Tynan writing in a New Yorker Profile in 1977, identifies 'accidents and wilfulness' in Stoppard's work.

"For Stoppard art is a game within a game," wrote Tynan, (1977) "the larger game being life itself, an absurd mosaic of incidents and accidents in which (as Beckett, whom he venerates, says in the aptly titled-*Endgame*) 'something is taking its course'. We cannot know what that something is, or whither it is leading us; and

it is therefore impermissible for art, a mere derivative of life, to claim anything as presumptuous as a moral purpose or a social function."

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead – or they soon will be, even if they haven't yet grasped the gravity of the situation.

Underpinning all his work and increasingly apparent in the later plays, however, is an attempt to come to terms with the characteristic Beckettian view that "I am a human nothing". In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* the landscape is bleak, the prospect forbidding.

This book will help the researcher to understand the theme of absurdism on which Stoppard's play is based and will support the her in making certain conclusions based on the comparisons and arguments placed herein.

Bloom, (2003, 6), insists that 'Shakespeare invented us 'through his creation of a new kind of psychological reflexiveness'.

Shakespearean inward selves seem to me different to Luther's in kind and not just degree, and different indeed in kind from the entire history of

consciousness up to Luther. Hamlet's self-reliance leaps over the centuries and joins itself to Nietzsche's and Emerson's then goes beyond them to their outermost limits and keeps on going beyond ours.

Bloom's approach to Shakespeare is summed up by Emerson who said: 'His mind is the horizon beyond which at present we do not see'. Furthermore Bloom said about Stoppard:

Tom Stoppard has been referred to as an almost obsessive contaminator, relying on the trope of interlacing perhaps more than any other writer. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was his first success, interloping *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* with *Waiting for Godot*.

Hence being a critic of outstanding caliber, Bloom, provides a basis of the Shakespearean era and his plays as well as an account of other important playwrights of the last century. He gives a comprehensive account of Stoppard's life, theories and works, thus making it easier for the reader to compare and contrast Stoppard's work to that from which it is derived i.e Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Esslin, (2004), in his book outlines important facts about this intricate and perplexing theatrical movement called 'Absurdist'. He helps provide a basic understanding of absurdism. Esslin makes this concept clear and accessible in the form of this book which will help the researcher in verifying the absurdist theme presented in Stoppard's play and drawing conclusions based on this. It is *the* authoritative text on absurdist theatre.

Costa's, (2005), argues that beginning with the premise that all drama issues from essential human predicaments, this study examines select works from three major playwrights over the last four hundred years--Tom Stoppard, Anton Chekhov, and William Shakespeare--to see how each conceives of the nature of dramatic structure, and how each helps expand, define, and re-define dramatic resolution. This study also explores the notion that the aim of all drama is to resolve the conflict that has initiated the dramatic situation in the first place, solutions that we often anticipate to be coincident with a "happy ending," especially when the point is related to comic drama. But rather than making the works in question fit some pre-fixed definition of what "resolution" means (or what comedy or happiness means, for that matter), this study seeks to challenge

conventional notions of resolution to allow for a fundamental and dynamic conception of dramatic structure.

Tekinay's book (2005), contains the proceedings of the conference held in Istanbul in 2004. This book includes more than forty scholarly papers about Shakespeare and his plays. These papers with their expanse of information about every aspect of the iconic Shakespeare and his works are a treasury of knowledge on this subject.

Drew, (2008), explores the premise that the dramatic tension of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *King Lear* is realized through their respective protagonists' struggle with conflicting philosophies. Though Shakespeare borrowed most of his plot structures, the author maintains, that his creation and development of subsidiary characters within these plot constraints allows for an amplification of the main characters' struggle with philosophical dilemmas.

This book will give the researcher a basis for the analysis of the theme of existentialism and the absurdity of life as experienced by *Hamlet Prince of Denmark* through his multi-dimensional personality conflicts as compared to those

of the passive and subtle personalities of the main characters of Stoppard's play and still managing to get the essence of the play across to the audience.

Chopoidaló's, (2009), states that adaptation has been an important part of the appreciation and study of Shakespeare's plays from the beginning. As was usual for playwrights of his time, Shakespeare adapted the majority of his writings from other literary and/or historical works; and in the centuries since, other writers have used his texts as inspiration for their own. Examining adaptations of literary works in relation to their 'original' source texts, to their performance/printing history, to each other, and to the world(s) of authors and readers allows us to explore the relationships of textual worlds to the actual worlds in which those texts are produced and read/seen/listened to, and the intertextual relationships between the worlds of the original work and an adaptation of that work into a new text.

This dissertation will help the researcher to understand the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* from the perspective of an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as well as how it is unique in this.

Banks, (2010), argues that, Tom Stoppard's 1967 play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, focuses on two minor characters from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "However, in Stoppard's re-telling, language is the focus because nothing much happens; the action is already predetermined."

This dissertation is important in understanding and comparing the theatricalities involved in Stoppard's play and Shakespeare's play as they were staged in different times. It helps in answering the question raised in this thesis about the different elements used by both these playwrights in their respective eras as well as their cultural and intellectual backgrounds.

Pollack-Pelzner, (2010), argues for the centrality of Shakespeare to British novelists in the nineteenth century, not only as a repository of characters, plots, and allusions, but as a source of narrative technique, a model of reception, and a touchstone of cultural authority.

"Shakespeare was quoted, read aloud, performed, debated, mocked, and modeled in novels whose authors drew on his soliloquies, stage directions, sayings, and genres."

The author's four chapters span nineteenth-century engagements with Shakespeare to show how novelists defined themselves and were defined in relation to him.

Shakespeare proved instrumental in generating the language and techniques of the Victorian novel, and the novel, in turn, helped to shape the way we view Shakespeare today.

Rosen, (2011), argues that "*Minor Characters Have Their Day*" asks the question: why have so many contemporary writers converted minor characters from canonical literary texts into their protagonists? Why has this previously unnoticed genre proven so appealing to contemporary literary figures and what can be learned from reading the transnational history of a genre that a narrower focus on individual, exemplary texts and authors tends to obscure? Literary scholars have tended to address intertextual reworkings of the canon primarily in terms of the critiques they level—as instances of "re-vision" or "writing back." When one widens the angle of vision to observe the range of writers--across national boundaries and in both "literary" and popular fiction--that deploy the generic technology the author calls "minor character elaboration," a very different picture appears.

This dissertation argues for revising critical orthodoxies about contemporary

reworkings of the canon, and, perhaps as importantly, rehabilitates genre analysis as a critical tool by combining formalist inquiry and narrative theory with cultural and material histories.

Studying the dissertation definitely helps in broadening the perspective of views and appreciating the play and its word. Also the reworking of the play that has been a part of an emerging trend that has attracted the attention of readers, audiences and critics alike as a ground-breaking genre.

All mentioned, the present study is based on general lines of the comparative method of analysis in which the researcher will use the above mentioned works as a reference, but will guide this comparison towards answering the particular questions that she has raised for discussion herein.

Chapter Five

Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher clarifies the methods she has followed in conducting this study and expands on all the different aspects of the play and its author in order to answer the questions raised herein. She will also discuss how Stoppard draws upon Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for the writing of his play.

5.1 Synopsis of the play

Two men sit flipping coins to pass the time. Rosencrantz is betting heads and winning; Guildenstern is left the loser for an impossible and improbable ninety-two times. Through methods of logic and scientific inquiry, questions and answers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (the protagonists in this play) are able to piece together the beginning of their lives' journey. They received an early morning summons from a royal messenger with official business for the duo—no questions asked. While debating their next step, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern encounter a traveling troupe of actors. Led by the Player, the actors are initially seen as an

omen by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, a sign that will point the way to their destiny. To their disappointment, the troupe's main motivation is one of payment and performance. As the Tragedians find their positions for an impromptu performance on the road, Rosencrantz discovers that the last coin to be flipped has come up "tails." Without warning or explanation, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dropped into the middle of Elsinore Castle and the world of *Hamlet*. Surrounded by Shakespeare's royal court, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are able to grasp some semblance of purpose. As in the prototype, *Hamlet*, they are charged by King Claudius and Queen Gertrude to monitor Prince Hamlet and his mysterious melancholy. The King and Queen cast Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet's schoolmates from school, as spies. This royal employment leads the two to a new set of questions. While in the castle, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are reunited with the Player and Tragedians. The actors are there to perform for the royal court because Hamlet intends to use "The Murder of Gonzago" as a means of fishing out the secret of his father's murderer. The dumbshow goes beyond the poisoned King, unfaithful Queen, and murderous Brother scenario to include more plot points to show Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's journey. The Tragedians, in pantomime, perform the duo's voyage to England and their tragic fates. The play is interrupted by a guilt-ridden Claudius, who immediately orders Rosencrantz and

