

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Politics of Parody in Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

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by

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Letter of Recommendation

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Abstract

Tom Stoppard takes Rosencrantz and Guildenstern – two so-called lowly characters from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* and revive them to boost the morale of living of the minor characters. Through this restoration, Stoppard wants to emphasize that essence of living does not differ from that of the high profile person to that of insignificant characters – the common folks. Life after all is life, and carries equal value to all irrespective of their status and class. However, due to the power of politics, a commoner is merely limited to perform crazy little things, which does not carry any significant meaning to the so-called resourceful people. In a world marred with political biasness, Stoppard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* attempts to restore the dignity and sentiments of these characters.

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I. Existentialism as a Parody

This present thesis is based on English playwright Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. It was first performed in 1966 – an era marred under the outcomes of the Second World War. It was the time, when the common folks were in search for meaning and essence in life, as the war had left them bruised and futile. All norms and values had fallen prey to the nasty war, and most people were struggling to live a fuller and meaningful life amid the futile situation.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead belongs to the post World War II background and follow the same absurdist tradition, like that of the war time. However, the play is optimistic in nature, as it aims to share happiness to the war affected people. The protagonists are in search of purpose of living in the play and their effort to fix their identity. Stoppard aims to represent the parody of existentialism of a common man of the contemporary society in a positive attitude.

In the existential universe of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the protagonists seek the purpose of life. They try to fix their own identity; and they try to find logic behind the events taking place around them but they exhaust this attempt with a series of failures, despite the fact they are living in the shadows of the high profile persons.

The employment and rejection of the absurdist technique in Stoppard's play is the focus of the study. The employment of absurdist tradition in Stoppard's play will be taken in consideration with William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In doing so, the researcher attempts to analyze the predetermined fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Stoppard suggests that there is some method behind the seeming madness of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's lives in the chaotic world. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, though are not aware of the trap in the world of the play, pass their

time throughout the play in bewildered search for clues and connections that clarifies the events around them, which implies the protagonists' search for their identity and meaning. It is a parody that with a fixed identity they intend to comprehend the systems of their world. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear as mere tramps who just repeat the action of waiting for the mystic masters, without any effort to search for their identity and meaning of their existence.

In such scenario, it was obvious for the common folks to find solace in light entertainment, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, a parody of politics. The politics of the so-called high class royals make their living limited to silly acts. Stoppard takes the idea of the play from English playwright Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which is a revised attempt to search for the identity of the lowly characters. The present research focuses on the activities of two seemingly less important characters – Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of *Hamlet*. However, Stoppard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* highlights them and diminishes the roles of the traditional powerful characters like Hamlet, Claudius and Ophelia. In transforming the minor characters to leading characters, Stoppard sought for meaning and validity of normal people and their existence. Taking this point in consideration, the present thesis uses existentialism as the tool to restore the glory and charm of the common folks.

The present play gets its title from the last lines of *Hamlet*, where at the end of the drama it is announced that "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead." Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two minor characters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. They are friend to Hamlet – the revenge seeking prince of England. Hamlet's father Hamlet senior was murdered by his uncle Claudius, when he (junior Hamlet) was in Denmark for his intellectual training. Upon the news that his father was killed, Hamlet returns to

England and finds his uncle in the throne; add to that, spirit of his father comes to him demanding that he takes revenge of his murder with Claudius.

Setting of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is of the Victorian era, when the charm and glory of theatre was at its fullest. In those days, minor characters were given less importance, both work and dignity wise. These characters were largely limited to the role of page boy, or mere joker to carry out stupid little acts to entertain the viewers. But Stoppard successfully revived the roles of these characters into major and powerful beings, able to provide happiness and laughter to the audience, according to the need of time. The two great wars changed the concept of so-called noble and grass-root level men, and the importance of characters like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern came to forefront to ease the tense between the so-called high class and low class people.

Tom Stoppard noted for his ingenious use of language and ironic political metaphors, was associated with the continental European theater of the absurd, a movement that lamented the senselessness of the human condition. He fused the English tradition of the “comedy of manners” (a play that satirizes the customs of the upper classes) with contemporary social concerns by concentrating on the intricate and comical duplicities of everyday conversation within a wider, and often menacing, historical perspective.

Stoppard was educated in India and England. He worked as a journalist and as a writer for radio and television before coming into prominence with production of his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1966. Conceived as a satirical meditation on *Hamlet*, by English playwright William Shakespeare, Stoppard's play focuses on the sadly existential but frivolous meanderings of two *Hamlet's* marginal characters, a pair of quarrelsome courtiers.

Although sometimes criticized for the limited character development in his work, Stoppard used inventive linguistic displays and plot inversions to fuel the texts for his plays *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968), *Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor* (1977, with music by American pianist and composer André Previn), *The Real Thing* (1982), and *Hapgood* (1988). In addition, Stoppard adapted several foreign-language plays, and he wrote many radio scripts and motion-picture and television screenplays, including the motion-picture adaptation of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1990), which he also directed. His film script for *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) won an Academy Award for best original screenplay. He adapted the script for *Enigma* (2001) from a novel about the cracking of Germany's Enigma code during World War II (1939-1945).

Stoppard's interest in language and use of intellectual concepts remained apparent in his later plays. *Arcadia* (1993) uses modern concepts of randomness and complexity to examine the consequences for the present day of actions taken at a house party in 1809. *Indian Ink* (1995) looks at angel Ophelia among Americans and Indians amid discussions about the nature of art. *The Invention of Love* (1997) uses the vocabulary of textual analysis to imagine the inner life of English poet and classical scholar A. E. Housman. His ambitious trilogy, *The Coast of Utopia* (2002), chronicles the struggles of radicals in mid-19th century tsarist Russia. *Rock 'n' Roll* (2006) covers the years from 1968 to 1990 from two perspectives: anti-Communists in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and Marxists in Cambridge, England. In 1997 Stoppard received a knighthood.

Stoppard seems to take a deep intellectual pleasure in parallels, coincidences, and convergences that extends beyond a purely theatrical relish. In an age which has exhibited fascination with the often extraordinary patterning of mathematical and

metaphysical theory, he has emerged as an almost exemplary artist, one with an appeal to the pragmatic and the speculative alike. He is implosive, symmetrical, and logical. Andrew Sanders in his work *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* comments: "At their most brilliant, his plays are carefully plotted, logical tours which systematically find their ends their beginning" (625).

Minor Shakespearean characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet* are brought into focus. But, the story develops in different form. Stoppard develops the borrowed characters into his own distinct creations for very different dramatic effect. He reverses the role of the minor characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of *Hamlet* into the lead role. He attempts to search and establish the identity of these insignificant characters. Jill Lavension writes, "This is Stoppard's version of Shakespeare's play, a reduction to absurdity of every thing noble and weighty in *Hamlet*" (46-47).

Stoppard adopts a critical view of the way in which the central characters are handled by Shakespeare. In addition to this, Stoppard displays existential philosophy mixing it with his intellectuality, and to some extent critical overview on Shakespeare's indifferent dealing with courtiers and their concerns. Amidst the chaos and disorder, the two bewildered courtiers seek a fixed identification for themselves, and try to understand the meaning of events taking place rapidly around them. But they are killed finally. Stoppard contemplates over the grave and serious matters, but lightly and comically, as was the need of time.

G.S. Robinson argues, "Fantastic incidents are made to appear logical, while ordinary and apparently rational occurrences are presented as if they were absurd and inexplicable" (qtd. *The Theatre of Absurd* 49). Robinson points out the main technical device in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The presentation of the subject

matter is divided into two separate sequences of events or scenes-the 'on-stage' scenes which are dominated by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, differs from the 'off-stage' sequences of events which contains Stoppard's creative and critical endeavor, showing that the play contains thesis and antithesis in itself.

