PARODY AND THE PLAY:

A STUDY OF SELECTED PLAYS OF TOM STOPPARD

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I Nelly Vanlalliani Tochhong, hereby, declare that the subject of the thesis **Parody and the Play: A Study of Selected Plays of Tom Stoppard***, is the record of work done by me, that the content of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university or institute.*

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C O N T E N T S

Chapter I: Introduction.

Thomas Straussler (Stoppard) one of the most prominent British writers was born in Zlin, Czechoslovakia on 3rd July 1939. According to Nazi racial laws there was 'Jewish Blood' in the family. His father was transferred to Singapore in 1939, taking his family with him. When the Japanese invaded that city in 1942, the women and children were taken to India. Dr. Straussler stayed behind and was killed. Thomas attended an American boarding school in Darjeeling. In 1945 his mother married Kenneth Stoppard, a British Army Major, and both of her sons took his name. They then went to England, where Stoppard's step father worked in a machine tool industry. Thomas Stoppard continued his education at a preparatory school in Yorkshire.

At the age of 17, he felt he had had enough schooling and became first a reporter and then a critic for the Western Daily Press of Bristol from 1958 to 1960. Stoppard then worked as a freelance reporter from 1960 to 1963. During these years he experimented with writing short stories and plays. In 1962 he moved to London in order to be closer to the center of the publishing and theatrical works in the United Kingdom. He was appointed C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) in 1978, and Knighted in 1997.

Tom Stoppard's works can be divided into two broad categories, works for theater and works for radio, film and television. Stoppard has written 22 theater plays, 7 radio plays, 10 television plays, 11 adaptations, 6 screenplays and a novel.

However the present thesis proposes to have an in-depth study of ten selected theater plays of the playwright such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1968), Enter a Free Man (1968), After Margritte (1970), Jumpers (1972), Travesties (1974), Dirty Linen and New-found-land (1976), Every Good Boy Deserves Favour (1979), Dogg's Hamlet (1979), Cahoot's Macbeth (1980), Arcadia (1993).*

In the literary world Tom Stoppard has won many achievements in life including awards like Ford Grant, 1964; John Whiting Award, 1967; Evening Standard Award, 1967, 1973, 1975, 1979, 1983, 1997; Italia prize for radio play, 1968; Tony Award, 1968, 1976, 1984; New York Drama Critics Circle Award, 1968, 1976, 1984; Shakespeare Prize (Hamburg), 1979; Outer Circle award, 1984; Drama Desk Award, 1984. He even achieved honorary degrees from Leeds University in 1980 and York University in 1984.

Stoppard like Pinter has evolved from the modernist tradition of English drama after Samuel Beckett. Both Stoppard and Pinter have gone beyond Beckett in their characterization and style. With Peter Shaffer and Edward Bond, Tom Stoppard forms a circle dominating the National Theater in Britain; however, unlike them and unlike the new social realists, mostly his esteemed near-contemporaries such as Behan, Delaney, Livings, Arden, McGrath, Osborne and Wesker, Stoppard shows his affinities with Beckett and Pinter for the kinds of metaphysical questions explored intellectually in his plays above social issues. Sometimes, Eliot's 'Prufrock' seems more to characterize his own intellectual inclinations, in the sense that Prufrock lives absurdity of life and intellectual uncertainties in transcending lurking incompatibilities between individual ability and social complexity, knowledge and reality, logic and chance. Such incompatibilities form the central

dramatic interest, which Stoppard engages with powers of wit and imagination at his command.

In his major plays Stoppard emerges as an intellectual and entertaining parodist. Parody has a seminal place in Stoppard's dramatic art and theatrical performance, to say the least. Moreover, an energetic sense of play (playfulness) is insistent in Stoppard the parodist. The kind of parody Stoppard sensitively apprehends may be underlined as postmodern. According to Cuddon, parody means "the imitative use of words, style, attitude, tone and ideas of an author in such a way as to make them ridiculous". The origins of parody seem to be very ancient. Hegemon was supposed to have been "the first man to introduce parody in the theater, in the 5th Century B.C." Aristotle has referred to it in *Poetics*, and attributed "its invention to Hegemon of Thasos who used an epic style to represent men as being inferior to what they are in real life." [1] Commenting on Quintilian's (c.35AD – after 96 AD) conception of parody derived from 'songs sung in imitation of others' (reminiscent of Homeric *parodoi* versus rhapsodists), Householder suggests, the basic sense of parody would designate "singing in imitation, singing with a slight change [e.g., of subject-matter]"[2]

Rose notes that Aristophanes' *Frogs* has "the ironic doubling of Hercules in the imitation made of him by Dionysos, who then confronts a stage Hercules face to face as in a distorting mirror so that the audience can compare – and laugh over – images of both model and parodic distortion together."[3] The word parody has been first used by Ben Jonson in his play *Every Man in His Humour* in 1598: "A Parodie, a parodie! To make it absurder than it was."[4] John Dryden in 1693 explained parody

as a word commonly used for recreation. In the contemporary world parody may mean a work of mockery for the means of humorous imitation.

Parody has been elevated as one of the most delegated artistic device, one of the agents of artistic creation and innovation. Greek writers have labeled parody as elements of a work reused but not necessarily ridiculed. In a broader sense there may be inclinations towards the use of other intentions other than ridicule. In the Eighteenth Century Pope and Dryden used the dominant mode of satire to ridicule social realities. The 20th Century parody uses parody as a weapon to target something else not only the parodied text alone. The artists of the postmodernist period move towards recontextualizing, connecting the past while registering differences brought by modernity.

Parody can in a wider sense be perceived as an imitation much like plagiarism, this comes into our thoughts as soon as the word parody rings in our ears. In the literary world it is very different to what the dictionary word 'parody' implies. Artists or performers paint or perform their acts with relation to their predecessors, a painter makes a master piece with what he has already acquired through vision which could be from the past events or from what he has already perceived from the painters that he admires this would be the same with performers on stage or offstage or in any case with anybody. Parody in the other sense would not be imitating each and everything, rather it holds towards the implications that the artist has his own way of molding and relating the original works of his predecessors. Parody can be usually achieved by the overemphasis of certain traits, using more or less the same technique as that of the cartoon caricaturist; in fact, it is

a kind of satirical mimicry. To Margaret Rose in her *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern (1993)* the ambivalent nature of parody's politics has a strong appeal, whose nature as subversive or counter-subversive cannot be fixed in abstraction without its contextual applications. She finds parody not as essentially agnostic or benign but both critical of and sympathetic to its targets, texts, and contexts.[5] The parodist in the partial imitation or evocation of another work reworks in a newly disjunctive, comic manner, which would establish "the ambivalence of the parodist's attitude to the object of criticism in the structure of the parody text. Unlike satire, the parody makes the 'victim', or object of its attack a part of its own structure." Thus, the specific technique of parody engages "refunctioning a quoted text."[6] Considering "the unique multiplicity of codes" used in parody, Rose explains:

> […]the ability of the parodist [is] to be not only both satiric and ironic, but, in instances, to combine both the 'engaged' and imaginative literature in the one work. In its most sophisticated form, the parody, moreover, is both synthetic and analytic and diachronic and synchronic in its analysis of the work it quotes, in that it is able to evoke a past work and its reception and link it with other analyses and audiences.[7]

Margaret Rose comes to note that since the 1970s, postmodern parody by returning from the late-modern parody, i.e., from either comic or metafictional style, moves to encompass "in a positive manner both humor and metafictional complexity."[8] Postmodern parody has shifted from its mode as "critique" to that as "innovation", in other words, has become more "complex"[9] because of its intertextual potential. Some of these insights are useful to reflect some of the characteristics of Stoppard's

intellectual parodies. In *Parody /Metafiction*, she has viewed another essential characteristic, i.e., self-parody and observed:

> The problems of self-reference in metafiction ... have shown metafictional parody to imply criticism of itself, and a form of 'self-parody' in parodying other fictions."[10]

The self-reflexive insight into metafiction holds equally relevant to intertextual plays of Stoppard.