Guildenstern to escort Hamlet to England. The Danish King gives the two a letter of introduction to the King of England, but the correspondence actually contains a command for Hamlet's death. On the boat to England, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern open the sealed letter and discover the true meaning of their journey. Hamlet overhears the plot for his execution and later replaces Claudius' letter with a forgery that calls for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's death. After a pirate attack and the disappearance of Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern open the false letter and realize their fates. Frantic over the news of their own demise, Guildenstern takes the Player's knife and stabs the actor. The Player, gasping for breath, falls to the floor and dies. A moment of respectful silence from the Tragedians is replaced by applause as the Player rises to his feet, and takes a bow. The troupe of actors then performs the final dumbshow, Hamlet's duel at Elsinore and the death of the royal family. The Tragedians leave, leading Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to consider the purpose of their roles. After a moment of contemplation, with little fanfare, the two disappear from the stage. The stage setting is immediately replaced with the end tableau from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The Ambassador from England delivers the news that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Horatio, surrounded by the corpses of Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, and Laertes, offers to speak of this tragedy as the lights slowly fade.

5.2 The Play in Question

In a 1995 interview in the *New York Times* with drama critic Mel Gussow, Stoppard described the satisfaction he still finds in exploring his artistic voice:

It's the equivalent of the potter and the clay. I just love getting my hands in it. Clearly there are many writers who can mail the play in [. . .] It stays the way they write it, I am told. I think they miss all the fun. I change things to accommodate something in the scenery, or something in the lighting. Happily, I love being part of the equation. I don't want it to be what happens to my text. I like the text to be part of the clay, which is being molded.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead was Tom Stoppard's breakthrough play. It was a huge critical and commercial success, making him famous practically overnight. Though written in 1964, the play was published in 1967, and it was played on Broadway in 1968, where it won the *Tony* for the best play that year.

Stoppard's play turns *Hamlet* around by giving these two the main roles and reducing all of Shakespeare's major characters (including Hamlet) to minor roles. Written around and in-between the lines of Shakespeare's play, Stoppard brilliantly takes the main concerns of contemporary theater – absurdism, the inevitability of

death, breakdown in communication and feeling – and inserts them into the text of a much earlier play.

The absurdist tradition that Stoppard is writing in suggests another enormous influence: Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952). Beckett's play is just as important to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* as *Hamlet* is. *Waiting for Godot* consists of two tramps sitting on-stage bantering back and forth and waiting for someone named Godot, who never comes.

Waiting for Godot changed theater by undermining many of its traditional values: plot, characterisation, and dialogue that move the action of the play forward. By portraying the act of "waiting" on stage, Beckett's play also opened up new ideas about meta-theatrics (plays that are about plays – how they are made, how they are seen, and/or how they interact with society). Since the characters in *Godot* are in the same position as the audience – waiting for something to happen – much of their dialogue works on multiple levels and seems to hint at awareness on the part of the tramps that they're actually two characters in a play.

Stoppard wrote *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in this absurdist and meta-theatrical tradition. It is very much influenced by Beckett, and much of the silly dialogue between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern simply would not have been seen in the theater before *Waiting for Godot*. Stoppard's use of these innovations that Beckett brought to contemporary theater in order to pry open the minor Shakespearean characters of *Hamlet* and present them as the major characters of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* was a creative and clever move.

It is thought by some critics that Stoppard was too much under the influence of Beckett at this point in his career, but it can be said that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is something unique and independent of both *Waiting for Godot* and *Hamlet*. It is an almost universally acknowledged masterpiece of contemporary theater. In the words of Clurman, for instance, who said the following about Stoppard:

"I cannot take him seriously as an important dramatist. Even his *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* struck me as a deft variation on a Beckett-like theme, and *The Real Inspector Hound* as a nimble jape. He is, to use Samuel Goldwyn's phrase, "a very clever genius. (64)

Smith had this to say about both plays and their authors: "*In Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Hamlet meets *Waiting for Godot*, and *Waiting for Godot* wins." (64)

Jenkins said this about Beckett's influence on Stoppard:

What Stoppard does is to exploit the comic potential of Ros and Guil's situation in *Hamlet*, a confused paralysis most cogently expressed in modern terms by Estragon and Vladimir's circumstances in *Godot*, in order to arrive at a statement about death that is both serious and of universal application. (172)

Stoppard's own assessment of his own debut, (Stoppard: 1995, 65), is worth quoting in some detail as it explicates the justifications and grounds behind writing this type of work and its thematic aspects:

If there's one thing that we don't have control over at all, one thing that's absolutely certain, it's that we're going to die. We don't think about this too often – it's not a cheerful subject – but we see and hear about people dying all the time: on the news, in books and plays, in video games, and in our personal lives as well. It's one of the most common things in the world, and yet when you get down to it none

of us knows a thing about it. It's a real mystery, not a detective story with an interesting twist at the end, but a real unknown: a mystery that endures. In some ways, it's impossible to think about. Your mind just can't fathom it, and your imagination falls short.

Stoppard's play cleverly explores all of these issues surrounding death. It does not give us heroic or tragic deaths as seen in *Hamlet*, but it tries to figure out what is significant when a "minor character" dies – someone unimportant who dies by his own folly. Insignificance, Stoppard seems to argue, is just as important a theme to be explored as its opposite. In Charles Marowitz's words, "a blinding metaphor about the absurdity of life. We are summoned, we come. We are given roles, we play them. We are dismissed, we go. Have we ever been? Has there been a point? If so, what?" (Marowitz: 327). Stoppard's characters, when considering the point, advise not to apply logic, or justice, (Stoppard: 81), because life is essentially devoid of such things.

5.3 Inspiration, Influences, and Evolution of the Play

In 1963, what began as a passing exchange between Stoppard and his agent, Kenneth Ewing, slowly evolved over the next four years into the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. A grant from the Ford Foundation in spring 1964 afforded Stoppard the time needed to begin the writing process. After finishing his forty-four page first draft in June 1964, Stoppard wrote to a friend from Berlin outlining his idea for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*: Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Hamlet are joined on the boat by the Player, and since the Player represents the Hamlet-like figure in *The Murder of Gonzago*, the Player is made up to look like Hamlet. On the boat, Hamlet and the Player change identities, and the Player is captured by pirates and goes off to fulfill Hamlet's role in the rest of Shakespeare's play. Meanwhile Hamlet goes to England, witnesses the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and then returns to Elsinore in time for the final tableau of carnage, but too late to take over. He is a man, in Fleming's description (Fleming, 30), stuck in space, a man caught out of the action. It is a bit screwy, but fun.

It is fascinating to read this brief synopsis and recognize which of the playwright's ideas survived the transition from a one-act to a full-length play.

Themes of identity, role-playing, and a life without purpose remained to form the core of the work. During the next two and a half years of revisions, plot points would change; the King Lear connection was jettisoned; and the Hamlet story would be usurped by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's journey as the story's main focus. Stoppard's rewriting would also touch upon the influences of Absurdist theatre within the work and the play's concept of fatalism.

Theatre scholar Martin Esslin (1918-2002) named and described the movement known as the Theatre of the Absurd. The works of modern playwrights such as Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Eugene Ionesco (1921-1994), and Harold Pinter (1930-) are most often categorized in this theatrical genre. Their theatrical works appear in many ways to be in opposition to the accepted conventions of the distinguishable and unswerving logic found in traditional drama. In Theatre of the Absurd, the single assurance is that there will be no clear "horizon of significance," or "a world ordered by certain normative understandings," or even a "sense of moral meaning" (Johnson 2). Instead, the audience of an absurdist play could expect to see characters stumble their way through a world devoid of meaning, unaware and uneducated about their purpose in life, and utterly lacking in moral values or the characteristics most typical to modern mankind.

The emphasis on verbal humour is one of the major attractions of Absurdist Theatre. In *Waiting for Godot* this humour is set up as a conversation between one of the clowns who wants to probe for significance (e.g., by trying to sort out the significance of the thief who was saved) but is ludicrously inadequate for the task and the other of the clowns who is much earthier and keeps puncturing the intellectual pretentiousness of the other, often with a physical complaint. This is also clearly a feature in Stoppard's play: Guildenstern agonizes about the meaning of it all; Rosencrantz is puzzled by his companion's attitude and is constantly thwarting Guildenstern's efforts. When Rosencrantz gets caught up in some time-consuming activity, Guildenstern just gets annoyed.