Many critics have frequently remarked on the similarities between Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are dead* and Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot* since their publication. Strong similarities do exist especially in characterization. Both plays present two little men, lacking knowledge and power, who are trying to grapple with a universe full of uncertainty. Guildenstern resembles Vladimir, or Didi, who is more head while Rosencrantz resembles Estragon, or Gogo, who is more bodily. Didi experiences anguish in waiting for Godot and tells Gogo that he perceives things which his friend misses. Guildenstern shows great strain and fear at the long run of "heads" at the beginning of the play, does most of the philosophizing, and is more mentally alert than Rosencrantz. Gogo is concerned with food, his feet, erections and sleep; he is a poet, has dreams but forgets about Godot.

Rosencrantz is indifferent to the run of heads. But is roused by the players' suggested pornographic exhibition; he is the first to voice and intuition of his own and Guildenstern's approaching death, and later, the first to voice acceptance. A very poor memory is characteristic of both Gogo and Rosencrantz. Didi and Guildenstern think they should remain waiting for Godot or waiting on the king. Gogo has difficulty in understanding how to respond to Pozzo and Lucky and Rosencrantz has even more difficulty in understanding how to play at questioning hamlet. The scene in which Guildenstern plays the nursemaid to Rosencrantz are reminiscent of the way Didi confronts and sings to Gogo; and Rosencrantz's plea to Guildenstern "Don't leave me!", when the player steps on his hand, seems an echo of Gogo's 'stay with me!' after

he has been beaten. Didi can become, irritated at Gogo's uncertainty and 'whining' while Guildenstern becomes increasingly angry about Rosencrantz's lack of perception and initiative and finally 'smashes him down. Stoppard has departed from Hamlet, where the friends are virtually indistinguishable to follow the dominant patterns of the characterization of the principals in *Waiting for Godot*.

However, Stoppard's two courtiers encounter a predicament and represent an experience essentially different from those of Beckett's two tramps. While Beckett's characters face interminable waiting, Stoppard's face sudden and inexplicable change. One of the most important distinctions is that in Stoppard's play *Godot* comes.

If Stoppard consciously depended on Beckett and expected his audience to be aware of the dependence, he was also presenting thought, action, and a theatrical experience distinctively different from that of *Waiting for Godot*. "Nothing to be done" "Nothing ever happens" are the cries of Didi and Gogo, but in Stoppard's play a great deal happens very rapidly. Time changes very heavy of the two modern tramps, but the two courtiers seldom refer to the passage of time, think time may be an illusion, and at times find "Never a moment's peace!" They do resort to games to pass the time and avoided facing their own predicament; however, they are at the same time trapped in the fast-moving, eventful, *Hamlet* plot and are becoming increasingly anxious about their entrapment. Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are chiefly concerned with freedom of action and are amazed that the "they" who chose them to go to England found them so important. Beckett's play, in short, is about the uncertainty and frustration felt by Didi and Gogo in their interminable waiting in limitless time while Stoppard's is about the uncertainty felt by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in trying to understand the origin and meaning of events, which they come to realize are carrying them to their deaths.

Thus, the situation in the text of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* both follows and deviates from the situation in *Waiting for Godot*. There are critics who tend to link these two works in terms of their situation and theme Edward Albert present his view on Stoppard as a follower of Beckett through the following lines:

The influence of Beckett is immediately seen in the play of Tom Stoppard Czech, who eventually settled in this country. His characters are suspended in isolation; they do nothing but philosophize; they know less about themselves than the audience does; words, acts, ideas all seem part of a stream of irrelevances. (595)

Here, Albert marks in Stoppard some absurdist elements like isolation of characters, the lack of knowledge about their origin, their pratfalls and irrelevant activities.

Similarly, Robinson further categorizes *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* under "an absurdist play on the basis of its presentation of deracinated world, timeless setting and minimal action" (15). As the absurdist world is uprooted and shows no specific time and setting and which includes no action in the traditional sense, Robinson leveling of Stoppard's play into the absurdist canon is appropriate in its own right. In the same view, Martin Esslin also finds some influence of Beckett on Stoppard. He explains: "*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* uses structural elements of *Waiting for Godot* under the limelight of minimal growth of characters" (434).

But there are other critics, who differ radically from the aforementioned views and believe that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* goes far beyond the limitation of the Theatre of the Absurd. They view that this play consists of the characters having an authentic choice, a clearly visible plot, the consistency of

language and visible action in the plot. Among the group of such critics, William E. Gruber clarifies:

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead rejects much of the absurdist cannot. It is not anti-literary, it does not abandon rational devices and discursive thought, but instead depends upon them, and finally it does not lament the loss of opportunities for meaning, even for heroism, because Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enjoy, albeit briefly, such potential. This play is comfortingly classical. (92)

He further argues that Stoppard does not simply grow out of the Theatre of Beckett. He employs characteristic features of the 'Theatre of the Absurd,' but the effect of this is to call the validity of absurdist Theatre into question. He says that Stoppard wants to frame questions concerning these diverse ways of understanding human action.

Furthermore, the trace of Elizabethan language in Stoppard's play is visible. From his view we can deduce that Stoppard has employed tradition that is not found in an absurdist plays of his contemporary time. He walks away from this concept and finds meaning even in trifle actions of humans. Stoppard in fact finds meaning in these trifle acts, that according to him, "are the essence of life and living" (38).

To understand Stoppard's play, it is very significant that we draw our attention to purpose of his writing of his creation of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

In the

Author's note, Stoppard writes:

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Whatever else it is a comedy, my intention was comic, and if the play had not turned out funny I would have considered that I had failed. Quite a lot of solemn and scholarly stuff has been written about it, which is fine and flattering,

but it is worth bearing in mind that among the productions staged all over the world, two were comparative failures, and both of these took the play very seriously indeed. (Author's note)

But unlike the view of Stoppard with regard to his own work, Adolf D. Klarmann comments on Beckett's play: "After all [. . .] Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a tragicomedy" [. . .] (99).

Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern want to live at any cost. Thus, we can conclude that Stoppard wants to invoke the essence of living even in adverse of life. He has far more life spirit than his contemporaries, like Beckett who found suicide as the ultimate escape. Stoppard's view seems to be exactly like that of the desire for life in Sisyphus in Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* in which Sisyphus challenges God by willingly lifting the rock for eternity. Similarly Stoppard challenges the nihilist absurdist view that suicide is preferable to life by making his character say: "Life in box is better than no life at all" (2.33).

Thus, the lowly characters are living for the sake of living. Their uniqueness is limited to the definition fixed to them high profile characters, which is the parody of living under the shadows of politics and power. The lowly characters are in no sense living a meaningful life, as they repeat the seemingly meaningless act, at least in the eyes of the resourceful ones. However, the essence of living life lies in simplicity – sans conspiracy and intrigues, which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are doing. They are the representative characters of the day- to-day common folks. As such, the present research will attempt to search meaning of living in an absurd world marred by political biasness through the existentialist approach.

II. Existentialism as Politics of Parody

Existentialism

Existentialism is a literary and philosophical movement that interprets the meaning of human existence. It also focuses on an individual and his relationship to the universe. It believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. Further it opposes the traditional belief which sees truth as objective and universal. According to this philosophy, truths are subjective, so what is true to one may be false to another. Whether a thing is true or false, it depends on the decision the individual makes. Thus it emphasizes on individual choice and freedom.

Existentialism is a philosophic movement begun in the 19th century that denies that the universe has any intrinsic meaning or purpose. It focuses on the essentiality for the people to take responsibility for their own actions and shape their own destinies. Defining the term, existentialism Simon Blackburn in *Dictionary of Philosophy* defines, [. . .] "the individual experience of choice and the absence of rational understanding of the universe with a consequent dread of sense of absurdity in human life" (129). Blackburn further opines that it is "the so-called rational understanding of the universe, invited by various philosophies, which has marred humans' want for a free and independent life" (130).