As a branch of satire, the purpose of parody may be corrective as well as derisive. Linda Hutcheon's idea comes helpful in clarifying the term parody. In *A Theory of Parody (1984)*, she says, "Parody is repetition, but repetition that includes difference. It is imitation with critical ironic distance, whose irony can cut both ways."[11] She feels that parody despite being an imitative art is difficult to accomplish well. The author has to maintain a subtle balance between close affinity to the original text and the deliberate contortion of its principal characteristics. It is, therefore, this form of literary art, which is likely to be successful only in the hands of creative writers and master craftsmen. Further she holds, "Overtly imitating art more than life, parody self-consciously and self-critically points us to its own nature."[12] Poirier too comments on the similar line, "(self-parody) ...calls into question not any particular literary structure so much as the enterprise, the activity itself of creating any literary form."[13]

Parody would mean, as Linda Hutcheon says, "a formal or structural relation between two texts." Literature has its own relations, whether it be a work of art or rather an event. She goes on to say:

> Texts do not generate anything – until they are perceived and interpreted. For instance, without the implied existence of a reader, written texts remain collections of black marks on white pages. Modern art, especially metafiction, has been very aware of this basic fact of aesthetic actualization.[14]

Parody makes for an entire discourse of a text, it has to do with the perspectives of the writer, the reader and the interrelations between the two and the text. Towards this postmodernist view Linda Hutcheon further observes:

> The framework in which my definition of parody does situate itself, unavoidably, is that of the forms of textual imitation and appropriation…But imitation in such contexts often meant pastiche or parody…However, it seems to me that parody does seek differentiation in its relationship to its model ; pastiche operates more by similarity and correspondence.[15]

Theodor Verweyen has categorized parody into two types, "those that define it in terms of its comic nature and those that prefer to stress its critical function. What is common to both views, however, is the concept of ridicule."[16] Shakespeare is well known for his well-made Romantic Comedies and Sheridan for his sentimental dramas. George Bernard Shaw has been the acclaimed master of the comedies of ideas. Shaw in *Major Barbara* has in fact developed a definite debate; "that art, culture, society and religion must gapple with and control the brutal realities of the world, or be controlled by them."[17] Unlike Shaw, Stoppard does not press on developing on a narrative line into a message, but at the same time he does

suggest the ideas are not unimportant. While Stoppard is intensely concerned with the comedy of ideas especially in *Travesties*; he shows carefully that the ideas scarcely progress, signifying thereby that in real life we have got nowhere. Shaw in well-made comedies, he does not believe in the rhetorical process of argument to win a hearing; on the other hand, he has the artistic sense to present the ideas through his own outstanding gift of jugglery for theatrical surprise. Stoppard's intertextuality has been artistic in the sense that it brings forth the inter relation between texts like *Hamlet* and *Waiting for Godot* in his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Michael W. Cadden talks about Stoppard and his use of intertextuality;

> Stoppard's comic juxtaposition of styles of theater, writing, thinking, speaking and living has made him one of the most beloved and most challenging of contemporary playwrights. This course will explore one aspect of his plays: the ways in which he draws attention to the work of other writers and artists in his own work. Well before the advent of mashup culture, Stoppard married *Hamlet*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author* to give birth to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. This ongoing dramaturgical methodology raises important questions about originality, canonicity, identity, and accessibility.[18]

James Joyce's *Ulysses (1922)* records experiments with "language and parody", imitating and sometimes "mocking different styles of writing."[19] For instance, Stoppard has postulated a neologism known as 'Dogg', in *Dogg's Hamlet*

(1980), where words are in English with an entirely unrelated meaning, which has some bearing on parody. This makes it evident that language to Stoppard is an aspect of human life, it happens to be one he enjoys and for which he has a flair, but he warns us against over estimation and the flaunting of it which he offers as only part of his humane or comic statement.

Tom Stoppard has been considered as a reputed writer of "serious comedy" and his plays as "plays of ideas that deal with philosophical issues."[20] But as Jane Montgomery has noted, "to his detractors, his plays are devoid of feeling and sensibility: improbably shallow people saying improbably deep things in an emotionally sterile context."[21]

Critical attention on Stoppard's plays ranging from their alleged shallowness, on the one hand, has already made the playwright a site of vigorous critical contestations. One of the reasons for contradictory perceptions of the Stoppardian art may be that Stoppard remains a persistent interrogator of the absolutes and stereotypes of humanity, and that too with a parodic strain. Amy Reiter's observation sounds useful as she states:

> whether on stage, screen or simply page, Stoppard questions everything from the nature of love to the nature of the universe, from the compulsion to act out, from the impulse to create to the impulse to procreate.[22]

However, among Stoppard's critics John McGarth argues from an ideologically class conscious viewpoint, and states that Tom Stoppard's success lies in "his specious ability to mildly stir the intellect of the middle classes". The critic

further notes that "a Stoppard show" does not help "the audience think they are being intellectual listening to this vapid sixth-form philosophy, or rather references to philosophy, not even philosophizing."[23] In the socio-political context, it is important to remember what Stoppard once said: "I am a man of no convictions…I haven't even got the courage of my lack of convictions."[24] The study proposes to consider whether parody is used as a strategy by the dramatist to explore this "courage of no convictions", in the sense of his lack of commitment to social programmes. Nonetheless, there is no dearth of the dramatist's supporters countering the above criticism with equal vigor by drawing on the meaningful issues and real philosophical questions immanent in the Stoppard plays. Man's confrontation with his world is a recurring theme in Stoppard's plays, says June Schlueter:

> 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*), or a pseudo historical meeting in Zurich library of three radically different revolutionaries (*Travesties*), The theme of man's relationship to reality—his insignificance, exile, and search for self—is manifest.[25]

In addition, Stoppard has increasingly evidenced his creative and sympathetic inclinations towards the postmodern concepts of intertextuality, subjectivity, and parodic perceptions of the world and art around him. Stoppard's play critiques Wilde's aesthetics of the autonomy of art for art's sake in his play *Travesties*. Stoppard modifies and extends Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

by paradoxically hinting at the implication that art also functions as a corrective to society since art cannot be divorced from life that easily; the boundaries between life and art are not as clear as we imagine them to be. Though not in Lenin and Tzara's sense, but art might have some revolutionary effects. Stoppard then induces the theme of death in a different perspective in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* a parody of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He makes use of the minor characters of Shakespeare and portrays death as something that can be enacted, whether it be a physical or a psychological death, bringing to the notion of the audience the reality of life. Death in all its rationality swerves towards the inclination that one cannot experience death to actually play dead, it needs skill, understanding, feeling, emotion, precision towards death, only then can a person play dead. Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound* again parodies Agatha Cristie's *Mousetrap*, a play about murder mystery in a whodunit style. The two critics Birdboot and Moon in *The Real Inspector Hound* are watching a play giving their own personal reviews related to their obsessions and desires interwoven into their bombastic and pompous reviews. The title is a reference to the ending of *The Mousetrap*, a play guarding the secrecy of its twisted ending. The producers of Agatha Christie's play could not publicly object without drawing even more attention to the fact that the conclusion gives us more like Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*, where forth he examines the ideas of fate and free will, and exploring the themes of the 'play within a play'. *The Real Inspector Hound*, has been created on the realms of a looking glass comedy of great suspense and intrigue about two drama critics. *After Magritte*, is a surrealist comedy in detective form, a husband and wife argue whether the figure they saw in the street was a one-legged football player with the ball under his arm, or a man in pajamas

with a tortoise under his arm. The play shows that Stoppard is as amusing and clever as always.

Stoppard's themes are generally of an intellectual, philosophical nature; 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. In *Enter a Free Man* George Riley, committed to a social group lives with his wife and a daughter. He has not opted out of society, but later he opts out of paid employment and finds that the issue of an individual's responsibility to others is more immediate and concrete. Riley takes upon himself an active role, that of inventor. In fact Riley is a failure, both as the head of a family and as an inventor, and it is this fact that creates the tension of the play, because it forces us to consider that his actions might be justified in principle even if they fail in practice. The positive side of George Riley is his independent creative spirit. He stands for the freedom of the individual to use his own mind and follow his own principles. "I was given a mind and I use it. I don't go through life as if it was a public escalator with nothing to do but watch the swimsuits go by." He finds the ordinary routines of life meaningless and pointless, and he has the courage to follow his creative promptings in spite of the ridicule and indifference of those around him. "A man must resist. A man must stand apart, make a clean break on his own two feet. Faith is the key - faith in oneself."[26] Liberal individualism represented by Riley has been ironically discredited and parodied.

Stoppard can be called a realist of the kind that most of his works portray life as it is reality in all its harsh, comic, ironic, pathetic forms without making it appear classically tragic. He thus reflects on death as an event in the journey of life,

and it needs to be trivialized expressing that there is a possibility towards living life anew and afresh. He would caricature the Romantic ideals, even while representing social phenomena of the middle or lower-middle class life. Stoppard's theater would well critique the literary realism which in the words of Donna Campbell indicates faithful mirroring of life primarily.

> Broadly defined as "the faithful representation of reality" or "verisimilitude," realism is a literary technique practiced by many schools of writing. Although strictly speaking, realism is a technique, it also denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life. A reaction against romanticism, an interest in scientific method, the systematizing of the study of documentary history, and the influence of rational philosophy all affected the rise of realism. [27]

Stoppard's plays are filled with soft obscenities, scattered humor, visible puns and everyday objects. In *Jumpers* and *Enter a Free Man,* Stoppard portrays life to a realist point of view in a world of shifting morals. Marriage is no more a sacred institution, but seems to be a kind of convention which needs perfection psychologically. George Riley and George Moore are never identified by the people around them. They are being treated as just another living person dealing with a confused life. This might be the reason why Stoppard gives them a very popular or common name 'George' representing life as a whole. Stoppard travesties them as liberal illusionists, represented as misfits in family and in society in the realms of political and economic terms, despite having high philosophic ideals and feelings

about the world around them trying to make every possible way to make their surroundings a better place to live in but all in vain. Their pathetic situations would remind of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman,* whose Willy Loman on the other hand has tragic proportions.