Guil: There must have been a moment, at the beginning,
where we could have said- no. But somehow we missed it.

Ros: Well, we'll know better next time. (126).

To acknowledge that these plays are often very humorous does not mean that we should miss the desperation underneath it.

Ros: I haven't forgotten – how I used to remember my own name
– and yours, oh, yes! There were answers everywhere you looked.
There was no question about it – people knew who I was and
if they didn't they asked and I told them. (314)

In fact, Absurdist plays can often be very bleak or very funny (or both), depending upon the emphasis the director wishes to establish (this is particularly true of *Waiting for Godot*). As critic Martin Esslin clearly recognizes about the absurdity in Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*:

When we compare and contrast the plays *Godot* and *Rosencrantz*, we can list many ways in which they are alike in their absurdist tendencies and many ways in which they are different. What remains essentially important is not so much that they are different, but the degree to which they are different. Beckett's treatment of death as something to come, something always on the horizon out of reach, is probably more happily acceptable to the viewer than Stoppard's view. But despite the negative connotations death holds, both Beckett and Stoppard use the metaphor of death to help us understand how our lives are absurd and how, once we accept this, we can be happier, healthier individuals.

The humour is potentially bleak because it depends upon laughing at any attempt to discover significance--the various resources which the protagonists seek to access are all equally nonsensical. We are not dealing here with traditional humour, in which a positive moral attitude helps to establish what matters and what does not, in which many things are exposed as foolish but only to bring out how certain other things really matter. Here we are dealing with a particularly modern sense of humour--black humour which sets up everything as equally ridiculous (probability, classical literature, traditional philosophical positions, religion, the human body, love, even language itself).

Guil: I'm talking about death- and you've never experienced that.

And you cannot act it. You die a thousand casual deaths- with none of that intensity which squeezes out life. . .and no blood runs cold anywhere. Because even as you die you know that you will come back in a different hat. But no one gets up after death- there is no applause- there is only silence and some second-hand clothes, and that's- death- (123)

days could basically be described as absurdist. It depends upon, as we know, the assumption that everything is equally silly, equally subject to ridicule: politics, religion, education, business and even death—in short, all aspects of life are equally fit for mockery. That, incidentally, may be why this form of humour depends so heavily on the short skit and why one often tires of it quickly: we are not getting anywhere with it. As Rosencrantz offers the following advice on death:

Ros: I wouldn't think about it, (death) if I were you. You'd only get
Depressed. Eternity is a terrible thought. I mean, where's it going
to end? (65)

This form of humour, which is a distinctive characteristic of the twentieth century, was born, according to some cultural historians (e.g., Paul Fussell, 1999), in the trenches of World War one. Faced with what seemed like the ultimate absurdity of their situation--death and destruction all around, noble but increasingly meaningless traditional rhetoric about honour, courage, patriotism, and so on, and the only way out being an idiotic charge into the machine guns, many soldiers responded with a howl of laughter at the absurdity of it all--not just

the absurdity of their circumstances, but also the absurdity of their responses to that situation.

At the base of much of this black humour (and especially in Absurdist Theatre) is the absurdity of language itself. Instead of being, as it is in virtually all the writers we have read, the keenest (if often deceptive) way of coming to an understanding of ourselves and the world around us, language in the absurdist world becomes one more unpredictable, unreliable, slippery, deceiving feature of experience. In Stoppard's play this point applies even to the characters' awareness of their own names. But it also emerges repeatedly in the frequently funny ways in which they are always misunderstanding each other.

Guil: No...no...no...Death is ...not.....Death isn't. You take my meaning. Death is the ultimate negative. Not being. You can't not-be on a boat

Ros: I've frequently not been on boats.

GuilL: No, no, no--what you've been is not on boats.

Ros: I wish I was dead. (68)

Thus communication in this absurd world is ineffective. Characters may speak often and hold frequent discussions between each other or with themselves, but nothing substantial is communicated during the course of the play. Language that is erratic, untrustworthy, and illusory proves to be an exercise in futility. "The verbal confusion only compounds the chaos and isolation the character feels within", as Esslin rightly puts it.

Ros: --over my step over my head body! – I tell you
 it's all stopping to a death, it's a boding to a depth,
 stepping to a head, it's all heading to a dead stop – (306)

As in any absurdist play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* suggests a world of chaos and isolation. Characters often awake to find themselves in a nondescript void, which they are unable to understand or control. The world of the play is usually a strange, unrecognizable locale or an ostensibly realistic world that suddenly becomes warped. Characters in this world lack the ability to act from any position of power and therefore do not behave with any semblance of independence. They possess no self-knowledge, purpose, or reliable memory on which to base choices.

Ros: Exactly.

Guil: Exactly what?

Ros: Exactly why.

Guil: Exactly why what?

Ros: What?

Guil: Why?

Ros: Why what, exactly?

Guil: Why is he mad?!

Ros: I don't know! (39)

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead is certainly indebted to the Absurdist movement.

Susan Rusinko (1986, 36). believes that "through their Beckettian word games, Stoppard's Eliotic main characters act out Pirandellian contradictory truths of reality and appearance, sanity and insanity, relativity and absoluteness." More than any other writer mentioned by Rusinko, Irish playwright Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) influenced Stoppard's work.

Perhaps the most telling legacies from Beckett are Stoppard's title characters and their feelings of entrapment. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are manipulated by outer powers, logic and facts fail to inform and only feed their confusion. Ultimately, they are left to wait in the shadow of death until they both disappear from the stage:

Ros: How intriguing! I feel like a spectator—an appalling business.

The only thing that makes it bearable is the irrational belief that somebody interesting will come on in a minute...

Guil: See anyone?

Ros: No. You?

Guil: No (41).

While the Theatre of the Absurd's influence on *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* is irrefutable, Stoppard freely refers to other schools of thought within the play. There are clearly echoes of fatalism in the play, for example. Known also as determinism or predestination, fatalism is the belief in the inevitability of all events due to the existence, intervention, and or interference of a major unseen force, such as fate or God. A fatalist also believes that every action or choice of

action is the result of a series of cause and effect situations, once again, set in motion by some outside control.

Everything in life is preordained, a play in which all have been assigned a role and a specific journey. Any hope of free will and choice in changing one's destiny is for naught. For Stoppard, this fatalistic view is voiced by the Player's admission that his purpose is to follow directions, and "there is no choice involved, the bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means" (80). Stoppard revisits this idea of a pre-written script in the final conversation between Guildenstern and the Player:

Guil: But why? Was it all for this? Who are we that so much should
 converge on our little deaths? Who are we?

Player: You are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. That's enough (95).

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are fated to die by the play's end. A letter written by Hamlet to the King of England is proof enough of their destiny. Whether Stoppard uses this position to illustrate the fatalistic behavior of his two characters or views their dependence upon outer authority as the duo's fatal flaw is

unclear. Despite the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern recognize their impending doom in the letter, in their own minds the script cannot be changed. So it is written, so it shall be. Stoppard himself noted, with some ambiguity, this element of fate within the play:

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two people who have been written into a scheme of things and there's nothing they can do about it except follow through and meet the fate that has been ordained for them[...] I'd have to say that I'm using Shakespeare as a symbol of God, which I'm not prepared to say. I have written about two people on whom Shakespeare imposed inevitability, but I haven't got a philosophy figured out for you. (Fleming 5-6)

Either through a belief that his audience will make up its own mind, or a reluctance to give a definitive answer, Stoppard has remained neutral in the predestination debate over his play.

The most acknowledged philosophy in *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, however, is existential orientation. This principle constitutes the core of the play. Our natural world, sun, moon, planets, and other material objects are unconscious

and remain true to their being. The subjective world, or inner world of the mind, of consciousness, of awareness, of freedom, of stability (355-56), is only available to human beings. This state of being cannot be accessed through logic or science, as both are rooted in the material, objective world. For Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, this failure to choose, to take control of their lives, is the source of much anxiety for the duo. This deficiency of personal responsibility also leaves the two vulnerable to outer manipulation.

Free will can be exercised, hopes and dreams may be held by the individual, but factors in the objective world can work to prevent those goals from being realized. The hard truth for the Existentialist is that much of the outer world is beyond his or her control and therefore, absurd. Stoppard's dialogue in Act 3 speaks directly to this point:

Guil: Yes, I'm very fond of boats myself. I like the way they're-contained. You don't have to worry about which way to go, or whether to go at all—the question doesn't arise, because you're on a boat, aren't you? [...]