At first, people lost religious faith due to the enlightenment. As a result, Nietzsche announced the "Death of God." Similarly, the horrors of the First World War caused man to abandon faith in social progress. Many more people predicted the hope of radical social revolutions but Stalin changed the Soviet Union into a totalitarian tyranny. As a consequence, people no more believed in them. Likewise, during the Second World War, barbarism, mass murder and genocide compelled man to lose the faith. So, the horrific situation of the wars evoked the sense of despair,

alienation, anxiety, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. Spiritual emptiness spread in rich societies of Western Europe and the United States. As a result, people's formerly held certainties collapsed. Then, for man the world lost its meaning and stopped making sense. These resulted in man finding himself thrown in a universe that is frightening, illogical, and incoherent, disordered, chaotic, irrational or in a word 'absurd'. In such conditions, the belief in concepts like unity, morality, value, rationality, logicity, absolute truth and Christianity was shattered. This realization gave rise to the idea that human existence is meaningless. However, existentialist philosophers think they can exist in the world by creating meaning with the help of choice. Thus they believe that they can create value for their lives by making choices. Existentialism as a mode of thought believes that man has to choose and create meaning for his own existence in the world. So man is what he makes of himself. Man is free to do whatever he wants and responsible for whatever he makes. Thus existentialism talks about individual existence, freedom and choice.

Existentialists showed the human condition more precisely and clearly than any other school of thought. Spiritual emptiness senses of insecurity and cosmic absurdity were depicted by the writers. Man was given an existence without essence. Further, he was entrapped by morality, fear, uncertainty. There was no 'super being' or 'transcendental absolute to help fulfill then needs of human life. So, Richard Tarnas states that "existentialist thinkers concerned themselves with fundamental problems of human existence like-suffering, death, loneliness and dread, spiritual emptiness, sense of insecurity, cosmic absurdity, inability of human reason and tragic human condition" (389).

Existentialists deny the existence of God. Nietzsche's announcement 'God is dead' influenced existential philosophy. Hence, the belief among atheist existentialists

is that there is no God to determine our existence. First, we exist, and then we create our essence ourselves. We are what we make of ourselves. In that sense, we are in the state of becoming but not in the state of being. We are consciously choosing and creating ourselves because it is not possible for us to stay without choice. Even when we don't choose, we still choose by not choosing. In this context Tarnas say: "Event if I do not choose I have chosen not to choose" (149).

Existentialism is closely related with phenomenology which is a philosophical perspective and method established by German thinker Edmund Husserl. It emphasizes on the self or subjectivism. It studies human consciousness. The world is as it appears to us. So, it means it lays emphasis on subjectivism. Husserl talks about phenomenology in this way: "Phenomenology itself learns its proper function of transparently human living from an entire relationship 'self' [. . .] Phenomenology is not less than man's whole occupation with himself in the service of the universal reason" (qtd. in Tarnas 15). Thus phenomenology stresses individuality and subjectivism. It rejects the idea of the objective. There is no absolute thing in the world. Things are as they appear to us our senses.

The major themes of existentialism are existence, alienation, frustration, loneliness, anxiety, dread, awareness of death; suicide etc. Existentialist philosophers think that man is conscious and because of the consciousness he feels tragic, miserable, and lonely in the world.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher has criticized Western philosophy and Christianity. According to him, Western philosophy and Christianity both were corrupt since they taught abstractions. The Western education system tries to prepare the historically educated/learned man but historical knowledge doesn't serve life, rather it corrupts life. Then, people become purposeless. Such knowledge cannot

provide happiness to people because they become like pendulum in the chain of history whereas man has to face the present for happiness. For Nietzsche the education should be for the sake of human life and existence. In his essay, "On the Use and Abuse of History" he says that we need education for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act. According to him, history is useful only in so far as it serves living. (152).

He also doesn't believe in the thought of absolute truth that controls an individual. Man is the product of his own action from his choice. Since, God is Dead; there is nobody to govern an individual. So, he is the master of himself. For Nietzsche, as Blackburn comments in the *Dictionary of Philosophy*, "No moment is more important than the present in which one has the opportunity to make active choice that influence the character of the whole" (292).

He also denounces the existence of God and further says even if there is God, he is dead. Therefore, there is nobody to determine out existence. He also calls Christianity a shelter only for the weak, sick and disabled and at the same time it possesses a slave morality (912).

Nietzsche seems to be quite positive towards suicide because it is also one of the choices and individual makes. He takes the suicide is as a solution in some way. So, suicide is not surrender but a means to achieve goals. It also makes fulfillment. Thus he takes it positively.

Jean Paul Sartre emphasizes on individual freedom and responsibility. Robert Solomon says: "The central tenet of Sartre's existentialism is the freedom of human consciousness, freedom to act, freedom to value and freedom to make itself" (86). He also agrees "existence precedes the essence" In accordance with Sartre; we first exist,

appear on the scene, make choice/choose and create ourselves. It means we make ourselves what to be only after we exist. We create meaning in our life by making choices.

He also thinks that God doesn't exist but he opines that if there is God, he is useless. To support this idea, he states that existentialism isn't so aesthetic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that world change nothing" (51).

Though he frequently talks about freedom, his view towards it is negative. He supposes freedom as a curse but not as a boon for him, man is condemned to be free because one has to choose the route of life, he is responsible for his actions in life. So, life is determined by choice a person makes.

According to him there is no predetermining essence but one creates essence by choosing. So, existence is primary and the essence of existence is secondary. He argues that existence and freedom go together, however, the concept of freedom is determined the environment of factors motivating and determining existence. For Sartre, "freedom is existence and in it existence proceeds essence" (66). When he talks about freedom, he also states individual freedom relies upon the freedom of others. In this way, like most of the existentialists Sartre focuses on freedom of choice and personal responsibility conveying that there is no absolute power to control a man.

Existentialism could be best understood through the concept of absurd, first coined by Albert Camus to indicate the pathetic situation of Sisyphus, a legendary hero whose pursuit for achieving goal has been commented and analyzed by hundreds of scholars and critics. Sisyphus was entitled by God to place a round stone at the top of a hill, as a punishment. But, as the stone was round it was impossible for him to place it at the top. He knew well that his attempt was worthless and the job was

impossible but, he continued to do it every time he failed. His never dying pursuit of spirit has been termed as 'absurd task' by the Gods.

Similar is the condition of modern man. S/he is in an attempt to achieve each and every thing that comes to the sight, and hence is ruining life.

Nietzsche, too has termed the modern man desire as absurd, like that of Sisyphus. He used the term saying that Christianity was irrational and even absurd for the human beings, as it virtually ends the hope of men to the path of knowledge. Later, Nietzsche's idea appeared in literature as "Literature of the Absurd." After that this term/phrase began to be applied to refer to a number of works in drama and prose fiction that have commonly the theme/sense that the human condition is essentially absurd. After the Second World War, it emerged as a revolt against strong belief and values of traditional culture and literature. In fact, according to Nietzsche, "Earlier people assumed that human beings as completely rational creatures who lived in at least partially intelligible universe and are part of an ordered social structure and may be capable of bravery and dignity even in defeat" (1).

Parody

Parody, as a literary term is a composition that ridicules another composition by imitating and exaggeration of its content, structure, and style, accomplishing in words what the caricature achieves in drawing. Drawing is description of character that exaggerates traits of appearance of personality for comic effect. According to *Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* parody is "a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work of arts, ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by exaggerated mimicry" (185).

Parody is related to burlesque, an incongruous imitation; it is a variety of high burlesque that deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically

inappropriate subject. Parody is related to burlesque in its application of serious styles to ridiculous subjects, to satire in its punishment of eccentricities, and even to criticism in its analysis of style. The Greek dramatist Aristophane parodied the style of Aeschylus and Euripides in *Don Quixote*.

Parody is taken as an imitation to ridicule or to criticize. It is essential to evaluate parody in terms of irony and satire to get its right meaning. Blackburn defines parody in terms of satire. He writes:

Both parody and satire can be best described in terms of three features of irony: pretense, echoic mention, and the maintenance of multiple mental representations. We suggest that pretense is an important part of satire and that echoic mention is an important part of parody. Such discriminations are useful because distinction among text genres to have psychological significance. (97)

The effective of a parody knows his or her subject well; however, the parodist does not need to affect a pretension of ignorance. In fact, the parodist makes his or her familiarity with the original work obvious. To be effective, the parody criticizes or flatters.