In *Travesties*, Stoppard induces the possibility of interrelation between the revolutionist Lenin, Dadaist Tzara and philosopher Joyce in a much comic way mocking the ideas and norms of the 1920's Europe after the World War I. Stoppard portrays the artistic and literary movement of Dada in Europe after World War I. The Dadaist movement emerged after the war, many artists, intellectuals and writers, especially those from France and Germany, moved to Switzerland, which was a neutral country. These artists, Instead of being relieved were not happy with the modern society. They showed their protest through artistic medium and decided to create art which had no meaning. On the contrary, Stoppard induces the artistic medium of the Dadaist movement but in a different perspective, he employs a certain way of producing art with puns and humour but his plays brilliantly portray the philosophical side of him as a writer in a serious but comic way. The Dadaists including Marcel Duchamp and his outrageous painting and his sculptural obscenities were repulsive towards the prevailing public morality and social conventions. This art movement was a protest, but at the same time it managed to be enjoyable and amusing. It was sarcastic, colorful, quirky and silly, and appeared as protest against self-complacent Victorian realism. In turn, Stoppard in his *Travesties* intellectually parodied the Dadaist self-assurances as well as self-contradictory Marxism. For example when Lenin discloses his dislike for the proletariat as lacking improvement:

> […]The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actor is simply disguised dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution. Socialist literature and art will be free because of idea of socialism and sympathy with the working people, instead of greed and careerism, will bring ever new forces to its ranks. It will be free because it will serve not some satiated heroine, not the bored upper ten thousand suffering from fatty degeneration, but the millions and ten millions of working people, the flower of the country, its strength and its future.[28]

The given situation invites Stoppard's satire.

First and foremost, Tom Stoppard's intention is always to entertain. Though his plays are intellectually and philosophically rigorous, they are also good episodes told with voluble wit. Sometimes he takes too easy a road to difficult issues in science and history. His plays reach far out in different directions and spread all over relating one work with the other in one way or two. Examining the works of Stoppard in the postmodern era, Freud's Psychoanalysis has been very much presented in his plays, especially in *Jumpers (1972)*, with the Id-Ego-Superego taking action in the relationship between George Moore-Dotty-Archie. Dotty who is much younger than George seems to be the psychologically unfit wife for the highly academic and philosophical husband George Moore. She in her unconscious mind seeks for someone who would pay attention to her beauty, be proud of her, and enjoy life, which she finds in Archie a psychiatrist friend who seems to understand Dotty and pays attention to her needs and feelings. George

Moore does not seem to read the thoughts and feelings of his wife who is bound to the table and chair in their room, not interested about what is happening around him. The unconscious does not just express itself automatically in Dotty; she can only be uncovered through the analysis of resistance and transference in the psychoanalytic process, which has been shown in the play by Stoppard. Much of the irony and parody is traced to their conversation with George Moore. In *Jumpers* Stoppard takes on the ideas that infinitely meet in conflict. The theater presents a moral philosopher, George Moore, wrestling in his study with lecture on God and to combat with Archie and Dotty's ideas, while in the outer world, an academic gymnast is murdered. The playwright exposes astronauts busy scrapping on the moon, when Britain suffers an authoritarian Radical-Liberal government's dehumanization. He reveals a deep commitment to morality and a coherent rejection of relativism, i.e. logical positivism as a sterile linguistic philosophy practiced by Archie. *Jumpers* is a play on apparent lines of the Shavian debates. But behind it, continues a serious idea concerning the question of whether moral values are actually social constructs or derive purely from an absolute divinity. Stoppard seems to give no definite answer, since George Moore's whole-hearted logic for a fixed point, in the sense of God as the beginning, has been deconstructed and playfully parodied.

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour (1978) deals with the problems affecting sane dissidents in Soviet mad regimes, and *Professional Foul (1978)* with political persecution and institutional evil. Stoppard has the ability to treat moral and political issues with confidence and clarity in *Professional Foul (1978)* which was written for television. Its protagonist, a Cambridge Professor, who visits

Prague to deliver a lecture on 'Ethical Fictions as Ethical Foundations' comes only to realize the real messy world of political persecution and learning, and how a clear distinction works between right and wrong. The early perception of Stoppard as an apolitical, detached and moral artist would receive counter reactions on the basis of these plays. Nevertheless, his serious use of satire and irony is not relaxed in the plays.

Stoppard treats two kinds of knowledge in *Arcadia (1993)*: the knowledge of love and academic knowledge. These two types of knowledge are in constant conflict throughout the text. It is only the proposition of marriage, the intellectual justification for sex, which allows a resolution between the two forces. The theme of love versus intellect is touched upon in the first pages of the play. Sex remains the final mystery of *Arcadia.* Septimus, in the conclusion of the play, reveals the final sadness and emptiness of an academic life: "When we have found all the mysteries and lost all the meaning, we will be alone, on an empty shore."[29] Septimus implies that the mysteries of mathematics will someday be solved. As if knowing his own fate, Septimus embraces and kisses Thomasina in earnest, finally indulging in the mystery of his attraction and love. Sex persists as the anti-academic driving force in *Arcadia*. Academic knowledge is never separated far from carnal knowledge—academic knowledge somehow equating sexual prowess. For example, when Bernard makes his great discovery he immediately propositions Hannah, indicating how academic knowledge gives Bernard sexual confidence. Sex is also equated with heat, making it the eventual objective and need of all humans. The relationship between Thomasina's theory of heat exchange and sex is clearly articulated by Chloe who tells Valentine that Newton forgot to account for sex in his

deterministic universe. Heat, like sex, is unchangeable, persistent, and random. A hypothesis of "The future is all programmed like a computer" gets discredited with amusing laughter for its sole reason offered is "all because of sex". Stoppard could also with wit and intelligence write about the pain of adultery and the excitement of love in *The Real Thing*, just as Harold Pinter did in his *Betrayal*. *Arcadia is* not devoid of poetry and passion, even if it treats difficult issues of thermodynamics and metaphysics evidencing interdependence of art and science.

The linguistic and semiotic ideas of structuralism as well as postmodernism will be useful to assessing the creative constructs by the playwright Stoppard. Moreover, the dramatist's playful linguistic constructs and, most often, his deconstructive debunking of the esteemed authorities such as Beckett, Joyce, or Shakespeare have emerged as an interesting site of critical contestations. But the parodic angles problematizing these constructs make his plays more interesting. It may be found that, among others, Rodney Simrad's reception of the Stoppard play is more sensitive to the parodic perspective in which the present thesis has of course its interest. Simrad has observed, "Stoppard's work is a comedic and farcical presentation of serious thought" that "reflects postmodern existence by its celebration of multiplicity, by its presentation of alternatives."[30]

Much of the negative criticism of the Stoppardian play seems to result from reader's failure of appreciating the comedic and parodic angles involved in the structurality and textuality of his plays. The study thus is an attempt to see parody, especially its postmodern variety, as a crucial creative force in Stoppard and explore its radical effects affecting a whole gamut of other important aspects of his art.

Hence *Parody and the Play* is the title of the thesis. It proposes to examine whether parody structures the Stoppard play and whether it is a precondition for the play to shape up, and more importantly, whether it has redeeming effects on the dramatic context and characters. As parody normally applies playful modes, the study faces a question to address: Has it got the enabling force to free the play and spectators from naturalized assumptions of times and life, ideological, cultural, metaphysical, religious, or it only superficially entangles his plays abundantly in surprises, paradoxes, and interrogations?

It is felt that Stoppard's inventive intelligence helps to generate parody simultaneously from within the play, even from casual events. Thus, parody may be thought to constitute the unpredictable in Stoppard, and in its unpredictability, parody assumes the postmodern nuances. In other words, it is difficult at times to conceive a Stoppard play without its parodic form and the parodic without a dramatic structure. Moreover, the presence of parody has the ability to complicate the established genre of the 'well-made comedy' in the sense that it could comically transcend the other's self-authenticated limits and teasingly turn a play to an open-ended affair as in real life. Hence the crucial place that parody holds in Stoppard's dramatic imagination. The playwright is on the side of life, which he as an artist wants to see as freed from life-constraining limits is energized by responsibilities to the community living. This common concern happens to be a later development in Stoppard's consciousness.

The present study would like to explore the creative construct of the Stoppard play and examine how far the dramatist has succeeded in turning his construct into a meaningful experience for the spectator beyond the bounds of

unhelpful criticism of his plays as the texts of plagiarism and pastiche. Still, one cannot help agreeing that for Stoppard "the play's the thing" (more than anything), when he emphasizes in an interview that, "plays are events rather than texts," not to be merely interpreted by professionals. "They're written to happen, not to be read."[31] So, the interest of the present study consists in exploring the possibility of parody radically affecting his creative vision, which is felt to have exerted his magical powers in creating a good spectacle.

Stoppard's characters are found engaging lively dialogues and discussions on politics, philosophy, art, and belief which throw insights into the dynamics of contemporary theater in Britain. Stoppard's career moves gradually to TV plays marked by playfulness and interest in style. He continues to be regarded as a celebrated British playwright in today's theater and had been Knighted in 1997. Stoppard's plays are marked by his characteristically postmodern mix of erudition and playfulness. What have seriously preoccupied his dramatic sensibility appear to be overweighed with doubts about of the spurious order in life and the world , with uncertainties accentuated by death, and more nuanced by insurmountable incompatibilities between assumptions and facts. But he is no nihilist or defeated an artist. As artist he is not apolitical or amoral or insensitively farcical, not also politically diehard or morally didactic. Someway, a liminal state between the opposing morals of narrowly structured life, the in-betweenness, would define Stoppard's dramatic sensibility and his worldview. Insurmountable contradictions and incompatibilities besetting reality and life are found to be attended by Stoppard with modes of vibrant intellect and vigorous parody.

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Chapter II: Stoppard's Intertextual World.