One is free on a boat. For a time. Relatively (100-101).

The idea at work in the play is the paradox of free will at odds with greater forces outside the realm of personal control. A person is free to move in the world, but the world itself is bound to its own rules and limitations.

The final existentialist belief is that while the world may appear to be incomprehensible and absurd, the independent person must revolt against such absurdity. Choice of action and the vigilant holding to one's own code of values is the standard. To this point, the French philosopher and playwright *Jean-Paul Sartre* (1905-1980) adds:

“Man makes himself whatever he chooses to be; he also creates his own values. Man's nature consists of his past, which he has freely chosen. He is an existence which chooses its essence” (Qtd. in Sahakian 355).

That is to say, freedom of choice should be regarded as a birthright, and that value of the self and outer worth is a personal creation. For Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, this idea of personal independence and choice is only touched upon during their final moments onstage. Their inaction, an unconscious choice made by the duo, is what seals their fates at the play's end. Having to forge his own identity through choice, rather than outward circumstances, it could be argued that

Stoppard has employed elements of existentialism for himself. As “A bounced Czech” (Qtd. in Nadel 3), living and working in a foreign country, the playwright has had to create essence for himself from his own existence.

5.4 Metatheatre

Stoppard’s mixing of theatrical styles within *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* is apparent through his use of metatheatre. Metatheatre is the use of a play (the inner play) within an existing play (the outer play). Skillfully implemented by Shakespeare in his plays *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, “this play-within-a-play technique allows the outer and inner plays to fuse together, causing the barriers between fiction and reality to break down.” (*Berlin* 270) One example of metatheatre in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is the acting troupe’s performance of “The Murder of Gonzago,” which acts as a mirror image of reality—convicting Claudius for the murder of Hamlet’s father and accusing the Queen of possible foul play. In this forum, the worlds of reality and theatre meet, and truth, though staged as a theatrical fabrication, is revealed as authenticity after all. Stoppard’s use of this device in his play is taken a step further by creating two fictive worlds. Theatre scholar, June Schlueter suggests, that for example, in a typical metatheatrical play, the audience would see Stoppard’s invention as the

outer play and the world of Hamlet as the inner play. The audience would, in turn, view Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “the coin flippers, the occupants of the frame play, as real, and Hamlet’s spy friends, the occupants of the inner play, as fictive” (Schlueter 5). Yet, since most of the audience is familiar with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s presence in *Hamlet*, an existence that precedes Stoppard’s invention, the audience must question which reality is the inner play and which is the outer play. They cannot easily “divide the metafictional characters into the fictive and the real, causing possible confusion for the audience. In addition, the world of Elsinore, which is presented as the “real world” in Stoppard’s play, is also derived from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and does not actually exist in reality either. It is just one more fictional creation and, thus, a point of confusion for the audience (Schlueter 5). As June Schlueter says in her book, *Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama*, Stoppard first creates a “rigid structural line of demarcation and then violates that line through his protagonists’ entrance into the inner play.” Stoppard then uses the “play within the play not simply in the traditional way, for enhancing reality, but rather to suggest the nature of role-playing and the power of illusion over reality” (Schlueter 2). Enhancing this illusory construct is Stoppard’s use of Shakespeare’s text. As Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter Elsinore Castle,

they are given the words of *Hamlet* to speak as they blithely move into their roles of courtiers and spies.

This blending of language and characters, intertextuality, within *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, would suggest that Stoppard's use of role-play is not limited to characters that are conscious of performing. The playwright points to the possibility of performance and assumed roles as an unconscious phenomenon in the world of the play, as well. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's fixation with role-playing is best exemplified in Act 3 when Rosencrantz pretends to be the King of England and peppers Guildenstern with questions regarding their reasons for bringing Hamlet to England (108-09). Rosencrantz is so engrossed with his role-playing that he, for a moment, "forgets that he is not the King and tears open the letter containing Hamlet's death sentence." (Harty 30). Of course Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not Stoppard's only characters that are preoccupied with role-playing. The Player, who admittedly never changes out of costume, is always in character just as Guildenstern surmises in Act 1 (34). For the Player, role-playing has become a reality as he constantly is playing a part in some play. While the Player is fully aware of his status as performer, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern unconsciously slip in and out of their assumed roles. The duo continue in their role-play until Guildenstern's

confrontation with the Player in Act 3, offers a moment of clarity on this point of reality versus illusion. While on the boat to England, Guildenstern stabs the Player. The audience, along with Guildenstern, is tricked into believing that Guildenstern has actually killed the Player. Yet, when the “dead” actor arises, bowing to his fellow Tragedians, both Guildenstern and the audience are confounded by the shocking discovery that perhaps reality is not always as it seems (123). In fact, earlier in the play, the Player discusses his failure in the staging of a real death. One of the Tragedians was condemned to die for stealing a lamb and the Player was given permission to “have him hanged in the middle of the play, but the actor just wasn’t convincing” (84). Here the Player comments on the audience’s view of death onstage, which is usually “merely an actor’s casual exit.” (Harty 31). Yet when a person really died onstage, it was more difficult for the audience to accept this death as truth rather than a staged performance of a death. The Player is correct in his assumption that audience members are often confused about the nature of truth, as illustrated by their belief as a fictive stage death as true reality. Perhaps Stoppard’s point through the use of the “play metaphor” is to not only reinforce the nature of reality as a misleading force, but also to express the idea of the role- playing self as a normative element of modern human life. Ordinary people just like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are often assigned roles in society to

perform and they must successfully convince an observing audience that they have the ability to handle such roles. As June Schlueter asserts, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's situation is "reminiscent of our own acquiescence to the demands of social convention, which constantly force us to assume a fictive identity" (Schlueter 3). Yet no matter what statements are made through Stoppard's use of metatheatricality and the theme of role-playing versus reality, it suggests that nothing presented onstage is what it seems. Just like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's game of question and answer, the pursuit of answers only produces more questions. With Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and the Player's preoccupation with the idea of role-playing, Stoppard's commentary on the nature of reality is, at best, ambiguous. The playwright never quite makes clear the answer to the question of what is real and what is fiction. Stoppard therefore makes no direct point through his use of metatheatricality with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and though many questions are posed, none are definitively answered. However, Stoppard has opened his audience up to a world of infinite questions and therefore a world of infinite possible solutions.

The Player King

Given the close, obvious, and acknowledged connections between Stoppard's play, Eliot's poem, *The Wasteland* and Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot* and its relationship to *Hamlet*, can the researcher conclude that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is, in the final analysis, a very skillful but very derivative play that does little more than integrate in an amusing way much more important works? It is difficult to answer this question with certainty. But before endorsing such a judgment, one must consider the most original aspect of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the memorable figure of the Player King.

The figure of the Player King injects into Stoppard's play the fascinating complexities about levels of illusion, the relationship of art to life, and the very nature of theatrical fiction. The Player brings into our consideration of the absurdity of the world a sense that we can find order in art. And art confers on human actions, especially on human death a certain significance that: on the stage people can live significant, active lives and they can die magnificently. Furthermore, there is logic to the action:

Player: There's a design at work in all art--surely you know that?
Events must play themselves out to aesthetic,
moral and logical conclusion.

Guil: And what's that, in this case?

Player: It never varies--we aim at the point where everyone who
is marked for death dies.

Guil: Marked?

Player: Between 'just deserts' and 'tragic irony' we are given
quite a lot of scope for our particular talent. Generally speaking,
things have gone about as far as they can possibly go
when things have got about as bad as they can reasonably get.

Guil: Who decides?

Player: Decides? It is written. (24)

The idea of fate on the other hand operates throughout the play. This thematic idea is introduced by a coin toss that seems to defy probability and operates solely on fate. The fate of the coin toss is symbolic of Stoppard's two muddled main characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and their fate.

Art, in other words, is quite at odds with the world as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern perceive it. Art confers order. The style the players offer may be, as he admits, run down, seedy, a product of indifferent times, but what they offer is not absurd. The only problem is, of course, that it is a fiction, something invented, and is quite meaningless without an audience. It is not a world unto itself. Hence, in the text, the Player King becomes very angry when he has to confront the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern abandon them in the woods in the middle of the performance.