Parody in modern day comes closer to political sarcasm. The politics of parody is what has made the modern men's life absurd. They are largely affected in the cross wars of the political leaders within the nation, and outside, as well. Politics makes man lowly and superior. Although politics tries to flatter every man to the height, but only for temporary period, and the selfishness of politics is over, a common man remains as where s\he was. One of the best creations of political parody is the work of Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*.

Camus' works express the central idea that human existence is absurd, due to the parody of politics. He also believes that man is free to give meaning to life, but is obstructed by the parody of politics. But when he makes choices, his choices lead to repetition and the repetition leads to the sense of absurdity. According to Camus, Sisyphus was given repetitive work that would remain forever a punishment because Sisyphus revolted against the gods. The task was that he had to roll a rock up the mountain top again and again because it rolls down to the bottom of the mountain. It was such a repetitive and purposeless as Sisyphus does. So, Camus came to realize a parallel between man's condition and Sisyphus' condition (66-67). He also has the sense that man chooses to exist give meaning/value to life. When he chooses, he makes repetition of things. Then, the repetition rouses the sense of consciousness and consciousness leads to the sense of absurdity.

Camus argues that the human condition is absurd. So, his search for purpose in the world is meaningless because the world has no meaning, value or ultimate truth. In this regard, M.H. Abrams referring to Camus says that human being is an isolated existent who is thrown into a strange world. S/he believes that the universe does not know why an individual is thrown into this strange world. S/he believes that the universe doesn't possess inherent truth, value or meaning. Human life moves from nothingness and moves toward nothingness. So, human existence is both anguished and absurd. Likewise, alluding Camus he says the universe has no secrets or truth similarly, man feels strange in the world. In this regard, he quotes from the *Myth of Sisyphus* in this way: "In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels strange. He is in an irremediable exile. [. . .] This divorce between man and his life and the actor and his setting constitute the feeling of absurdity" (1).

According to Camus, the universe is unknowable and uncertain. Though we try to understand the ultimate truth, through science, philosophy, religion and mathematics, it is inaccessible. So, it is absurd to search for the absolute truth (25). It means that human reason can't comprehend the universe properly. He further says that man tries to get something which is irrational. So, there is clash between human need and the unreasonable science of the world (reason) which gives birth to absurdity. Likewise, absurdity springs from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality; action and the world that transcends it as well as from their conformation. That's why; absurd is essentially a divorce.

Moreover, the absurd is constant encounter between man and his own obscurity (3). The absurd makes everything really free. In search for freedom, man creates different things that confine his own life. So, being free he is not really free. The absurd enlightens him because he knows there is no future for man and it gives inner freedom to him. It also indicates that he takes the absurd positively and opines that it helps us lead a real life. By accepting death, the absurd man feels released from everything outside. Death and the absurd are principles of the only reasonable freedom which a human heart can experience and live. So, what is important is not the best thing but the most living. The absurd and the extra life don't depend on man's will but on its death. So, death is the source of absurdity (59-61).

Camus says that man who by accepting the absurd does nothing for the eternal is the absurd man. He possesses the nostalgia. He likes his courage and reasoning. Courage teaches him to live without appeal and proceed with what he has. On the other hand, his reasoning informs him of his limitations. He can accept that one is not separated from God and the commandment; however he lives outside that god. He sees nothing in them but justification and at the same time he has nothing to justify.

So Camus concludes "absurd does not liberate but binds" (64). This shows that an absurd man is both courageous and reasonable and can live a happy life due to awareness of his situations.

Likewise, Camus talks about repetition by alluding to Don Juan's story. Don Juan goes from one woman to another for more satisfaction but he loves them with the same passion and each time with his whole self that he must repeat his gift and profound quest. Then, he gets the same type of satisfaction, nothing more than it.

Camus says that all existence for a man who turned away from eternal/death is a vast mime under the mask of the absurd. So, creation is a great mime. The work of art is also a kind of creation which is very monotonous. However, the creation is not the end, the meaning and the consolation of life because creating or not creating changes nothing. Therefore: Creation itself is absurd. People work and create for nothing. People know that that creation has no future. The absurd negates everything on the hand and glorifies them on the other. Because of absurd creation, man got revolt, freedom and diversity but later they will show their sheer futility (106).

Thus, he thinks that creation itself is absurd because it doesn't bring any change in our life.

Edmund Husserl says the universe is full of contradictions and nonsense. So it is a vast irrational (31). Simon du Pollock in *Albert Camus Existentialist or Absurdist* states that Camus might more properly be supposed an absurdist than existentialist. Pollock differentiates Camus from Sartre. He says Camus used the term 'absurdity' to refer to the human condition whereas Sartre used 'nausea' to denote it.

Camus views the denial of world to fulfill the desire of man. When man has high expectation but the world doesn't respond to them, then the absurd occur (15).

Martin Heidegger says human existence is foolish and irrational. Man is lost in the universe. Likewise, the consciousness of death is the main source of anxiety, and absurdity (28-29).

Martin Esslin talks about different kinds of meaning of absurd. According to him, it originally means 'out of harmony in a musical context. So, its dictionary meaning is 'out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, and illogical. But it may simply mean 'ridiculous' in common use. However, it is not the sense in which Albert Camus uses the word (23).

Esslin says that the *Theater of the Absurd* can be taken as a new combination of a number of ancient, even archaic traditions of literature and drama. The ancient tradition has been brought together in a new form in the *Theater of the Absurd*. The *Theater of the Absurd* has roots in the *mimus* of Greece and Rome. There was the tradition of miming and clowning. Similarly, the *commedia dell'arte* of Renaissance Italy also became a component of the movement known as the *Theatre of the Absurd*. Likewise, popular forms of theatre, like The Pantomime, The Musical Hall in Britain also contributed to it. The ancient convention of nonsense poetry also supported it to rise. In Greece and Rome, there was the tradition of dream and nightmare literature which gave rise to the new type of theater. Moreover, the allegorical and symbolic dramas of the medieval period known as the morality plays provided this movement with plenty of nourishment. It has also developed from the Spanish "auto Sacramental." In the same way, this anti-theatre movement has originated from the ancient tradition of fools and mad scenes in dreams of Shakespeare and other playwrights. Further, the more tradition of ritual drama also contributed to the theatre.

For Esslin, the 'Theatre of the Absurd' tries to make man aware of the ultimate realities of the condition. It also attempts to put but again in man the lost sense of cosmic wonder, to take him out of an existence which has become mechanical, trite (dull), complacent and deprived of dignity. It is a part of the ceaseless endeavor of artists of their time to destroy the wall of complacency and automatism. It also makes an attempt to reestablish consciousness of man's own situation when he is confronted with the ultimate reality of his conditions. So it fulfills a dual purpose and presents a two fold absurdity (400). This obviously shows that it tries to make man aware of ultimate realities of his condition by breaking the wall of complacency and automatism. Similarly, it also brings back the consciousness in man in order to face the harsh realities of life.

Esslin says that though the 'Theatre of the Absurd' appears to be grotesque, frivolous and irreverent, it performs the original and religious function of the theatre since it deals with the ultimate realities of the human condition, fundamental problems of life and death and breakdown of communication (402). Here, he thinks that the Theatre of the Absurd is a symbolic religion that deals with man's fundamental problems of life. Likewise Richard L Peck state that "the central idea of the theatre of the absurd is that if we break traditional views by abandoning logic and meaning, we can know the truth" (4).

Moreover, Esslin states that the 'Theatre of the Absurd' shows the audience with a picture of a disordered world that has lost its meaning and purpose called "an absurd world". The Theatre of the Absurd shows "the madness of the human condition and enables the audience to see his situation of grimness and despair. So, it works as a therapy. Then, he will be out of illusion, fears and anxieties. As a result, the individual will be able to face the harsh realities of world consciously" (414).