Stoppard's plays are intellectually and philosophically demanding. Their apparent meanings are not the only ones which make them interesting. As works of literature these plays take on the pre-existent plays, texts or traditions, and attempt to critically respond to established notions of meaning, cultural codes and philosophical absolutes in a manner that resembles postmodernist. The postmodern is designated by Lyotard as a rejection of the modernist "metadiscourse" signifying "some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working Subject, or the creation of wealth." He defines the spirit of the postmodern age as "incredulity towards metanarratives."[1] The post-World War-II situations expose scientific progress, the laissez faire and free market economies, Salvationist faith, socialist ideals and the nuclear family as bedtime lullabies. The empty and illusory stabilities of these grand narratives do increasingly indicate the fact no text is uniquely placed to hold the absolute meaning.

It is a fact that Stoppard's play is felt to be an intertext. The Stoppard reader feels thus obliged to consider the network of textual relations as well as their meaningful significances that arise out of such perspectives of intertextuality. As a poststructuralist thinker Julia Kristeva introduces the idea of intertexuality in her "The Bounded Text" as constructed out of already existing discourses. She lays bare her conviction that a text does not originate from the mind of an original author,

but rather it is compiled from already pre-existing texts and discourses in society; and hence, to her, a text is "a permutation of texts," utterances, and traces which "intersect and neutralize one another" and produce "an intertextuality in the space of a given text."[2] In "The Death of the Author" Roland Barthes too, without his use of the term intertextuality, has similarly conceived text as "made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation." He has defined text to be "a tissue of quotations, drawn from innumerable centers of culture."[3] Stoppard's plays *Dogg's Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Travesties, Jumpers,* and *Arcadia* do elicit readings in the light of the above poststructuralist thought. For example, Stoppard's intertextuality may be perceived from *Arcadia*:

> If knowledge isn't self-knowledge it isn't doing much, mate. Is the universe expanding? Is it contracting? Is it standing on one leg and singing 'When Father Painted the Parlour'? Leave me out. I can expand my universe without you. 'She walks in beauty, like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies, and all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes.' There you are he wrote it after coming home from a party.[4]

Stoppard talks about knowledge and explores the nature of the world with questions that examine staple truths of science, religion and romanticism. He premises that no being is superior to the other and that one is always connected with the other. Plurality of life and freedom of the perception is being shown.

Intertextuality refers to far more than the 'influences' of writers on each other. Kristeva's intertextuality also includes, as Graham Allen observes, "(d)esire and the psychological drives of the split subject" who is "split between the conscious and the unconscious, reason and desire, the rational and the irrational, the social and the presocial, the communicable and the incommunicable."[5] And in Stoppard's *Jumpers*, when Dotty looks at a dying jumper in surprise as he crawls up her body and she looks around 'in a bewildered way.'[6] Later George shouts furiously at Dotty's scream '(h)elp-rescue-fire' as 'childish nonsense'[7] and prepares for his lecture on moral philosophy.

In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Stoppard's technique of extracting two minor characters from the famous Shakespeare play *Hamlet* enables the audience to gain unique and enlightening perspectives on the existential problems of the individual. Situated in a context that it is, the two characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are unable to comprehend their own identities and thus their own individualities, which prevents them from conceiving their own free will. The lack of making choices and taking control of their lives, ultimately leads to them falling into the contrivances of fate, which let them question the meaning of life. This is explicit in the opening scene where they discover probabilities. In this regard, they are conscious of a world that seems to be controlled around them. However, one could argue that their existence is already contrived by their previous existence in Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* Nevertheless, Stoppard deliberately chooses not only to manipulate two characters and their intertextual conditions, he also probes and questions the possibilities of individual heroism in a world imposed not from above, but of our own making. Guildenstern says, "life in a box is better than no life

at all." The image of being trapped in a box becomes a metaphor for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's life, as if their "scripts are taken away, [they are] lost." This may be perceived from:

> Lawyer: Naturally- we didn't get paid, owing to circumstances ever so slightly beyond our control, and all the money we had lost betting on certainties. Life is a gamble, at terrible odds- if it was a bet you would not take it. Did you know that any number doubled is even ? [8]

Stoppard's intertextual domain offers the reader some ironic reflections on verities and certainties of the *Hamlet* as a classic Renaissance tragedy. In the Stoppardian play the laymen are presented not as heroes, but as victims having inadequate knowledge about life and circumstances, whose foolish questions and conversations produce occasions of tragic humor and travesty on humanity's absurdities and indeterminacies. Stoppard also parodies the source of language, whose denoted certainty the so-called philosophers of truth have claimed to have traced and hunted down:

> Dotty: As I recall, you talked animatedly for some time about language being the aniseed trail that draws the hounds of heaven when the metaphysical fox has gone to earth; he must have thought you were barmy.
>
> George (*hurt*): I resent that. My metaphor of the fox and the hounds was an allusion, as Russell well understood, to his Theory of Descriptions.[9]

Saussure has emphasized that language is a system which pre-exists the individual speaker. For structuralists and poststructuralists alike believe that our meanings are positioned by semiotic systems and most clearly by language. Contemporary theorists have referred to the subject as being spoken by language. Barthes declares that 'it is language which speaks, not the author,' to write is to reach the point where only language acts, performs, and not the traditional author.[10] When writers write they are also written. Furthermore, in conforming to any of the conventions of our medium, we act as a medium for perpetuating such conventions.

The play *Travesties* has parodic relations with Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest.* While Dada and Lenin's political art have collapsed, the permanence of Joyce's art has affirmed the prevalence of art over life. The play reaffirms Wilde's aesthetic that art should be responsible only to itself and that life should imitate art, not the other way round. As Max Beerbohm said about *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1902:

> But the fun depends mainly on what the characters say, rather than on what they do. They speak a kind of beautiful nonsense--the language of high comedy, twisted into fantasy. Throughout the dialogue is the horse-play of a distinguished intellect and a distinguished imagination—a horse-play among words and ideas, conducted with poetic dignity.[11]

Likewise, in Stoppard's plays characters communicate a kind of beautiful nonsense. *Travesties* raises questions while displaying serious topics under the apparently trivial surface where characters utter serious things disguised as nonsense.

Considered from that perspective, Stoppard is joking in 'earnest'; he is travestying and maybe satirizing, while also pretending to be playful. Depending on one's perspective, the play appears both as a work of art divorced from reality and as a work of art that implicitly comments on life. Stoppard interacts with both sides of the problematic relationship between art, life, and politics. Fleming argues that his plays reflect both the 'uncertainty' of human life and the necessity of 'order' and 'logic' to provide stability amid this chaos. He states further that 'the quality of Stoppard's work allows him to cut across categories and to attract admirers from different critical, theoretical, and ideological backgrounds.'[12] In the heated argument about the function of art and the artist, *Travesties*, as a whole, seems to be echoing Algernon: 'The truth is rarely pure, and never simple.'[13]

It might seem to the audience of *Travesties* that Stoppard is teasing us with mischief in the play, which opens with silence later followed by a diverse and miscellaneous flow of languages. Tzara blabbers out his poem which happens to make sense in French, Joyce gabbles about from the earliest chapters of XIV of *Ulysses*, and Lenin's wife drops a scrap of paper which Joyce reads out for the audience in English which makes no sense. Hunter finds Stoppard postulating three different revolutionaries and dismissing the play's linear development towards fixed meanings, thereby signifying conflicting discourses to occupy the same space. Though the dramatist brings together "the political revolutionary Lenin; the literary revolutionary Joyce, dedicated to the great traditions of art and radical only in his methods; and the Dadaist Tzara, flirting with communist ideology but artistically anarchist,"[14] the play does not develop in a linear mode towards any direct result as the final philosophical truth.

Stoppard's play *Dogg's Hamlet* is a metaplay where forth Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has been enacted on a stage by school boys. The Shakespearean lines of a ruthlessly abbreviated *Hamlet* that English schoolboys are about to perform is juxtaposed against the 'Dogg' language they use while preparing the stage for the performance; here the boys are busy testing the microphone and conversing in the 'Dogg' language:

> Abel: (into the microphone) Breakfast, breakfast…sun—dock—trog…[* Testing, testing…one—two—three…](he realizes the microphone is dead. He tries the switch a couple of times and then speaks again into the microphone.)
>
> sun—dock— trog—pan—slack…[*one—two—three—four—five…]
>
> (The microphone is still dead. Abel calls to someone off-stage.)
>
> Haddock priest! [* The mike is dead!]
>
> (Pause. Baker enters from the same direction. He is also a schoolboy similarly dressed.)
>
> Baker: Eh? [*Eh?]
>
> Abel: Haddock priest.
>
> Baker: Haddock ?
>
> Abel: Priest.
>
> (Baker goes to the microphone, drops satchel centre on the way.)[15]

The apparently nonsensical dialogue here would not however oscillate to the other extreme that the sound of words is the content, or that the speech is the presence and meaning privileged over the written language. Even without metaphor and other figures, as the above dialogue denotes, a neologism aids or devises communication; in other words, life is not exhausted by language or metaphorical expressions. It is Derrida who says in *Of Grammatology* commenting on traditional assumptions about language how "writing in the metaphoric sense, natural, divine, and living writing, is venerated; it is equal in dignity to the origin of value, to the voice of conscience as divine law, to the heart, to sentiment and so forth.[16] Stoppard dramatically presents what Derrida derides in the form of the conventionally ascribed metaphysics of presence or the authentic meaning of language, perhaps divinely decreed.