And by the same token Guildenstern is finally provoked to significant action at what he perceives to be the futility of mere theatre. When he strikes at the Player King, he expresses a finally explosive anger at the way in which the Player King, because he lives in the world of illusion, has all the answers that Guildenstern never finds:

Guil: But why? Was it all for this? Who are we that so
much should converge on our little deaths?

(In anguish to the PLAYER) Who are we?

Player: You are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. That's enough.

Guil: No--it is not enough. To be told so little-to such an end-
and still, finally, to be denied an explanation . . .

Player: In our experience, most things end in death.

Guil: (Fear, vengeance, scorn) Your experience?--Actors!

(He snatches a dagger advances, speaking more quietly.)

I'm talking about death--and you've never experienced that. And
you cannot act it. You die a thousand casual deaths-with none of
that intensity which squeezes out life . . . and no blood runs cold
anywhere. Because even as you die you know that you will come
back in a different hat. But no one gets up after death--there is no
applause--there is only silence and second-hand clothes, and that's
death.

Although both *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* concentrate on death, the difference lies in the fact that *Hamlet* dramatizes the process of death in all its manifestations while Stoppard's play is content with conceptualizing what the process of death is- part of role playing. Guildenstern is trying at last to do something, to make contact with the only reality of which he is sure. And he is utterly convinced that he has succeeded. He claims the Player does not know death. But the Player King convinces Guildenstern that he is dead. By some final irony,

without knowing it, Guildenstern has finally done something, only to discover that it's just a pretense, part of an improvised drama, complete with an audience who duly applaud.

The play itself is full of references to that fact that it is a play (from the opening comment during the initial coin flipping "There is an art to the building up of suspense"). Thus, as we watch a play, we see within that fiction a professional seller of fictions offering something that is lacking in the main represented fiction. Much of the intellectual delight we get from the play comes from this tension--what exactly is real here? Stoppard's treatment of this aspect of the play is dazzling, entertaining, and very thought-provoking (for some people at least).

5.5 Stoppard's display of wit through dialogues

The lack of control over their lives is mirrored in the fragmentation of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's language and their persistent use of questions. Of course this is not a new idea since Ionesco and Beckett have used similar techniques in their plays, *Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. A good

example is when Guildenstern states "certainly not, If you like" contradicting himself, highlighting the subversion of language.

The play's mixing of speech, contemporary and Shakespearean, is used by Stoppard to link his play to the pre-existing world of *Hamlet*. Intertextuality— a new play based upon, or using a pre-existing text— is a technique that follows the postmodern approach to borrowing from the old to create something new. The contrast of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's speech patterns, which contain one-liners and nonsequiturs, and the blank verse of Shakespeare further enhance their roles as outsiders in this world (Gabbard 27). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's ability to speak the language of Shakespeare also brings attention to the nature of role-playing. The duo interacts with the royal family of Elsinore, and assumes the roles of courtiers with no hesitation or recognition that there is a difference in their language or persona. This character trait would suggest that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's concepts of self and identity are flexible and unconscious. They have the ability to adapt to the given circumstances of Elsinore. The emotional conflict that follows the duo's encounter with the royal court is not a result of a difference in language; rather, the new setting generates new questions for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to answer. Words are the only perceived power

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have in this world. As Guildenstern says in Elsinore: “Words, words. They’re all we have to go on” (41), and which is certainly a reminder of Hamlet's statement, "words, words, words", in the famous Shakespearean play. This control, however, is limited because of the character’s inability to grasp the deeper meanings offered. For all of their verbal dexterity, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s debates provide little advancement or lasting security for the two. As Stoppard’s agent of the world of make-believe within the play, *the Player* uses language as a metaphor for theatre. He gives voice to the nature of plot structure within tragedy and its predictable outcome, “Decides? It is written!” (63) and pre-existing expectations and perception, “Audiences know what to expect, and that is all they are prepared to believe in,” (66) to drive home the illusory nature of the world he inhabits. The Player’s lines, “Don’t you see?! We’re actors—we’re the opposite of people!” (49) are the perfect summation of his job as one who lies for a living. False characters and scenes are used by the Player and Tragedians as a method of expressing deeper meanings. Stoppard’s use of the Tragedians’ dumbshow within the play also brings into focus the limitations of verbal communication.

Guil: What is the dumbshow for?

Player: Well, it's a device, really - it makes the action that follows more or less comprehensible; you understand, we are tied down to a language which makes up in obscurity what it lacks in style. (61)

For all of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's desire to gain insight through words, the greatest moment of clarity offered to the two is presented in pantomime. Then, in near silence, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are shown the story of *Hamlet*, through the 'dumbshow, including their own deaths in England. This moment in Act 2 shows the playwright's postmodern use of metatheatricality to deliver dramatic irony. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's dependency upon language, coupled with their incomprehension of the deeper meaning behind the Tragedians' performance, leaves the duo oblivious to the truth. They are shown their own deaths in the dumbshow, but because the truth is presented as "theatre," Rosencrantz and Guildenstern devalue the message. When the Player asks what the two thought of the dumbshow, Guildenstern immediately responds, "What were we supposed to

think?” (63). Along with Stoppard’s focus on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s failure to understand a deeper truth, he is also commenting on the passive mental state of the audience. A dependent individual always looks to an outside authority to explain meaning. This is Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s flawed approach to understanding through communication.

Stoppard also uses dialogue in the play as a means of contrasting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s theatrical world with the natural world. Throughout the play, both characters speak of nature—the seasons, the sun (both rising and setting), leaves changing colors, animals, smoke, baked earth, night, the ocean’s current, and the wind. The playwright is using nature as a model of order amid chaos. Within the structure of the human world, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern use intellect, logic, and questions and answers as means of comprehending purpose and direction. The two never find comfort or substance through logical methods, however. The natural world, a world of harmony and balance, is a separate entity from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s existence. Stoppard ironically uses nature as a way to comment on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s limitations in using scientific methods. The duo acknowledge nature but do not fully comprehend its meanings contained within. Stoppard also uses the absurdist-influenced,

postmodern technique of broken mental states that are revealed through disjointed dialogue. In the aftermath of meeting the King and Queen in Act 1, Rosencrantz blurts out, “over my step over my head body! I tell you it’s all stopping to a death” (29). Guildenstern experiences this verbal breakdown after the pirate attack in Act 3, “the pirates left us home and high-dry and home-drome” (93). Language is destabilized to the point of collapse in these moments and quickly shows how the security of communication between the two characters can be shattered.

5.6 Critical Reactions to the Play

Initially, this mixing of styles and ideas filtered through the world of Shakespeare was met with little enthusiasm by the critics. The first performance of the full-length play was staged by the amateur Oxford Theatre Group as part of the “fringe” of the Edinburgh Festival the summer of 1966. Reviewing the August 24 premiere, Harold Hobson of *The Sunday Times* wrote that the play would not guarantee Stoppard’s success, while Allen Wright in *The Scotsman* called it “no more than a clever revue sketch which got out of hand, peppered with incriminating phrases that could be taken down and used in evidence against it” (Nadel 172-73).

A lone positive review from Ronald Bryden in the *Observer* generated interest for the play's performance in Edinburgh and netted Stoppard a telegram from the National Theatre in London. As literary manager for the National Theatre, Kenneth Tynan organized a meeting between himself, Stoppard, and the National's artistic director, Sir Laurence Olivier. Eager to champion the new playwright and his work, Tynan quickly scheduled *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* to be produced in the spring of 1967 at the National Theatre's Old Vic stage. The play went into an eight week rehearsal process, with Stoppard expanding the cast size from eleven in the Scottish production to twenty-seven for the London stage and adding a new scene (suggested by Olivier) featuring Rosencrantz and Guildenstern searching for Hamlet as the prince tries to hide Polonius's body (Nadel 179). For Stoppard, edits and rewrites became an almost daily occurrence in the collaboration with director Derek Goldby. At twenty-six, the Oxford-educated Goldby had gained experience at the National as an assistant director, but *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* was to be his first main-stage play. To keep costs down, the production used costumes pulled from the Old Vic's storage. Out of pure coincidence, it so happened that the faded Victorian-Jacobean outfits for the new play had been previously used in Peter O'Toole's 1963 *Hamlet* (Nadel 179-180). After considering several different endings and a short-lived title change

to *Exit Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, Stoppard finally settled on giving Shakespeare's Horatio the play's final words and on keeping the title, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Because of the National Theatre's scheduling as a repertory company, the production moved into the actual performance space with only two rehearsal days remaining (Nadel 183).