According to Esslin, the 'Theatre of the Absurd' expresses modern man's hard effort to accept the world where he lives. It also tries to make him encounter human condition as it really is. At the same time, it endeavors to free him from illusions that cause maladjustment and disappointment. Man in the world attempts to endure the loss of faith and moral certainties through mass entertainment, shallow material satisfaction, false explanation of reality and ideologies. However, the dignity of man lies in his ability to face the reality in all its meaninglessness, accept it freely, fearlessly, consciously and to laugh at it.

Martin Esslin says that absurdist playwrights regard themselves as lonely outsiders who being cut off and isolated from society live in their own personal world. Each of them deal with both subject matter and form in individual manner. All of them also discuss over own roots, sources and background in their personal ways.

Esslin says that the 'Theatre of the Absurd' talks about the stylistics aspect of plays without emphasizing the philosophical side (genus). He states: "Perhaps the most serious critical limitations of Mr. Esslin's otherwise excellent work, the Theatre of the Absurd is precisely this tendency to focus too quietly and exclusively on the stylistic breed worth stressing the philosophical genus" (3).

He opines that many of absurd plays from the beginning have circular structure and ending. The absurdist playwrights also say that it is impossible to motivate all human behavior. So, the audience in the absurd plays faces such actions or incident which has no motivation, such characters that are constantly moving and mostly such events which are irrational. Similarly, what's going to happen next cannot be predicted in such plays because like in traditional plays the action doesn't go logically and chronologically, rather it slowly develops complex patterns of the poetic

image. It indicates that it is not possible to motivate all human nature. So, they present unmotivated characters and irrational actions which create a pattern of poetic images.

Similarly, he also talks about the poetic image which is "complex, ambiguous, multidimensional, and multi-meaningful. He believes words are meaningless and all communication among human being is impossible" (128). So, interpretation is useless because we can't give the exact meaning. That's why it consists of the theme of incomprehensibility of a life's experience. As a result, "it dramatizes the futility and failure of human existence" (151). He opposes the elegant, logical construction of the well-made play, rather he demands for intensity, the gradual growth of psychological tension. To bring this about the author does not have to follow rules or restrictions. In this way, he is against the standard of traditional play.

Similarly, like Martin Esslin, William I. Oliver also discusses about absurdity and absurdist playwrights. He says absurdist playwrights believe that our existence is absurd because we are born without asking to be born; we die without seeking death and live between birth and death trapped with our body and reason. We have our senses, will and reason but can never perceive anything completely. Oliver states that all our creations are doomed to decay as we ourselves are destined to death. We create in order to see ourselves in some form of eternity but our creations become autonomous because of repetition. However, we can't find out it. So, the more we make efforts at definition and permanent distinction, the more we feel absurd. So, the only truth we have to accept is that we don't understand our life completely. Our sense of power, permanence and distinction is achieved when we give up reason. It is impossible for us to act efficiently, perceive accurately, and create anything definitely and permanently. It is impossible for us to stop acting as long as we live in the world. This is the very condition of human being called 'absurd'.

He says the context of absurd drama remains very much the same but only the style changes. So, absurd drama is not new but as old as farce. In fact, farce and tragedy are the double masks of absurdity. The absurdist dramatists think that the subject of farce is like that of the tragedies and their subject matter is the terrible or comical disclosure of man's absurdity, ignorance and impotence. The farce rouses laughter, removes our sympathy away and frees our cruelty. But tragedy causes tears and awakens our sympathy. On the other hand, the absurdist's of today mix up the qualities of farce and tragedy that make us laugh at that which hurts us most and weep at that which is most foolish in our nature.

Oliver says the absurdist is a thinker who accepts that the human condition is absurd. So, he knows his own absurdity very well. He thinks that realization of the absurdity is important for people to live life of reasonable expectation and to their important responsibility. If one recognizes absurdity, he in his life knows what is right to do and what not to do. If man doesn't know absurdity he is a puppet who is being dangled on the strings of dogma and illusion. It is a bitter discovery for all men and at the same time the only judgment that will rightly evaluate man's power of perception, action and success. It is ironically also only ground upon which man's mind can stand secure it clearly says that he takes the absurd positively because it helps man live a reasonable life by abandoning unnecessary strings of dogmas and illusions. The absurdist is a social farce also. He tries to lead his audience to the logical inference of absurdity for their good. He has to inform the audience that they must encounter the absurdity of their own existence so that they can be bold and courageous to face the difficulties of life. He has to show the audience the reasonable benefits of absurd living in order that people get convinced of giving up their bundles of dogmas, illusions and superstitions. Likewise, in Oliver's opinion:

The absurdist as a technician has to choose those devices which can convey his ideal and purpose indirectly. He can use expression, allegory or irony to express his ideas, in this way, the absurdist dramatist will search for such a form and style that first of all act as a disguise of his assertions rather than a direct and complete expression. In the same way, the ideal absurdist will never present his opinions in symbols and action which implies that the encounter with the absurdity is a nihilistic experience. (15)

Observation of all these ideas, we come to know that they all writers lay emphasis on meaninglessness, futility, irrationality, disorder, illogicality, foolishness and purposelessness of the human condition and universe.

Thus, the existent of a modern man; largely depends and is determined by the parody of politics. Politics is the theory of practice of government, especially the activities associated with governing, with obtaining legislative or executive power, or with forming and running organization connected with government. This practice of execution of legislative power is responsible to make a man meaningless, as in the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are mere puppet in satisfying the needs of the kings and nobles. But, in present day, even such futile person has meaning, because political parody has made every powerful ones absurd and meaningless.

III. Parody of Existentialism in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* questions the meaning of life and meaning from the lowly characters point of view. It takes its characters and setting from English playwright William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two courtiers appointed in service of Hamlet, the prince of England. Their role is limited to perform silly little acts to please the king and the prince. The role of the traditionally powerful characters like the King and the Noble courtiers including Hamlet is limited to few scenes of no particular importance in the play. However, the revival of these characters in the lead role in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* introduced a new trend of familiarizing with the sentiments of common folks.

Stoppard's play helps to reconsider the importance common men, who was in the Elizabethan and Victorian Era limited to mere a page boy, a joker, or a room attendant whose work was to please his/her masters. Their existence was hardly recognized in the plays. Rarely they enjoy a role in the lead, and if sometime they did it were due to the blessings of the so-called lead characters. Their actions were absurd, ridiculous and funny which rarely tried to go into the humane behavior, as is visible from the role of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet*.

The play begins with the image of two courtiers – Rosencrantz (hereafter Ros) and Guildenstern (hereafter Guil) tossing a coin. Guil is carrying a bag which is almost full and Ros's bag is almost empty. The reason being they are betting on the toss of a coin, in the manner, Guil – Head and Ros – Tail. They continue the game and every time, Guil announces "head" and keeps the coin in the bag. This act of seemingly no particular importance is repeated for 76 times and every time Ros declares 'tail' and lose. But it seems he has no feeling for the loss.

The game is followed by still more illogical talks. Guil claims that Ros should go and check his probability ratio, before he enters into the game, again. He says, "The law of averages, if I have got this right, means that if sex monkeys were thrown up in the air for long enough they would land on their tails about as often as they would land on their [. . .]" (13).

Common folks are born to praise and be amused at the bravery of the so-called high status people. Guil and Ros, the representative of commoners find amusement even in a normal act of fingernails growing after death. Ros (cutting his fingernails) says, "Another curious scientific phenomenon is the fact that the fingernails grow after death, as does the beard" (18). It is a natural phenomenon; however it amuses Guil and Ros, which is Stoppard's way of awakening the audience on their ignorance.

These characters are while playing the coin-tossing game; they remember that they had received a royal summons that demanded the courtiers to spy on Hamlet, the prince and later on to escort him in the voyage to England from Ellsinore, Denmark.

Stoppard's play directly employs many poetic lines from *Hamlet* in each act of his play. In the second act, Shakespeare's text intrudes more frequently and in shorter bits. Here we find maximum presence of the *Hamlet* scene to be accommodated in the plot of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. The third act takes place in the sea. In course of the sea voyage, the two courtiers find that the letter they are carrying with them demands the death of their old friend Hamlet from the hand of the English king. But they don't do anything to the letter to save him. They contemplate that sooner or later he will die. That is why, they think, there is no need to worry about his death. They accept Hamlet's death as a natural phenomenon. But later on, they find the contents of the letter have been replaced with the words that demand their own death.