Hanna Scolnicov refers to the unintelligible language in *Dogg's Hamlet* thus:

> Stoppard was intrigued by the idea of 'writing a play which had to teach the audience the language the play was written in.' In the play, he demands of his audience to learn a new language, a language made up largely of English words that have totally changed their grammatical and pragmatic functions. We are introduced into Dogg language playfully, without any kind of formal initiation or learning process. The reader, as well as the potential actor, are provided with an English translation in parentheses, at least at first. Not so the spectator, whose exposure to Dogg language comes as a total surprise and who must pick it up, unaided, from the dramatic situation and tone of voice.[17]

Why is ‘sun—dock— trog—pan—slack’ spoken? What is meant by ‘Haddock priest’? Do these not travesty that *priest* in ‘haddock priest’ is illusory echoing the restitution of the dead? It may also imply absurdity and childhood are close; it may imply the shortcomings of speech to reveal truth, and it may also mean that there is no fixed meaning as the only truth other than significances as worked out by signifiers and signifieds. Further, any language becomes acceptable when performed with gestures; gestures though silent speak meaning into the utterances. Stoppard thus states, “The appeal to me consisted in the possibility of writing a play which had to teach the audience the language the play was written in.”[18] Importantly, (alien) speech is incomprehensible unless it is simultaneously transcribed or translated in some form –slab? (*okay?)- conforming to customary understanding. More importantly, a situation beyond any individual’s control points to the constructedness of language and its meaning through continuous use.

This kind of neologism serves, what Bakhtin would imply, the “centrifugal,” that is “de-normalizing,” conception of language. The Dogg language, which seems close to the absurdist notion of Beckett’s speech, would premise that otherness of a centripetally “homogenizing” or “hierarchizing force” of the internally differentiated individual consciousness as well as social life.[19] On the whole, Stoppard’s predilection for a neologism could be akin to Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism. Holquist explains:

> In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness. This otherness is not merely a dialectical alienation on its way to a sublation that will endow it with a unifying identity in higher consciousness. On the contrary: in dialogism consciousness is

> otherness. More accurately, it is the differential relation between a center and all that is not that center. [20]

For example, in *Travesties,* Lenin harangues with great force and ferocity:

> You talk about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy. There can be no real and effective freedom in a society based on the power of money…. The freedom of bourgeois writer, artist or actor is simply disguised dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution.[21]

Elsewhere, Carr would challenge Tzara:

> All this dancing attendance on Marxism is sheer pretension. You're an amiable bourgeois with a chit from Matron and if the revolution came you wouldn't know what hit you. You're nothing. You are an artist. And a multi-coloured micturition is no trick to those boys, they will have you pissing blood.[22]

The above citations illustrate a range of provocations touching on the stereotypical positions of each ideologue in the play. What is relevant here is the nature of dialogue which is essentially social, and its paramount dialogism that incorporates all difficult and contesting ideas and ideals. This reflects the Stoppardian art of jigsaw involving various perceptions and avowed ideologies in society in play. The very nature of dialogism is intertextual, which flows dialogically with the dialectic participation among different views and consciousnesses. There seems no value for man to be permanently consistent about, and there is no absolute truth which can be

irrefutable. This may be clearly perceived from Stoppard's novel *Lord Malquist and Mr Moon:*

> How can one be consistent about anything, since all the absolutes discredit one another? … I take both parts … leapfrogging myself along the great moral issues, refuting myself and rebutting the refutation towards a truth that must be a compound of two opposite half-truths. And you never reach it because there is always something more to say.[23]

There may be many and self-contradictory half-truths in life rather than a single absolute meaning, the fact of which Stoppard's intertextualism consistently spins out. Further in his conversations he has a similar belief to advocate, "I write plays because writing dialogue is the only respectable way of contradicting yourself." He continues, "none of us is tidy; none of us is classifiable. Even the facility to perceive and define two ideas such as the classical and the romantic in opposition to each other indicates that one shares a little bit of each."[24] The important import to Stoppard and to the reader is, there is no end to the dialogic process of such interbreeds of opposites, no singularity of privileging one value and dismissing the other. Thus Stoppard's dramatic texts are steeped in these premises which can be lighted by Bhaktinian sociolinguistics. In dialogic discourse, as Bakhtin perceives, "(t)he direct word" that is monologic and elitist encounters for its signification "the fundamental and richly varied opposition of another's word."[25] And this would reinvigorate the Saussurean insight into the meaning made by differences and Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence by difference.[26] The

poststructuralists and critics have employed the term intertextuality "to disrupt notions of stable meaning and objective interpretation."[27] This idea can also be validated with Stoppard's example.

> Dotty: That was the year of 'The concept of Knowledge', your masterpiece, and the last decent title left after Ryle bagged 'The Concept of Mind' and Archie bagged 'The Problem of Mind' and Ayer bagged 'The Problem of Knowledge'—and 'The Concept of Knowledge' might have made you if you had written it, but we were still on the carpet when an American with an Italian name working in Melbourne bagged it for a rather bad book which sold four copies in London, three to unknown purchasers and the fourth to yourself. [28]

The above lines would explain Stoppard parodying the postulates of knowledge firmly held by George Moore.

Further, Stoppard's sense of parody plays a counter model to the dominant monologic discourse. In this he seems close to Bakhtin who emphasizes laughter (parody) and heteroglossia as two seminal aspects of the novelistic discourse, which constitutes an inter-generic and multi-voiced world. Bakhtin holds that "laughter and criticism" become corrective to "all existing straightforward genres."[29]

Stoppard parodies his characters to the extent that finally they become travesties of what they historically represent. None of the characters manages to escape Stoppard's satiric twists played on the sincerity of their own creeds and convictions. In the second act, where Lenin is heard speaking in a paraphrase of

Algernon and Lady Bracknell, the travestying reaches a climax; it is both devastatingly ironic and absurd. Stoppard's comedy, here, derives from the beauty of style and wit:

> Lenin: Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example what on earth is the use of them?! They seem as a class to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility! To lose one revolution is unfortunate. To lose two would look like carelessness![30]

The ironic effect in Lenin's words develops from a travesty of Lady Bracknell, the Victorian upper-class matriarch, the ultimate embodiment of what the proletarian demagogue Lenin hates. Moreover, as Fleming aptly states, 'Lenin's sentiments on the lower classes are diametrically opposed to the words he seems to say.'[31] In a similar fashion, Stoppard offers his audience bits of self-contradiction in Tzara as well. In the first act, Tzara and Carr argue whether the meaning is objective or relative. Each sounds convincing in its forceful argument. After that they proceed in a heated argument over the politics of war (World War I). Carr says: "Wars are fought to make the world safe for artists," to defend "civilized ideals are all about." But 'modern art' demonstrates "the *ingratitude* of artists, indeed their hostility, not to mention the loss of nerve and failure of talent." In response, Tzara uncovers the political and colonial reasons:

> Wars are fought for oil wells and coaling stations; for control of the Dardanelles or the Suez Canal; for colonial pickings to buy cheap in and conquered markets to sell dear in. War is capitalism with the

> gloves off and many who go to war know it but they go to war because they don't want to be a hero."[32]

When Carr proudly says that going to war was his "*duty*, because (his) country needed (him), and that's *patriotism*," and that the less fortunate or the lazy are to be "defended from German militarism, and that's *love of freedom,"* Tzara rebuts:

> *Quite right*! You ended up in the trenches, because on the 28th of June 1900 the heir to the throne of Austro-Hungary married beneath him and found out that the wife he loved was never allowed to sit next to him on royal occasions, except! When he was acting in his military capacity as Inspector General of the Austro-Hungarian army—in which capacity he therefore decided to inspect the army in Bosnia, so that at least on their wedding anniversary, the 28th of June 1914, they might ride side by side in an open carriage through the streets of Sarajevo![33]

Both characters are unwavering in their opposite convictions and both views equally seem to be offering the slices of a complex whole or reality. In this scene, Tzara contradicts himself and his Dadaist views that are based on chance: 'causality is no longer fashionable owing to the war'[34]. On the other hand, Carr claims that 'war itself had causes'.[35]

> Carr: […]The industrial revolution had crowded the people into slums and enslaved them into factories, but it had not yet begun to bring them the benefits of an industrialized society. Marx looked

> about him and saw that the system depended on a wretched army of wage slaves. He drew the lesson that the wealth of the capitalist was the counterpart to the poverty of the worker and had in fact been stolen from the worker in the form of unpaid labour. He thought that was how the whole thing worked. That false assumption was itself added to a false premise. This premise was that people were a sensational kind of material object and would behave predictably in a material world. Marx predicted that they would behave according to their class.[36]

Although different from Carr's reasons, Tzara ironically presents 'causes' for the war. Fleming interprets the scene as pointing 'to a need to minimize the manipulation of language so that events can be seen as clearly as possible' not as suggesting 'anti-art and turning everything on its head'[37] as Tzara and his Dadaism declared. Another ironic and comic example provided by the inversion of intention is the words Tzara utters while evaluating Lenin's folder of social critique, assuming wrongly that it is Joyce's folder. He says to Joyce:

> Furthermore, your book has much in common with your dress. As an arrangement of words it is graceless without being random; as a narrative it lacks charm or even vulgarity; as an experience it is like sharing a cell with a fanatic in search of a mania.[38]

Tzara is unknowingly criticizing Lenin's revolutionary views on social change that will be aided by the artist. Tzara's biased thoughts and admiration of Lenin are brilliantly displayed through an ironic prism. Also, it shows Tzara's

ignorance about Lenin's views. In a much deeper sense, however, the conflation of Joyce's manuscript of *Ulysses* and Lenin's politics on art blurs the distinction between 'political art' and 'art for art's sake' providing one of the major parodic scenes, as well as, the gist of the play. Reading the folder with the utmost seriousness and strong conviction that it belongs to Joyce, Tzara is deluded. Or, should we interpret it as even the most contradictory theories might contain some common assumptions? The play goes back to its initial postulation that in complicated matters as art, it is difficult to suggest any single solution. A much flexible and humorous perspective seems better than rigid views. In the argument about the function of art, which takes place between the four characters, Stoppard often stated that he was on Joyce's side, at least he felt closer to him than Tzara. Hinting through the sympathy and admiration the play *Travesties* embodies for Joyce and Wilde and distaste for Tzara and Lenin, it centers around the doctrine of art for art's sake, that art exists for the sake of its beauty and that it need not serve any political, didactic, or other purpose. Also, by travestying all these revolutionaries, Stoppard reflects his dislike for hegemonic ideals and seriousness. 'He humorously undermines the earnestness of Lenin, Tzara, and Joyce'[39]

The entire play *Travesties* has been a testimony to the intertextual premises of the postmodern as understood in Lyotard's term of incredulity towards the metadiscourse. Further, the play amounts to a playful autopsy of divergent ideologies and viewpoints that arise in the context of a post-war reality. Tzara's language is not born in the absence or innocent ignorance of other's discourses, and no discourse arises in a void of history, politics, power or other ideologies. *Travesties* is a carnival of inter-discursive discourses. Thus, the playwright

convinced of the absence of truth engages in parody and play, making allowances to difference and divergence as the better option left for life. This shows, as demagogues are both opposed to and complicit with war, Stoppard's parody engages the reader in "the intertextual 'bouncing' between complicity and distance"[40] in Hutcheon's terms.

There is no final truth about life, no objectively verifiable absolute meaning anywhere. To recall Barthes's incisive criticism, postmodern text, as he declares, does "not release a single theological meaning (the message of the Author-God) but rather arranges and compiles the always already written, spoken and read into a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."[41] And this notion of intertextuality or Kristeva's notion of 'transposition' of transformed views and positions[42] has been increasingly reinforced in Stoppard's parody- invigorated plays.

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Chapter III: Aiming Beyond the Absurd

Stoppard's Rosencrantz *and Guildenstern Are Dead* is regarded as criticism, not literature, in Normand Berlin's adverse comment, as "a derivative play" that "feeds on Hamlet, on *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and on *Waiting for Godot*."[1] Hinden counters this aptly observing, "Stoppard does not 'feed on' Shakespeare, Beckett, and Pirandello; he dines with them."[2]

> Absurdism, one of the most exciting and creative movements in the modern theater, is a term applied to a particular type of realistic drama which has absorbed theater audiences and critics for the past three decades.[3]

The absurd in literature is that which defies what is conventionally comforting, religiously re-assuring, and metaphysically logical. The artist of the absurd evinces a tendency to violate conventions, to put into doubt postulates of self-identity and stable meanings in life, society, and the world. The aesthetic movement of absurdism started as a radical response to effects of the Second World War; its issues are found to receive impetus from Dadaism and Surrealism. Adopting Ionesco's idea of absurdity based on man's divorce from the meaningful background he once possessed and man's existence in an incomprehensible world, Martin Esslin (1961) cites, "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose....Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; his action becomes senseless, absurd, useless."[4] Esslin defined the absurd as seriously doubting well-designed

statements about the human condition, but as presenting the situation "divorced from discursive speech to the point where language became mere musical sound", dramatizing despair, fear, loneliness, and meaninglessness[5]; in other words, recreating the condition in all its un-presentable aspects. Thus, the absurdist theater that derives energies once from the 'existentialism' of Jean Paul Sartre ('existence' being privileged over 'essence') from Camus's narratives, and other arts became a staple of stage performance in the fifties and sixties. The reason for this is the staging of absurd human conditions rather than narrating mental conflicts in narrative modes became dramatically more effective in capturing uncannily the interest of audience.

Tom Stoppard too appears as a dramatist concerned with the absurd. Beyond the preoccupations of famous absurdists, his major interests relate to irrational human conditions but with some knowledge of the past and individual actions borne without one's control; his plays demonstrate intertextuality of relationships and meanings held together with playful comic vivacity, and make the audience aware of the complicity of political and social forces in meaning making processes in life. Many such things indicate that Stoppard moves beyond the limits of the absurdist theater.

With the theatre of *the absurd*, names like Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, and Pirandello come foremost to our mind as the forerunners dramatically portraying the nihilistic and the ridiculous in life. The concept of nihilism, which follows ancient Greek skeptics and Nietzsche in the twentieth century, rejects the idea of any philosophical certainty and enforces existential meaninglessness of social systems.[6] Albert Camus came round to the absurd as defined in his *Myth of Sisyphus*:

> A world that can be explained by reasoning, however, faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. The divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity![7]

The Theater of the Absurd has historically followed domestic plays and comedies of various categories (comedy of menace, dark comedy, etc) which had a comparatively brief period of success. Irving Wardle outlines some of the characteristic features of 'the Theater of the Absurd' thus: "the substitution of an inner landscape for the outer world; the lack of any clear division between fantasy and fact; a free attitude toward time, which can expand or contract according to subjective requirements; a fluid environment which projects mental conditions in the form of visual metaphors."[8] Some identical perceptions and absurd in outlook, besides toss of the coin coming to the head every time, inform Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (Rosencrantz,* briefly hence*).* Certain other premises in the play in contradistinction with Shakespeare's Hamlet cannot be overlooked:

> Guil: Operating on two levels, are we?! How clever! I expect it comes naturally to you, being in business so to speak…. The truth is, we value your company, for want of any other. We have been left so

> much to our own devices- after a while one welcomes the uncertainty of being left to other people's.
>
> Player: Uncertainty is the normal state. You're nobody special.
>
> Gul: But for God's sake what are supposed to *do*?!
>
> Player: Relax. Respond. That's what people do. You can't go through life questioning your situation at every turn.
>
> Guil: But we don't know what's going on, or what to do with ourselves. We don't know how to *act.*
>
> Player: Act natural. You know why you're here at least.
>
> Guil: We only know what we're told, and that's little enough. And for all we know it isn't even true.
>
> Player: For anyone knows, nothing is. 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. One acts on assumptions. What do you assume?[9]

The Player thrusts as true the conviction that his players create their own reality and that the play offers them the unreality of the world of drama. However, here Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, raised above Shakespeare's pawns meant for sacrifice, wander bewilderingly for some clues to explain why they are put in a world or a situation as it is. This reflects that the theater of *Rosencrantz and*

Guildenstern are Dead denies the comforting humanist perspectives of the Elizabethan stage and the Enlightenment rationalism of truth as against uncertainty. It puts into doubt, the way Beckett and Pinter did, "the sanctity of the individual which naturalism so resolutely upholds"[10]

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 work 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.[11]

The construct of language and communication seems to be what Stoppard has acknowledged through the works of his past predecessors. He further states that the specific works of T.S. Eliot and Samuel Beckett 'are the twin syringes of my diet, my arterial system,' and that he has been influenced more by 'the way in which Beckett expresses himself' than by 'the image of two lost souls waiting for something to happen' Stoppard stresses on the idiosyncratic communication between the two tramps, rather than the act of waiting postulated by Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*).[12] These remarks encourage us to locate his work making the

audience aware of the difficulties faced by a literary artist in an age of linguistic impoverishment and moves beyond the level of absurdism.

Further, for the glib complacencies of language to demonstrate, Stoppard has taken up Ludwig Wittgeinstein's concept of language (*Philosophical Investigations* and *Tactatus)* as background work for his *Dogg's Hamlet, and Cahoot's Macbeth.* By decisively separating the structure of language from the perceivable world, Wittgeinstein postulated that any investigation into human language would not give access to reality; on the contrary, language is "a *projection* of the mind rather than a picture of the world, in a sense *creates* reality."[13] Moon the black Irish Catholic in the novel *Malquist and Mr Moon,* comes round to acknowledge the unsolvable aspects of the same one world:

> If I had time to prepare my words I would have given the other side too. I can see both sides ... because they claim to have appropriated the whole truth and pose as absolutes. And I distrust the opposite attitude for the same reason.[14]

Moon is having racist prejudices. And in order to enforce irony Stoppard once admits, "I'm a Moon myself." He endows his portrait with the same irony that colors his other characters.[15] This would remind us of how Derrida critiques Austin's performative language in *Margins of Philosophy* observing, "One will no longer be able to exclude … the 'non-serious,' the *oratio obliqua* from 'ordinary' language". Further, the effects of ordinary language "do not exclude what is ordinarily opposed to them term by term (i.e. relative specificity of the effects of consciousness), on the contrary presuppose it… as the general space of their possibility."[16] To him as to the

postmodernists, “the pure singularity of (any) event” is a misnomer, split within, and hence, language is haunted by its ironic, parasitic, perverse, menacing intent intrinsic to itself. This squarely critiques the ‘felicitous’ performative of Austin, which, to Austin, must be uttered by a fully conscious ego in complete possession of its wits and its intentions. That language even creates confusion and deadly ethical blunders may be gauged from:

> Player: The old man thinks *he’s* in love with *his* daughter.
>
> Ros (*appalled*): Good God! We’re out of our depth here.[17]

The Player next explains it is Hamlet, not Polonius the old man, who is thought to have fallen in love with Ophelia. A deliberation on ‘death’ and ‘not-being’ would give the reader insights into Stoppard’s skepticism on metaphysical postulates and also on language’s felicitous meanings.