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead opened at the Old Vic Theatre in London on Tuesday, April 11, 1967. Critical response to the professional production was resoundingly more positive than the previous ones from Scotland. Harold Hobson's review in the *Sunday Times* all but retracted his first review of the Edinburgh production: If the history of drama is chiefly the history of dramatists—and it is—then the National Theatre's production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard is the most important event in the British professional theatre of the last nine years (Nadel, 185). After seven years of disappointment in his playwriting career, Stoppard was about to become an overnight success. At twenty-nine, Tom Stoppard had become the youngest playwright ever to be staged at the National Theatre (Nadel 149). Within six months the production transferred to Broadway, another first for the National, for a yearlong, four hundred twenty performance run. In 1968, the play received eight

Tony Award nominations and won four: Best Play, Best Costume Designer, Best Dramatic Producer, and Best Scenic Designer. *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* also received the Drama Critics Award for Best Play, the John Whiting Award, and *Plays and Players* Best Play Award. The influential British newspaper, *The Evening Standard* presented Stoppard with the, Most Promising Playwright Award (Fleming xii). Between the years 1967-68,

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead would be staged in twenty-three countries and within a decade, the play would be professionally produced more than 250 times in twenty languages (Fleming 48). Notable subsequent productions of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* have included a 1974 revival at the Young Vic (an offshoot of the Old Vic), a Broadway production at New York's Roundabout Theatre in 1987, and a 1995 staging at the National Theatre in London.

5.7 Comparative Literary Analysis

As artistic representations, literary texts are constructed through diverse historical, cultural and personal experiences in addition to worldviews. Literary texts, in various genres and discourses, embody particular aesthetics of particular

cultures. Comparative study of different literatures and texts in their historical, cultural, and aesthetic contexts enables a clearer and more crystallized understanding of them.

5.7.1 Comparison of the two plays

In Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* we find that it has little and a lot to tell at once. This can be seen in the fact that there is no purpose and no beginning to the play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern do not even fully know their reasons for being there (e.g. 'Two Elizabethans passing the time in a place without any visible character.') This justifies the labeling of the play as absurd. There is no purpose to the play because fate is sealed, the ending is written and death is their only option. It is one of the rare plays in which theatre and its world become a convincing and suggestive metaphor for man's presence in this universe. The play is made absurd by minimalist sets, meaningless dialogue, and lack of character motivations, a single setting, condemned characters and a dark comic almost sarcastic tone throughout the play.

These strategies represent the opposite of *Hamlet*, which has a prefigure, beginning, purpose, structure and point and even foils, though it also contains fate

(for example, Hamlet's fate is sealed when he finds out that Claudius murdered his father). Hamlet is able to determine Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's fate through his own actions, in *Hamlet*; these decisions decide Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's future (for example, the switching of the letters leads to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern being slaughtered instead of Hamlet).

Tom Stoppard raises contextual issues that Shakespeare was unable to raise because of the moral framework of the 1600's. These ideas include the absurdist view of life, the convention and radical theatre; sixteenth century theatre is held in comparison to Absurd theatre and the tragedy and tragi-comedy of the common man. Over time, texts are altered and adapted to suit a different purpose, context or audience. In the case of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, this is a tragi-comedy. Its formidable impact stems from this curious and striking mingling between these two elements which have become the hallmark of theatre and its reception.

The language on the other hand in the two plays *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Hamlet* is also very different. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is written in old English style; rhetorical, lofty, and large (technically called 'unrhymed iambic

pentameter'). It is a language style that has become a catch phrase for critics, scholars and theatergoers. It is easy to recall "To Be or not To Be" and recognize its effect that reverberates on us. Whereas in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, the language is colloquial and improper. However, when the play *Hamlet* coheres with the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* the language becomes formal and old English style. Stoppard himself has consistently emphasized the pleasure he takes in language. 'I'm hooked on style,' he informed Giles Gordon in 1968, and elaborated on his preoccupation with 'things I find difficult to express' in an article in the Sunday Times:

One element of this preoccupation is simply an enormous love of language itself. For a lot of writers the language they use is merely a fairly efficient tool. For me the particular use of a particular word in the right place, or a group of words in the right order, to create a particular effect is important; it gives me more pleasure than to make a point which I might consider to be profound. IV, No. 14, 1974, 6.

Hence the style of writing of the two plays differs, as in the case of *Hamlet* it is meaningful and straight forward and was written for the common audience of that

time, and the play is mostly written in poetic, blank verse form as well. Shakespearean blank verse relies heavily on substitutions of three-syllable feet that create rhythmic variation. Here are the opening lines of Hamlet's most famous soliloquy:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wish'd. (3)

Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* on the other hand was written for a contemporary and more intelligent audience, using prose, word games, humour and ambiguous expressions of truth. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whose own idiom is the contemporary vernacular, periodically find

themselves swept up into a scene from Hamlet which leaves them helplessly picking over the ‘bizarre’ medium of Elizabethan blank verse. After their first brush with the inhabitants of the Hamlet world, they ponder the implications of one of Queen Gertrude’s remarks:

Guil: And receive such thanks as fits a king’s remembrance.

Ros: I like the sound of that. What do you think he means by remembrance?

Guil: He doesn’t forget his friends.

Ros: Would you care to estimate?

Guil: Difficult to say, really some kings tend to be amnesiac, others I suppose—the opposite, whatever that is

Ros: Yes—but -

Guil: Elephantine . . . ?

Ros: Not how long—how much?

Guil: Retentive—he’s a very retentive king, a royal retainer (29)

Sometimes, the ambiguity lies in the different syntactical structures that can be perceived in an arrangement of words. The *Player* attempts to clarify the personal situation of the characters in Shakespeare’s tragedy:

- Player: The old man thinks he's in love with his daughter.
- Ros: (appalled): Good God! We're out of our depth here.
- Player: No, no, no—he hasn't got a daughter—the old man thinks he's in love with his daughter.
- Ros: The old man is?
- Player: Hamlet, in love with the old man's daughter, the old man thinks.
- Ros: Ha! It's beginning to make sense! (49)

Satire is also apparent in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Stoppard makes a statement about how insignificant we are in this universe similar to the characters in a play. Whether they are significant or insignificant is upto the spectators.

- Ros: How very intriguing! I feel like a spectator - an appalling business. The only thing that makes it bearable is the irrational belief that somebody will come on in a minute." (41)

Rosencrantz is referring to the main characters of *Hamlet*, who seem to wander in and out of their lives. In reality too people tend to wait for someone who they think will be more interesting to come into their lives, and they simply wait for it to happen. By having Rosencrantz say that when he did, Stoppard was able to point out a flaw in humans, yet he did it in a way that was humorous.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern played a game of questions, with the object of answering a question with a question, and therefore not give away any truths. When King Claudius sent them to talk to Hamlet to learn what has brought about his upsetting condition, they approach it like a game of questions. Afterwards, Rosencrantz complains:

Ros: Twenty-seven - three, and you think he might have
 had the edge?! He murdered us." (57)

Guildenstern understated their loss, which people tend to do. Though they emphasize their problems, they like to de-emphasize their losses like Guildenstern, which Rosencrantz points out.

Stoppard also seems to be showing the misuse of free speech as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are exchanging dialogues.

Ros: Fire!

Guil: Where?

Ros: It's all right - I'm demonstrating the misuse of free speech.
To prove that it exists. (60)

In presenting this misuse of free speech in a humorous way, Stoppard shows that it happens in real life too. He also points out how people have to do something to prove that it exists, not just believe that it does. This scene also shows that he does not think much of having to prove something by experience. An amusing demonstration of dark humour used by Stoppard is, as the Player is talking to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he tells stories of deaths in the theater.

Player: I had an actor once who was condemned to hang . . . I got
permission to have him hanged in the middle of a play . . .
he just wasn't convincing!" (83)

This reflects Stoppard's indelible style of making even the serious reality of death sound humorous. In this way Rosencrantz and Guildenstern always keep constant their mindless banter. When they are on the boat to England, Rosencrantz remarks:

Ros: Dark, isn't it?

Guil: Not for night.

Ros: No, not for night.

Guil: Dark for day.

Ros: Oh yes, it's dark for day. (98-99)

Stoppard here uses words in a tricky way to show the confusion and miscommunication between Ros and Guil. This also reflects the confused sometimes illogical behavior of man.

People like to be optimistic, or to be around optimists, yet being pessimistic does not bother Guildenstern. He also shows that he believes in predestination, and that people cannot do anything to change this and still have life work out well. By believing in predestination, like Guildenstern, any action is not the person's own will. Any consideration of what to do becomes pointless.