Yet again, knowing their situation very clearly, they don't dare to destroy or change the letter to save their own lives too. They become cowards, consequently, inviting their own deaths. Thus, the play presents a linear structure in which two courtiers find their lives transformed as a result of the royal summons. Summoned by a messenger to the court of Elsinore, Ros and Guil await the completion of their roles in the plot.

Act one of Stoppard's play first poses a dilemma, defining, as it were, the conflict of the play as a struggle between two plots, between the story an individual (here, two individuals) wills for himself and the story the myth tells about him. Here the two texts seem most at odds, for him and the story the myth tells about him. Here the two texts seem most at odds, for *Hamlet* intervenes in two large chunks, each time unexpectedly, almost forcing its way on stage. And in the second act, the compositional pattern shifts with the frequent appearance of Shakespeare's text giving the sense as if the completed play were being broken down and assimilated by or accommodated to the play in making. In this act, we find the maximum presence of Hamlet materials, the increased pull of the myth. Thus, we witness the epitasis, the complication or the tying of the knot here. Between the growing design of *Hamlet* and in inter-textual freedom of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's discussions, there develops maximum tension, maximum interplay. Then, in the final act, the process whereby *Hamlet* the play is accommodated in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* seems completed. This act displays the famous sea voyage of Hamlet, for which no dramatic precedent exists. No lines from Shakespeare's play intrude here, for none is available. Hence, most of act three of Stoppard's play represents an undefined and unwritten zone. Here, Stoppard invites his characters to invent their history according to their will; he offers them alternatives to devise their own script.

In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* the off-stage material functions both as mystery and myth, the myth with its powerful implications of logic and design as in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. The juxtaposition of the *Hamlet* scene and the invented scene in Stoppard's play creates both a sense of the possibility of freedom and the tension of improbability of escape.

The setting of the play includes time and place in which the action occurs. It also refers to the scenery, the physical elements that appear on-stage to verify the author's stage direction. Very often, the setting of traditional play appears to be realistic, representing the day-to-day time and situation. Explaining the necessity of convincing setting, M.H. Abrahams quotes Aristotle's view as: "Tragedy should bear the unities of time and place as well as of action" (320). The requirement of this three-fold unity is based on the assumption that the play should create an illusion of reality in the audience. In other words, the play should mirror the social and individual activities in a convincing way.

But when we observe the setting of *Waiting for Godot* as such we notice that it is impossible in our day-to-day life situation. We do not find the situation in our life in which two men stay for ever on a country road beneath a bare tree. Only mad people may be there, not ordinary men or women. And the setting of the play implies lifelessness because the only tree remaining there is without leaves and the tramps often wish to commit suicide as *Modern world Drama: An Encyclopedia* by Myron Matlaw University New York mentions: "Stoppard's settings are spars and they usually insinuate a dying earth" 966).

The tramps have no life-like quality. The time is evening. The winter has ravaged all life on earth. The only one tree shown in the setting is bare. The tramps have nothing that is worth eating or life giving except some carrot. They are even

ready to eat the thrown bones. They are physically as well as mentally disabled. They always wish for death. Thus, this situation shows the dying earth. M.H. Abrams argues: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* rejects "realistic settings" (2). As Abrams' view implies, we find nothing convincing or life-like in the surroundings. Thus, the setting of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* evokes the sense of absurdity. It reminds us of the grotesque comic vision of Charlie Chaplin. It increases the feeling of isolation, alienation, frustration and desolation in the audience.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead presents a realistic setting. Its first and second acts are set in Elsinore in Denmark. And the third act is set in the sea. The ship is heading towards England. The situations do not cross the boundary of real life. Denmark, Elsinore and the court are places we actually can find on the map. The sea voyage to England also doesn't go out of the horizon of our normal experience.

Moreover, Stoppard's court is full of people with zest for life. It shows the picture of a court life where rulers fight for power and sometimes kill their kith and kin to establish themselves on the throne. It also mirrors the life of rulers who enjoy the performance of drama within their court. To sum up, with the exception of some absurd activities like coin-tossing, Stoppard's setting appears far more realistic than his contemporaries.

Stoppard uses direct description of scenes, with no exaggeration. He narrates his play with no courtly language. In the opening lines of Act I, he writes, "Two Elizabethans passing the time in a place without any visible character" (11) with no added flavor or jest like that of the language of the common people.

The primary aim of this direct and precise setting and language is, as Stoppard aims his play for the commoners. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* has been used to create a situation in which an idea is established and then shattered, producing

a new meaning. Tarnas argues: "The argument behind *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is not complex; its strength lies precisely in the skill with which Stoppard has blended humor with metaphysical inquire" (16). The characters in Stoppard's play often quote philosophy of different modes: empiricism, Socrates' philosophy, Chinese philosophy, etc. hence speaking philosophical language. The following excerpt presents Guildenstern when he quotes Socrates, "As Socrates so philosophically put it, since we don't what death is, it is illogical to fear it. It might be-very nice" (353).

Though, Stoppard also employs non-verbal elements as it is impossible to totally get rid of them, he does so less frequently and less intensely. Stoppard's dominant characteristic feature in his use of language is the juxtaposition of blank verses, philosophical prose and absurdist language is the juxtaposition of blank verses, philosophical prose and absurdist language so that it can create a collision between the three and suspend the authenticity of the incommunicable spirit of the absurdist language as the other two are full of communicable spirits. As Stoppard intermingles the logical with the absurd and fantastic incidents are made to appear logical, while ordinary and apparently rational occurrences are presented as if they were absurd and inexplicable as in the following dialogue:

Guil: Go where?

Ros: To England?

Guil: England! That is a dead end I never believed in it anyway.

Ros: All we've got to do is make our report and that'll be that surely.

Guil: I don't believe it- a shore, a harbor, say-and we get off and we

stop someone and say- where's the king? And he says, oh, you

follow that road there and take the first left and (furiously) I

don't believe any of it. (359)

In the given dialogue the simple event of going to England is treated in absurd way using words to create vague situation. The remark made by Rosencrantz "that'll be that" adds ambiguity and vagueness to the dialogue. The dashes and casual words in Guildenstern's speech bear a comical tone. A very simple event is presented in illogical and complex way so that the message the utterance is supposed to convey gets scattered within and outside the linguistic horizon. But Stoppard doesn't become consistent in his tone and treatment of language as Beckett does. He vacillates between logical statements and absurdist undercurrents. He employs Elizabethan poetry on the one hand, but doesn't hesitate to resort to the absurdist babbling of Stoppard on the other.

Thus, we find with Stoppard that Elizabethan Poetry, modern absurdist prose and philosophical statements quoted from different philosophers are juxtaposed in the text to shatter the idea that what Beckett thought about language is not the authentic feature of language. Stoppard uses poetry as well as philosophy with the absurdist babbling so that the authenticity of the absurdist concept of language can be questioned with the incompatibility in the juxtaposition of the three where the distorted and caricatured form of absurdist language loses its significance in comparison with the other two. Victor Chan writes that language in *Waiting for Godot* is not a cohesive force, a bond linking civilized man. Rather, it is the ultimate entropic force, isolating each man in a vacuum of words. Man becomes a prisoner of his own inability to communicate and of society's inability to communicate with him (40). Thus, such degenerating language can have no genuine significance in connection with the language of poetry and philosophy that is full of meanings and significance in the world.

Encyclopedia of World Drama New York mentions that fundamental voice in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is actually the device of a poet working in the French symbolic tradition that attempted to close the gap between language and music" (156). By using imagery rhythm, suggestion, pauses, and eventually the sound of silence itself, Stoppard appeals directly to our senses and emotions with the result that his message is often felt without being completely understood. Thus, we can say that Stoppard's play is to be felt, not to be understood. The agony of living is a world, where people are left with no choice but to adapt to silly little things for living is to be felt deeper inside rather than understood, externally.