> Guil: Yes . . . yes … (*Rallying.)* But you don’t believe anything till it happens. And it *has* all happened. Hasn’t it?
>
> Ros: We drift down time, clutching at straws. But what good’s a brick to a drowning man?
>
> Guil: Don’t give up, we can’t be long now.
>
> Ros: We might as well be dead. Do you think death could possibly be a boat?

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.

Guil: No, no, no – what you've been is not on boats.

Ros: I wish I was dead. (*Considers the drop*) I could jump over the side. That would put a spoke in their wheel.[18]

Put in the same situation the two characters read the reality differently and Rosencrantz is not obliged to "take my meaning." Derrida and postmodernists are of the view that the performative as a coded statement (possibility of communication) is haunted by a possibility of its own menace, its intrinsic irony. This is all the more apparent in Stoppard's plays as in *Travesties* and *Jumpers*. The subjugated side, or the *non-serious* of language, of discourses, systems, metaphysics and history speaks of the fact that the performative 'cannot guarantee fulfilling its intention,' despite our best intentions, to 'remain felicitous, sincere, true to itself.'[19] For example, Dogg language as in *Dogg's Hamlet* is an attempt at communication with no grammatically spoken registers; it undoubtedly indicates invention and play, while a thing is actually being built.

Dogg : Brick.

(Abel enter, holding his ear and …)

Sun, dock, trog, slack, pan, sock, slight, bright, none, tun, what, dunce . . .

Easy: What?

Dogg: Dunce.

Easy: what?

Dogg: Dunce!

Easy: What??

Dogg: Sun, dock, trog, slack, pan, sock, slight, bright, none, tun, what, *dunce* !

Easy: Oh![20]

Stoppard notes in the "Preface" to this play:

> Moreover, it would be also be possible that the two builders do not share a language either; and if life for them consisted only of building platforms in this manner, there would be no reason for them to discover that each was using a language unknown to the other. This happy state of affairs would continue only as long as, though sheer co-incidence, each man's utterance made sense (even if not the same sense) to the other.[21]

Stoppard would not, of course, move toward a possible conclusion that given this "happy" co-incidence, all utterances are unnecessary. Moreover, his invention of a new language as here or in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is closely reminiscent of Beckett's purpose to free the play and so free life from the tyranny of meaning, the conventional meaning that is associated with symbolic

forms by adopting a "sparse and bare vocabulary" which can be interpreted for "many meanings," with "none the inevitable" whatsoever.[22] Raymond Federman has noted in Beckett's fictions a narrative method working up disintegration of language as "to delyricise, to destylize the language of fiction, to designify the words."[23] Beckett 'adequately' sought, as critics demonstrate, the "solace of form" recognizng poetics of 'insuperable indigence' (Becket's own phrase) or syntactic subversions dismantling "grammatical conventions and hence grammatical logic."[24] What is true of Beckett's novels in terms of language and meaning are equally true of his plays. Stoppard however intends that the absurdity of life is to be partly enquired in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, though least comprehended, by the characters themselves doomed to a situation; and this enquiry is made possible and accessible in a language much loosened from the Beckettian inexorable impermeability, but more shifted to the postmodern palimpsest and polysemic difference and trace. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are "much more sophisticated and rational" than Estragon and Vladimir.[25] In Stoppard, the inexorable oddity of life, the aporia of meaning has not been collapsed into the conditions of entropy. Rather, unlike in modernist structures and traditions, Stoppard's plays enact a postmodern situation where an acknowledgement of the undecidable, however incoherently comprehended, is met with realistic, identifiable men but with witty measures of parody, inscribed with an enlivening sense of playfulness. In this, Stoppard aims self-discursively to move beyond the limits of the absurd. Cahn has justly suggested: "Stoppard confronted absurdity head-on and at the same time takes the initial steps towards moving beyond absurdity."[26]

Further, despite language being humane and amusing, Stoppard warns us, its importance cannot be over-estimated. He knows that language is easily manipulated and distorted by commercial or totalitarian forces, and under its treacherous nature "what chances of survival exist for truth and value!"[27] One of the ways to redeem this unresolved condition (metaphysical aporia) is comic delight in deficiency of the language.

Shakespeare, Wilde, Joyce, Beckett, and all those philosophers that walk shoulder to shoulder in Stoppard's plays "emphasize that there is nothing exclusively literary or academic about Stoppard's allusiveness. His comic rebounds are not only from cathedral walls but from advertisements, pop fiction, pop songs. Perhaps the commonest all rebounds is from a stale pattern of language."[28] Thus, Stoppard's plays are a counter-discourse radically intermingling multiple levels of reality. In *Jumpers*, Stoppard reveals limits of the Logical Positivists and their absolutist rationalism. The character George comments: "If rationality were the criterion for things being allowed to exist, the world would be one gigantic field of soya beans!" With this humorous undercut, he would radically dispute any "privileged information" proclaiming 'Good and evil are metaphysical absolutes!'[29] Similarly, in *Travesties*, Lenin's post-revolution attitude to "the lower orders" becomes a self-defeat of communism,[30] whereas Tzara the Surrealist artist disrobes the capitalist and colonialist West naked: "Wars are fought for oil wells and coaling stations; for control of the Dardanelles or the Suez Canal; for colonial pickings to buy cheap in and conquered markets to sell dear in. War is capitalism…."[31] All this polemic reveals one basic strain in the plays that the playwright is a determined humanist rather than a committed ideologue or an atheist.

One crucial element to radicalize language and logic is parody, which ridicules models and concepts with its ironic intent and produces *difference* of the postmodern.[32] On the modernist stage, Beckett has dramaturgically parodied conventions, beliefs, and metaphysics with least alternative possibility suggested for reassurances of human existence or values. Some of Stoppard's plays (*Jumpers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Dogg's Hamlet,* etc.) move unrelaxed on the borderline between fact and fantasy, inexplicable causes and meaningless human acts, between endless waiting and endless irony. In the postmodern age, it is found that too much of aesthetic structuring of reality and rigorous constructedness of certain dimensions of life has been critically interrogated, and postmodern dramatists have struggled out of this doomed condition to look for fresh openings in our existence, for replenishments of life. In economics and knowledge late capitalist instabilities and postcolonial interrogations have prepared the contemporary stage for postmodern parody. John Barth, a significant postmodern novelist and conscious of the 'exhaustion' of narrative conventions, has found parody and travesty as two of the manifestations which anticipate the new postmodernist approach, suggesting possibilities of art in the post-war literary movement. He wrote:

> Artistic conventions are likely to be re-tried, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even deployed against themselves to generate anew and lively works.[33]

Stoppard has demonstrated in his plays the 'postmodern' celebration of pluralities and 'incredulity' toward the grand narratives as famously defined by Lyotard.[34] In other words, the dramatist has employed the parodic modes in order not merely to trivialize the great traditions and high metaphysics, but also to break down and break

free of the constructedness and protected conditional ties of human existence. And here lies Stoppard's serious moral import that is delivered in non-serious parodic performances. His play works on certain conditions and prompts certain assumptions in life situations; but in crucial moments, the performance subverts them as absurd and life-inhibiting processes. For instance, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* Stoppard portrays a hilarious work of absurdist existentialism, for the two Elizabethans may as well be any two of us. We go through life not knowing what our role is, our purpose in existing, and the harder we look the more we are forced to give up and let things happen around us; as such the characters have no free will and will never be able to escape their already prewritten destiny. Simrad comments, each of the hired clowns "fears the unknown, the incomprehensibility of life that is represented by death and attempts to assess his position."[35] Stoppard's metaphor "wheels set in motion" does not merely signify the predestined finalism which the two condemned do not understand ("wheels within wheels"); more than this, it does also project the historical and cultural difference of the old world that fixed " the meaning of order," fixed the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the Elizabethan world stage. The playwright critiques this fixed order, encourages re-reading of the modeled reality, and espouses life's freedom, which he as an artist wants to see as much freed from life-constraining absolutes as energized by responsibilities to living.

Beckett's plays are not devoid of comedy or parody. Huizinga's idea of medieval *ludic* forms and Beckett's plays as *ludic* or theater of '*ludus* or game'[36] present the grotesque spirit of carnival in *Waiting for Godot.* But Stoppard's bristling parody is more delightful and privileged over his modernist forbear's dark

comedy. The postmodernist Stoppard appears to espouse the sense of play in order to make reality livable and less excruciating despite human predicaments. His plays remind of Derrida who proclaims:

> […] reading literature thoroughly is attending to it as language through a complex play of signifying traces; it also enables us to interrogate the covert philosophical and political presuppositions of institutionalized critical methods which generally govern our reading of a text. There is in deconstruction something which challenges every teaching institution."[37]

The absurdity may also be marked in *Jumpers, The Real Inspector Hound* and life's normative foundations recovered by Stoppard's sustained satire on the absurdities of academic philosophy and relativism.