Guil: The only beginning is birth and the only end is death - if
 you can't count on that, what can you count on?" (39)
 Each move is dictated by the previous one - that is the
 meaning of order. If we start being arbitrary it'll just be a
 shambles; at least let us hope so. Because if we happened . . .
 to discover . . .that our spontaneity was part of their order, we'd
 know that we were lost. (60)

People tend to be distrustful of information other people give them. They look for truth, yet they have no way of proving things are true. The *Player* shows a different view when he says:

Player: Everything has to be taken on trust, trust is only
 that which is taken to be true. It's the currency of living.
 There may be nothing behind it, but it doesn't make any
 difference so long as it is honored." (66-67)

Without trust, nothing is true according to Stoppard through the words of the *Player*. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are on the boat, they discuss the sunrise.

Ros: I watched it come up.

Guil: No . . . it was light the whole time, you see, and you opened your eyes very, very slowly." (85)

Stoppard demonstrates through the dialogues that people take a lot for granted or to be true, yet there is no way of knowing what is true and what is an illusion.

Stoppard exemplifies this in *Rozencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by the unique connection the play has with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* on which it is based. Stoppard integrates the two plays by drawing out two minor characters from *Hamlet* turning them into the protagonists, bringing them to the forefront of the stage in his play. He creates an identity for them separate from that in *Hamlet*. Likewise the protagonists in 'Hamlet' are reduced to minor characters in Stoppard's production. Stoppard is known for grafting much of his best works onto plays that are already well established, such as his play *On the Razzle* (1981) which is an adaptation of an Austrian play *Einen Jux will er sich machen* by Johann Nestroy.

Whatever Shakespeare has done in *Hamlet* was given a new light on by Stoppard. Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is almost the complete opposite to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in many ways, yet very similar at the same time. Both display

historical, social, theatrical and literary contexts and also many common themes and characters.

Stoppard gives Rosencrantz and Guildenstern an existence outside '*Hamlet*', although it is one of little significance and they idle away their time only having a purpose to their lives when the play rejoins the '*Hamlet*' plot, after they have been called by the King's messenger: "There was a messenger...that's right. We were sent for." (19) Their lives end tragically due to this connection with *Hamlet*, predetermined by the title. However their deaths evoke sadness and sympathy leaving the reader/audience grieving for them. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's deaths show how Stoppard has effectively created these characters by the audience's emotional reaction to their vulnerability and predicament. Nonetheless, the roles provided them with a purpose to their otherwise futile lives, making them bearable.

By appropriating the classic Shakespearean play, *Hamlet*, in his own play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Stoppard has turned what was once a traditionally-structured play revolving around important characters such as Kings and Queens into an absurdist play about ordinary men. The concentration on

characters is reversed: the minor characters become major fixtures and the articulate protagonist, Hamlet, morphs into an inarticulate version of a minor character. Not only does Stoppard adapt ideas and form from *Hamlet*, he also takes two small, irrelevant characters and devotes stage exclusively to them. We get to see what probably has happened offstage in *Hamlet* but definitely onstage in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

Comically and poignantly, Stoppard shows how easy it is for the present to misinterpret the past, even as the play depicts the way the past shapes our future. Beyond the jokes and the intellectual *joie de vivre*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* leaves a deep and lingering impression on the readers.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

This play has been a journey and an education for many theatergoers and for those who have read it. Reading *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* gives an opportunity to examine one's views of theatre, and of life. The play provides the audience with this experience of sharing with others. To tell a good story, make people laugh, and invite them to think, are noble standards for the theatre.

For the twentieth-century reader, the problem of communication is a very modern concern. The writers of the twentieth century have, in general, been acutely aware of the limitations and ambiguities of language, and the theme of communication is one which has been addressed by every major author of the period. Finally, for the writers of the Theatre of the Absurd, language is empty, and

the attempt to communicate simply futile: "Words, words," says Guildenstern, in dismissal, "they're all we have to go on." 1[2]

The main aim of this study has been to compare and contrast Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and to answer the questions raised herein.

The researcher has found that the method of analyzing these plays through the comparative method has indeed shed light on the questions raised regarding the reversal of the themes and characters i.e to say Stoppard has taken a complete different view of the status of the common man as compared to the royalty and their complicated psychologies in Shakespeare's play. This study has particularly scrutinized this aspect of Stoppard's play and come up with some suitable answers to the questions raised herein. Hence this study does fit as a critique of Shakespeare's play. Certainly well known and prolific in his writing Stoppard has proved no less than a force to be reckoned with in comparison to a giant, Shakespeare.

The elements such as the dialogues which Stoppard has written for his play bring out the failure of language to be able to communicate although the delivery of these dialogues brings the audience into raptures, assigning these dialogues an absurd kind of humour as opposed to Shakespeare's serious sided dialogues which certainly were suitable for an audience of the Elizabethan era. Hence the question of the language and its suitable use in Stoppard's play earns him credit as an eminent playwright of our times.

Stoppard's play, as we know shifts back and forth in setting from being on a bleak stage representing the dim world of today to the royal Elsinore castle. This was deliberately done by Stoppard in order to let the audience get a glimpse of both worlds and still come to a conclusion about the helplessness of man being stuck in a bleak world, overwhelmed by the inevitability of death as it is. Fate also plays a part in the display of the characters' reversal and the introduction of a totally new character, *The Player*, who at different times becomes Stoppard's mouthpiece in order to speak directly to the audience about his philosophical and ethical views about the existence of man and why man asks so many questions

when fate has its own way of answering them. Hence the questions regarding the themes and elements have suitably been answered in this study.

Perhaps the whole play is just intellectual fooling around, with occasional stabs at seriousness. The characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and their situation inspires several things: to remember to laugh at the absurdity of life, and to make meaningful connections with others and to leave the rest to fate.

Stoppard uses two indecisive, confused men, to show human flaws which make his plays humorous. He also uses satire, wordplay, humour and a good plot effectively to create an entertaining play the message of which is basically to be entertained and not take the play as well as life too seriously. This is a complete reversal of what Shakespeare's plays was supposed to deliver to the audience of that time.

An eclectic, rootless childhood and adolescence has indelibly coloured Tom Stoppard's life as a playwright. Despite no post-secondary education, Stoppard has consistently offered intellectual, engaging theatre and has moved to the forefront of

respected and acclaimed British dramatists. At seventy years old, Stoppard continues his creative journey as a writer for both theatre and film.

Through its free use of the conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd and the mixing of various philosophies, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* has been hailed by critics as a landmark, postmodern play. Under the guise of a comedy, the play has also had a successful forty-year relationship with audiences worldwide. The journey of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is a search for purpose and meaning in life. Self-professed “little men,” (86) the two figures are lost in a sea of conflicting philosophies. Inaction, powered by a dependency on outside authority, proves to be their greatest character flaw. Stoppard’s qualified use of absurdist, metatheatre, and postmodern techniques—intertextuality, the mixing of language, signs offered through physical and verbal cues, and multiple theories concerning existence, all channeled through the perspective of humour—offers moving and challenging theatre. Stoppard's is a much finer (and yet no less resonant) art. He is one of our favourite playwrights, each of whose new works we eagerly look forward to or at least this is how the researcher assesses Stoppard and his memorable work.

Truly, this study has maintained that though Shakespear's play is a classical work of art Stoppard's play in contrast has stood its ground in bringing forward different themes and techniques as well as shedding light on the plight of the common in an absurd universe, of which whatever he does or says, will always remain a mystery.

On that note it would be fit to mention this quote from Kapos:

The human condition being what it is, with man small, helpless, insecure and unable ever to fathom the world in all its hopelessness, death and absurdity, the theatre has to confront him with the bitter truth that most human endeavour is irrational and senseless, that communication between human beings is well-nigh impossible, and the world will forever remain an impenetrable mystery. At the same time, the recognition of all these bitter truths will have a liberating effect: if we realize the basic absurdity of most of our objectives we are freed from being obsessed with them and this release expresses itself in laughter. (Kapos, 345)

References

Aronson, Ronald. (2004). *Camus and Sartre*. University of Chicago Press.

Baker, William, and John C. Ross, comp. (2005). *Harold Pinter: A Bibliographical History*. London: The British Library and New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press.

Banks, E. (2010). *"Rosencrantz & guildenstern are dead" and obscured by language*. University of Kansas Dissertations Publishing. (MFA, Dissertation)

Bethel, Nocolette. (1986). *The Bad Behaviour of Language: The Problem of Communication in the Eighteenth Century*. London Routledge.