That's why, nearly one quarter of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is presented in the form of questions, pointless repetitions, and clichés. M. H. Abrams comments on Stoppard plays are "lucid but the dialogue is eddying and pointless and often funny, and pratfalls and other modes of slapstick are used to project the alienation and tragic anguish of human existence" (2). Here, Abrams implies that the sterile and nonsensical language use in play evokes and increases the absurd feeling within us. We feel alienated and helpless while going through his play. In the same manner, Neil Sammells writes that perhaps no work repeats an obsolete device in a more, incongruous context than Stoppard's play, in which "hackneyed rhetoric of domestic melodrama are relived by characters thrust into sporadic speech by probing, unnamable light" (7). The implication of Sammells' view is that Stoppard employs outdated devices in unsuitable contexts, consequently destroying the communicability of the language in its own right. Thus, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* mocks or rather demolishes all of our myths of meanings, using language against itself so as to prevent it from disguising their radical vulnerability.

Stoppard also has a central message coming out of his contradiction, meaning presenting minor characters in the form of central characters. He praises the concept of language and shows through language itself, a man must be accountable and active enough to take the responsibility for him. Our existence has a serious effect of the choices we make. He emphasizes responsibility and action through his play. Ronald Hayman in *British Theatre since 1955* clarifies Stoppard's view on the need of action thus:

By putting modern speech patterns into their mouths and juxtaposing the comic prose scenes with sequences of Shakespeare's tragedy, Stoppard makes modern clichés appear to be indicative of cowardice and a slow wittedness, in contrast to the contrast unfavorable with both Hamlet's courage and his language. (26)

In addition to the difference mentioned above, Beckett's text abounds with Biblical allusions but they don't produce the redeeming spirit in readers. Rather, they usually create humor by rapid shifts from the divine to the secular. They accomplish two things: firstly, introduce the play's central theme that life is full of hellish suffering and secondly, establishes a tone of cynical humor which is heard throughout the play.

For example:

Ros: That's it, then is it?

No answer. He looks out front.

The sun's going down. [. . .]

Not that it makes any difference.

Pause.

What was it all about? When did it begin?

Pause. No answer.

Couldn't we just stay put? I mean no one is going to come on
and drag us off . . . They'll just have to wait. We're still young .
. . fit . . . we've got years . . .

Pause. No answer.

Guil: I can't remember.

Ros pulls himself together. (125)

Here the dialogue has a humorous tone, which is produced out of Ros's view. He uses words like we are still young, fit and has years, which shows that people are random old and worn out. This is a cynical humor to keep them active in this inactive and meaningless world.

People go here and there for redemption or to praise or worship God by which they believe they become happy on earth and hereafter for eternity. But Guil and Ros take such a serious and pious place for just quenching their passion. They go here and there and everywhere for a corporal celebration. He cannot experience the piety of being called the sanctity of humans.

We rarely find Biblical elements in Stoppard's text. His motto is just to establish a point that human beings must make a choice that determines that he becomes, not to criticize or condemn any religious authority. He is silent in the issue of God or ethics. It is true in the case of common folks, as they have neither, religion or ethic. However, the presentation of his view is in a light and comical tone.

Commenting on Stoppard's play, John Weightman says, "the whole play is just intellectual fooling around, with occasional stabs of seriousness" (74).

Whenever Stoppard's play turns metaphysical, which is frequent, it turns spurious, particularly in the author's recurrent discourses upon death: "Death is not romantic . . . and death is not a game which will soon be over . . . death is no anything

. . . death is no. It's the absence of present, nothing more . . . the endless time of never coming back" (360). This sort of thing is squeezed out throughout the play; the gravity of the subject never quite overcoming the banality of its expression: "The only beginning is birth and the only end is death if you can't count on that, what you can count on the casual statement "if you can't count on that, what you can count on" (116)? It demolishes the serious tone of the metaphysical truth of birth and death.

For these characters seriousness of death and birth are as like normal other day happenings. They live their life, like nothing else could bother them. As they continue to die for other, like in war, which is invited by someone else and for some other's benefit. Expression of life and death by these characters, and their similarity with silly little acts Guil and Ros perform is depicted brilliantly in the following manner:

Ros: I'm going.

Ros pulls his cloak round him. Guil ignores him. Without confidence Ros heads upstage. He looks out and comes back quickly. He's coming.

Guil: What's he doing?

Ros: Nothing.

Guil: He must be doing something.

Ros: Walking.

Guil: On his hands.

Ros: No, on his feet.

Guil: Stark naked?

Ros: Fully dressed.

Guil: Selling toffee apples?

Ros: Not that I noticed.

Guil: You could be wrong?

Ros: I don't think so. (74)

Here, phrases like fully dressed, naked; walking on hands, foot; selling toffee apples, etc represent absurdity. In precise words, these characters and their lives are limited to these little acts, that why the politicians and the so-called high class people use and throw them, whenever they want.

Taking this presentation as the means of exposing reality of the common folks, Hayman in his work *British Theatre since 1955*, writes:

Stoppard's originality as a dramatist depends partly on his anti theatrical images to express his poetic vision. Stoppard is less a poet and, as such is less immune to the appeal of spectacular visual effects. However, it is this strategy that appeals as realistic to the viewers as they find them one among these day-to-day characters. (42)

In this excerpt, it is implied that Beckett emphasizes on expression of anguish or tortured feeling through his poetic spirit, whereas Stoppard allows his play to have strong visual effects. His play is more like a play in its own right than being like poetry, as, we sometime find in Beckett's play. His play consists of play within play, consequently giving emphasis on action unlike the passivity of Beckett's characters. The courtiers and the player, the leader of the tragedians speak the modern pattern of language when they are left alone in the off stage scenes and their use of contemporary words or phrases momentarily free them from the shackles of the Shakespeare universe. But they speak like Shakespeare's characters when they find themselves in the world of Hamlet.

There are many similarities in characterization of *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Beckett's anguished clowns are barely individualized. Few

can articulate their suffering; none can locate its source. They are afflicted, enduring infirmity, hunger, assault, loneliness, impotence and a sense of the void. They have created games to distract themselves from their hopelessness. Like Shakespeare's characters Stoppard's are also bewildered. They also don't know their origin. They become play-things of time and situation which seem beyond their control. Their talk, gestures, and activities are almost like that of Beckett's tramps. They toss coins to kill time and the most interesting thing is they stick to the same point (tail) for every time, though they know that the probability of tail is almost impossible. They play king and pass decrees to avoid the monotony of actionlessness, which are similar to that of tramps activities like playing a tree and making ceaseless pratfalls throughout the play.

But in spite of these and many other obvious similar features, there are many differences between them, which play a dominant role for the outcome of this study. Stoppard's characters are most lifelike than Shakespeare. His courtiers' wish for life is common to all human beings because each and every normal human being first wants to live, but Shakespeare's characters love their death, not life as Hamlet. Stoppard employs fairly plausible characters for his real interest is in how individuals survive in an irrational world. This is evident in the play, when he makes the clowns of Shakespeare as the hero of his play. Revealing the desire for life Rosencrantz after receiving the death warrants says: "We are still young fit . . . we've got years . . . we have done nothing wrong! We didn't harm anyone. Did we?" (119). He feels they have been unjustly trapped in death. He feels they are still full of youthful spirit, desire for life. He thinks they are still fit and fine to struggle on earth. He sees no reason behind their predicament. But they are forced to die due to the pull of the myth, the *Hamlet* plot.

On the contrary, Shakespeare's characters are real heroes, are so, we call them; as they wish for death. They have a mission to kill and die, they have a conspiracy against life, and they are in search of truth and meaning. Whereas, Stoppard's courtiers are intellectually rather than psychologically compel. Guildenstern quotes a Chinese philosopher of Tang dynasty, "A philosopher dreamed he was a butterfly, and from that moment he was never quite sure that he was not a butterfly dreaming it was Chinese philosopher" (78). Here the intellectual complexity is apparent. The philosopher's reasoning is confused consequently causing a problem in the identity itself. He is not sure who he is whether a butterfly or a man.