Bloom, Harold. (ed.). (1986). *Tom Stoppard [Modern Critical Views Series]*. New York: Chelsea House.

Bloom, (2003). *Tom Stoppard [Bloom's Major Dramatists]*. New York: Chelsea House. (2010). *Tom Stoppard [Bloom's Major Dramatists]* London: British Library; New Castle DE: Oak Knoll Press, New York: Chelsea House.

Bradby, David. (2001). *Beckett, Waiting for Godot*. Cambridge University Press.

Brater, Enoch. (1990). "After the Absurd". *Around the Absurd: Essays on Modern and Postmodern Drama*. Ed. Enoch Brater and Ruby Cohn. University of Michigan Press. pg. 293- 301.

Cahn, Victor L. (1979). *Beyond Absurdity: The Plays of Tom Stoppard* Rutherford NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Chopoidaló, C. (2009). *The possible worlds of "hamlet": Shakespeare as adaptor, adaptations of Shakespeare*. University of Alberta (Canada).

Claude Schumacher. (1990). *Encyclopedia of Literature & Criticism*. London Routledge.

Cornwell, Neil. (2006). *The Absurd in Literature*. Manchester University Press.

Costa, K. J. (2005). *Predicaments and resolutions: A study of dramatic structure in stoppard, chekhov, and shakespeare*. State University of New York at Buffalo).

Culler, Jonathan. (2000). *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. USA. Oxford University Press.

Culik, Jan. (1952). *Tom Stoppard: An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (Part III)*.

Clurman, Harold.(1974). *The Nation* (copyright 1974 by the Nation Associates, Inc.), May 11.

Delaney, Paul, *et al.* (1991). "*Structure and Anarchy in Tom Stoppard.*" London, Macmillan Press.

Delaney, Paul, ed. (1989). *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press [2nd edition].

Derrida, J. (2002). *Positions*. Trans. A. Bass.2nd ed. London & New York: Continuum.

Drain, Richard. (1995). *Twentieth-century theatre: a sourcebook*. London Routledge.

Drew, J. M. (2008). *Shakespeare and the language of doubt*.(Ohio University MFA Dissertation).

Epton, Nina. (1960). *Love and the English*. Cleveland: The World Publishing Co.

Esslin, Martin. (2004). *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage[Knopf]).

Fleming, John. (2001). *Stoppard's Theater: Finding Order Amid Chaos* [Literary Modernism Series] Austin: University of Texas Press.

Fleming, J. P. (1996). *Defining stoppard: His life, plays, and productions*. The University of Texas at Austin).

Flynn, Thomas. R. (2006). *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Gabrielle H. Cody, Evert Sprinchorn. (2007). *The Columbia encyclopedia of modern drama*. Columbia University Press.

Genette, Gerard. (1997). *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*. University of Nebraska Press.

Greiner, P. A. (1980). *The plays of tom stoppard: Recognition, exploration, and retreat*. The Ohio State University).

Grossman-Ziegler, F. (1985). *Theatre/story/audience: The audience in contemporary theatre*. Emory University Press.

Guaspari, David. (1996). "Stoppard's *Arcadia*." *Antioch Review* . vol:54, issue:2. 3-4.

Guss, M. H. (1985). *Spectator as hero: The critique of philosophical idealism in the plays of tom stoppard*. The University of Wisconsin Press.

Gussow, Mel. (1995). *Conversations with Stoppard* London: Nick Hern Books, 1995 New York: Limelight Editions.

Haddawy, D. E. (1994). *Not silence is the rest: Modern treatments of the hamlet dilemma*. (University of Nevada, Reno).

Hazlitt, William. *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, Oxford University Press, [1st edition 1817]. Reprinted in 1959, 1962 and 1966.

Hodgson, Terry. (2001). *The plays of Tom Stoppard: for stage, radio, TV and film*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hornby, Richard. (1986). *Drama, Metadrama and perception*. Associated University Press.

Hunter, Jim. (2000). *Tom Stoppard* [Faber Critical Guides] London: Faber and Faber.

Hu, Stephen. (1989). *Tom Stoppard's Stagecraft* [American University Series IV: English Language and Literature] New York University Press.

James Knowlson. (1997). *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*. London. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Jenkins, Anthony. (1987). *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard*. Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jump, John, *Shakespeare: Hamlet; A Casebook*. Macmillan Education Ltd,

London. [1st edition, 1968, 14th reprint, 1990].

Kane, Leslie. (1984). *The language of silence: on the unspoken and the unspeakable in modern drama*. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press.

Kaufmann, Walter. (1980). *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*. Princeton University Press.

Kelly, Katherine E. (ed.). (2001). *The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kelly, Katherine E. (1986). "Tom Stoppard's *Artist Descending a Staircase*: Outdoing the 'Dada' Duchamp." *Comparative Drama*. Western Michigan University. (Fall 1986) Vol:20.3, 191-200.

Lapointe, G. C. (1983). *Language and comedy in stoppard's early works (Britain)*. (Case Western Reserve University, Ohio).

Lewis, Allan. (1966). *"The Theatre of the 'Absurd'—Beckett, Ionesco, Genet". The Contemporary Theatre: Significant playwrights of Our Time*. London: Crown Publishers.

Lutterbie, J. H. (1983). *A critical analysis of the major plays of tom stoppard (England)*. University of Washington Press. (Phd. Dissertation).

Marowitz, Charles. (1973). "Writer in our Midst" in Contemporary Literary Criticism (ed. Carolyn Riley). *Gale Research Company*.

Nadel, Ira. (2002). *Double Act: A Life of Tom Stoppard*. London: Methuen.

Nice, P. M. (1984). *Scenic images in selected plays by tom stoppard (theatricality; britain)*. University of Minnesota).

Pollack-Pelzner, D. (2010). *Talking shakespeare in the ninetheenth-century british novel*. (Harvard University).

Pritzker, E. C. (2011). *Tom stoppard: Humanizing chaos*. Florida International University Press.

Reiter, Amy. (13 Nov 2001). *Salon Magazine*.

Richard Drain. (1995). *Twentieth-century theatre: a sourcebook*. Routledge. pg.

Rosen, J. M. (2011). *Minor characters have their day: The politics and popularization of a contemporary genre*. (English Language and Literature).

Rusinko, Susan. (1986). *Tom Stoppard* [Twayne's English Author Series]

Boston: Twayne Publishers, 164pp

Sales, Roger. (1986). *Tom Stoppard: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* [Penguin Critical Studies] Harmondsworth/ New York: Penguin.

Sartre, Jean Paul. (1957). *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. New York: The Philosophical Library.

Schlueter, June. (1995). *Dramatic Closure: Reading the End*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Schlueter, J. (1986). "Stoppard's Moon and Birdboot, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern." *Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

- Schlueter, J. (1979). *Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama*. Columbia University Press.
- Schumacher, Claude. (1990). *Encyclopedia of Literature & Criticism*. Oxford University Press.
- Simon, John. (1974). *New York Magazine* (© 1974 by NYM Corp.; reprinted by permission of New York Magazine and John Simon), August 26.
- Stephenson, B. J. (1985). *In defense of play: A reassessment of tom stoppard's theaters*. University of Florida).
- Stoppard, Tom. (1974). 'Ambushes for the audience: towards a high comedy of ideas,' *Theatre quarterly*. London. New England Press.
- Styan, J. L. (1968). *The dark comedy: the development of modern comic tragedy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tekinay, Asli. (ed.). (2005). *Tribute to Professor Oya Basak: (Re)reading Shakespeare in Text and Performance*. Istanbul: Bogazici University Press.

www.theatredatabase.com/20_century/tom_stoppard. (retrieved, Sep 2010)

The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare. (1982). London: Chancellor Press.

Tompkins, Jane P. (ed.). (1980). *Reader-response Criticism: From Formalism to Post- structuralism.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Tynan, Kenneth (1977). *Withdrawing with Style from the Chaos.* New Yorker, 53 (19 December). In Kenneth Tynan, *Show People: Profiles in Entertainment.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Vickery, D. J. (1980). *Stoppard: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead [Brodie's Notes]* London: Pan [pb].

Ward, D. D. (1987). *Dramas of defamiliarization and distantiation: A comparative study of the selected works of eugene ionesco, tom stoppard, and antonio buero vallejo.* University of Arkansas.

Zeid, W. A. (1989). *Edward bond, tom stoppard, and shakespeare: The anxiety of influence.* City University of New York).