But instead of such complexity in rational power, Stoppard's tramps are psychologically complex. Guil says, "Death followed eternity . . . the worst of both worlds. It is terrible thought" (72). They know death is reality, as Guil say it as eternity. The awareness of the fact of life and death, however, still living like meaningless makes them the real heroes for the normal man. It is only a normal character, who despite all odds can assemble the tits and bits and live a fuller life. On the contrary, Hamlet finds meaning in death, as despite all his greatness, he plans to know the truth, and somehow avenge the killer of his father. He does not give a damn, what happens to his beloved – Ophelia, or even his faithful followers.

The principal characters in, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* are not bored of a void of endless time and space. They take it as a challenge and find meaning in it. They find meaning in all these to live and lead even, fuller life. Their existence is within this voidness. However, Stoppard's courtiers are killed in spite of their desire for life.

Stoppard's characters are victims of accidental calamities which threaten and occasionally destroy them. These characters are externally suffering and there is no

way out of it and they are living in the death-in-life situation. Guildenstern reads the letter that demands their death, "As England is Denmark's faithful tributary . . . as love between them like the palm might flourish, etcetera . . . that on the knowing of this content, without delay of any kind, should those bearers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, put to sudden death" (3.59).

However, Stoppards' two courtiers in fact are not sniveling, powerless victims of time and circumstance, and their story does not illustrate the baffling absurdity or the blind fatality that has sometimes been said to arrange their lives. It is their inability to choose rightly which the cause of their death is. Their playing is not the aimless play of Beckett's two tramps with which it has been compared but a play obviously freighted (transported) with imminent peril which was the result of their wrong choice, their choice to be cowards.

Thus, it is clear that for Guil and Ros past, present and future are quite the same. Ros and Guil experience a 'future' very different from their past and what frightens them that they will both die but that only one might die, leaving the other to live alone. Thus, lone survival is a punishment for them. Upon knowing their warrant of death, they are more scared of dying alone, rather than dying. Like most lowly characters, who live in community, and for the sake of community, so are Guil and Ros, who express their anxiety on dying alone, as follows:

Ros: He said we can go. Cross my heart.

Guil: I like to know where I am. Even if I didn't know where I am, I like to know that. If we go there's no knowing.

Ros: Knowing what.

Guil: If we'll ever come back.

Ros: We don't want to come back.

Guil: That may very well be true, but do we want to go?

Ros: We'll be free.

Guil: I don't know, it's the same sky. (47)

The philosophy for these characters is being together, unlike the so-called successful and powerful characters. Stoppard's courtiers want to live even in the midst of challenges, which are clearly revealed in their desire that they prefer life even in the box rather than death.

In this context of this philosophy of living together and dying together, Hayman writes, "Stoppard is less angst ridden, and more content to take his earrings for the human existence in being together" (42). Thus, Hayman's view points to a difference of philosophy especially in terms of their views on human existence. The powerful one takes human existence and its suffering very lightly and the latter seriously. The former sees some way out of suffering or sees some meaning within the universe which is possible only to a man of action or to a responsible person. Who can act as per the demand of the situation to maintain his existence?

Remarking on the philosophy of Stoppard, Abrams argues that "Stoppard wants to reveal, the meaning of existence within the underling "abyss" or "void" or "nothingness" on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended" (168). Abraham's view implies that for Stoppard, now all the concepts like human rationality, God, morality, unity, coherence, ideal, essence, transcendental truth, etc. have no significance at all. They no longer can work as a solution to get rid of the constant suffering of existence. They are the illusions which now have been revealed in their naked forms. Now what man can see is only the naked reality, a bare universe, an indifferent nature. Everything has been tried but nothing satisfied.

The undefined enemy is deeply sinister in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Their enemies indeed have their whole predicament, and can be seen in quite different terms, as in *Hamlet*. Due to lack of any recourse for their suffering in Stoppard's play, unlike audience, his are forced to remain independent, facing the oppressive weight of his characters' experiences and failures.

Andrew Sanders sees Stoppard's faith in traditional logic that determines one's like. He writes: "However arbitrary life might appear to be, logic is relentless and the preexistent and inescapable pattern of *Hamlet* determines that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's strutting and fretting must end, like real life with death" (625). Sanders impels that logic is constant in spite of the external arbitrariness of life as the hamlet pattern guides the fates of the courtiers. The following excerpt in which Guildenstern passes his comment on the naked performance of Alfred further clarifies Stoppard's faith in tradition. Guild says: "No enigma, no dignity, nothing classical, portentous, only this comic pornographer and a rabble of prostitutes . . ." (19). His view implies that Stoppard still aspires for some traditional rules and logic. Later on, Ros also says: "I want a good story, with a beginning middle and end" (23). Further Guildenstern adds: "I'd prefer art to mirror life" (23). Here all these statements imply Stoppard's deep-rooted faith in traditional cannon, logic and rule making him nearer to the common folks. He cannot totally cut off ties from radiation. Thus, he sees the solution to existing problems in revival of the traditional logic through courtiers like Guil and Ros, who are together during life and want to so, even after death; who find meaning in being togetherness. As when they are left on a boat to die, we find their willingness to be united even after death:

Guil: (turning on him furiously): Why don't you say something original? No wonder the whole thing is so stagnant! You don't take me up on anything – you just repeat it in a different order.

Ros: I can't think of original. I'm only good in support, in life or after. (104)

Stoppard shows the essence of living a life in unity, which is present only in the simplicity of meek and weak people. It is not possible in the world, dominant by ruthless power, like that of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Thus, we can say that leading a life is to live to the fullest, in whatever essence it means; might be through the mere tossing of coin, if one finds pleasure in it.

Meaning of life does not only lie in the so-called use of power of politics, but also in simplicity. In terms of human existence to the extent where one surrenders to each other in life and in death, Stoppard is optimistic as for him it is the real living.

Stoppard focuses on *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* life is of equal importance and value to all people, despite class and status. The politics of power may focus and highlight on living of the so-called high class people, however, all the lowly commoner also have their life and dignity, and in most cases it is more meaningful than those of the high profile ones.

IV. Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* the present researcher has come to a conclusion that the essence of life is not deterred by the power of politics. A common man also has to face hurdle and hardships in life; however, it is unjustified to say that only the so-called powerful people only have problems and worries. The essence of life of minor human beings should be judged not on the basis of power, but on what level s/he has contributed to the society.

Ros and Guil are two insignificant courtiers at the service of prince Hamlet of England, during the Elizabethan era. They are seemingly meaningless characters, who are entitled with silly little jobs, like to please the King, or spy on prince Hamlet. However, the revival of these characters in to the central characters by Stoppard has changed the meaning of not only these characters but also has glorified the essence of living of the common folks through these normal characters.

Guil and Ros perform silly little acts like tossing a coin, and betting either for tail forever, or for head continuously, which shows how the politics has made the normal man, mere into a puppet, i.e. to please the so-called resourceful characters. However, Stoppard highlighted these characters into the prominent figures and even in the trivial acts they perform, he finds meaning. The traditional powerful characters are given small and insignificant roles, which reflect that the so-called powerful ones also are insignificant to the common folks. It is a further proof that every character has its own importance, whether powerful or meek. The essence of living cannot be determined by the politically powerful figures. As every human have their own significance of living and life, so there is practically no difference between the so-called powerful and the meek.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead is the glory of a common person, whose importance was challenged and diminished in to puppet, or mere an instrument for the pleasure of the so-called powerful figures. They were made to perform caricature and obey their order at all times, just to make them happy and in the process their own self identity and respect was ignored.

The play is the glorification of a common man's activities, during the crisis era of 1960s. It is an attempt to search for pleasure and identity even in small and trivial thing; we common folks perform each day. Stoppard aims to rejuvenate the essence of living and life, by presenting the plot from the supposing insignificant humans view point.

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