Furthermore, the plays of Stoppard attest to a carnival of clashing ideas and intertextualities. For example in *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor,* Stoppard plays contradictory ideas in the dialogue between Alexander and Ivanov:

> Alexander: I do not play an instrument. If I played an instrument I'd tell you what it was. But I do not play one. I have never played one. I am not a musician.
>
> Ivanov: What the hell are you doing here?
>
> Alexander: I was put here.
>
> Ivanov: What for?

> Alexander: For slander.
>
> Ivanov: Slander? What a fool! *Never speak ill of a musician*!—those bastards won't rest. They're animals to a man.
>
> Alexander: This was political.
>
> Ivanov: Let me give you some advice. Number one—never mix music with politics. Number two—never confide in your psychiatrist. Number three—*practice*![38]

The two cellmates, Alexander a political prisoner and Ivanov a genuine mental patient in a mental hospital have been portrayed by Stoppard as two individuals with split interests. They are prisoners held for their differing ideas and each of them finds it difficult to bear the other. This clashing of interests can also be found in *Travesties, Jumpers* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* dramatizing to radical perspectives. In their dialogically polyphonic perspectives the plays stand out as superior illustrations of life-energizing and travestying motions.[39] Intertextuality may seem superficially parasitic of classic texts and concepts, but in Stoppard's intelligent craftsmanship the intertextual mode always inspires the morale of life as against fixed ideals that oppress and sap life.

In the theater of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead,* what starts out as an amusing evening at the expense of two friends ends with a sense of personal loss. To Jenkins, "that final empathy is essential if, after all the game playing has ended, we are to experience their deaths for ourselves."[40] Stoppard works subtly upon his audience's emotions by making the play's ideas transcend the commonplace in the

humor of Rosencrantz bristled with a genuine compassion for man.[41] Thomas R. Whitaker's description of drama as "an art of man-with-man" may be more revealing in this context. He observes, "A play always exists among us. It contains not 'character' but roles-played-by-actors-for-us. The *dramatis personae* are not people but the partial masks of the actors' lives and *ours* while participating in the performance." He grounds a play's "meaning" not in the author's "impotent mastery but in spontaneous reciprocity, inherent mutuality" between actors and audience.[42] Thus, in this light, Stoppard's clowns walk in and out of us, every now and then. Their deaths are unhelpful and unheroic, but they are not absurd, for the play offers us learning experience, if no explanation to them.[43]

One would justly agree with Brassell observing Stoppard's development:

> There is a distinct move toward realism in the majority of the plays after *Travesties*, inevitably accompanied by a reduction in structural originality, though even within these more conventional forms. Stoppard's unfailing inventiveness frequently rebels against the prevailing disciplines.[44]

In later plays *Night and Day, Professional Foul, Every Good Boy Deserves Favor*, and *The Real Thing*, etc, there is sufficient indication that Stoppard's instinctive development evolves away from "more naturalistic presentations and more didactic treatment of specific themes."[45] *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor* presents Stoppard's attacks on the suppression of individual liberties in Communist countries, whereas *Professional Foul* in fact powerfully demonstrates his central concern as a socialist ideologue would, that man can change his world. Thus his

position denies any neat classification under either/ or category. *The Real Thing* is about the supreme value of love and what it means in practice, particularly within marriage. Brassell characterizes Stoppard as a dramatist who presents "utterly serious discussion of human values" within "the most felicitously imaginative and comic structures."[46]

Stoppard's radical positions conforming to none of our conventionally structured realities or meanings appear to move towards a realist theater, a realism which does not deny the essentially comic-farcical and which has to negotiate inevitably the shifting subjectivities and the undecidable difference of our contemporary times. The absurdist theater aimed at and structured a mode of expression to recreate that which is absurd subverting cerebrations of stable meanings and symbolic forms of meaningfulness. The postmodernist theater, such as Stoppard's, nevertheless, apart from its complicated relationship with modernism, goes many steps ahead to be a theatrical spectacle by celebrating the playfulness and jouissance of life rather than intellectually cloistered meanings.

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Chapter IV: Towards a Moral Dialectic.

Stoppard sounds radically political in plays like *Travesties, Every Good Boy Deserves Favor* and *Jumpers,* where he comes up with his subversive pronouncements on many subjects such as modern art, Marxist revolution, capitalist and colonial imperatives, etc. For such radical purposes, he seems to have adopted the dialectics of ideas and discourses, which is supported by the familiar Socratic method of dialogue. Socrates' contribution to philosophy and science was not to establish, prove or advance any specific system of views. Rather, his significant contribution is in originating a method of dialectics for evaluating any set of views about the nature of the world, morality, or ourselves. Stoppard follows the spirit of this Socratic method in his plays, an example can be extracted from *Jumpers:*

> George: Inspector!—I think I can help you in your inquiries. I'm your man. I am the mystery telephone caller.
>
> Bones (*pause*): You laid information against your wife, sir?
>
> George: Yes, Well, it was really against myself more than my wife.
>
> Bones: Anonymously. Against yourself?
>
> George: Yes.

> Bones: You have a funny way of going about things. Are you trying to prepare the ground for a plea of insanity?
>
> George: I don't understand you. I didn't give my name because I could hardly register a complaint about the noise issuing from my own flat. So I pretended to be a neighbor who couldn't sleep.[1]

Stoppard forms an inquiry and debate between characters with opposing viewpoints. The asking and answering of questions stimulates the critical thinking and illumination of ideas between characters in the play. This is often known as the dialectical method, involving an oppositional discussion in which the defense of one point of view is pitted against the defense of another. George Moore contradicts himself and states that he was the "mystery caller", strengthening his own viewpoint. George Moore becomes aware of the complaint he made against his wife was all along against himself. He rather realizes through the questioning and answering with Inspector Bones that he was to blame for the whole situation about the murder of Duncan Mc Fee, "I'm perfectly willing to take the blame."[2] The Socratic method searches for general, commonly held truths that shape opinion, and scrutinizes them to determine their consistency with other beliefs.

Stoppard contradicts Lauren Langman who in the medieval era states, "To parody, to mock, to stick out a tongue, butt or a finger to authority is to give one a sense of power over authority, be recognized by others for so doing and integrated into a community of resistance. Fleeting, perhaps, momentary, but so is life and in the medieval era, especially so"[3] Stoppard is free, more radical and postmodern. Awakening the Carnivalesque which sides with the people, the folk, life as it

normally moves; the monologic suppresses the living freedom, structures life becomes a presupposed notion.

Stoppard reveals that he is "a man of no convictions," and believes that one should have the courage of no convictions. This amply reveals the playwright's moral of no convictions explored through play of convictions and counter-convictions; in other words, he interrogates and subverts established beliefs under dominant traditions that drive his dramatic characters and situations which ignore or oppress the other silent and suppressed ones. As he sees, self-contradiction is a dialogue between contending dimensions within, thus constituting a dialectical strength. To hold to an ideal with rigorous consistency often produces "a kind of atrophy of spirits."[4] His plays demonstrate a space of contentions. In *Travesties*, Stoppard primarily dramatizes the complex relationship between art and revolution without a consistent resolution. The central characters are presented as committed to their avowed ideals, such as Lenin as a Marxist radical committed to absolute action, Joyce to his modern experimental art with a religious passion, Zara zealously committed to pleasure principle, bent on pulling down outworn gods of the Victorian world; whereas Carr is the anchor of discussions, himself a contradictory spokesman for the truth.[5] The moral that emerges out of the heated debates is that no ideal or philosophy is sacrosanct; on the other hand, each character contradictorily and travestyingly reveals some lurking shortcoming in another. One remembers, historical materialists such as Marxists based the ideal of progress on dialectical conflict of class consciousnesses and economic interests, or even philosophers of dialectical Enlightenment advocated progress by reason as the answer to all doubts.[6] Mankind has gone through and tested itself through all forms

of dogmatism postulated as confirmed truths; but after over million centuries, still the ideal evades us, still humanity suffers indefinite problems both material and mental. This would at least present the human situation as complicated as ever before. However, postmodernism has brought to the forefront the bitterest questions and nagging doubts once suppressed or invalidated by some claiming authority, superiority, or pure vision. In the postmodern times, dogmatic assurances or adherences but come down to unfold the limitedness of all isolated approaches to the whole complex of truth, which still remains indefinable. It appears in this regard that postmodernism in holding no moral standard as universal has come round close to the Sophists upholding the same epistemic relativism.[7] As his plays reflect, Stoppard has conceived his moral dialectic to evolve out of contending perspectives with no final word on the truth to arbitrate, whatsoever.

In the 1974 interview, Stoppard claims as regards *Jumpers*, "What I try to do is to end up by contriving the perfect marriage between the play of ideas and farce or perhaps even high comedy."[8] He reveals, "*Jumpers* is a serious play dealt with in the farcical terms,"[9] and further asserts, "*Jumpers* obviously is not a political act, nor is it a play about politics, nor is it a play about ideology…. On the other hand, the play reflects my belief that all political acts have a moral basis to them and are meaningless without it."[10]

Stoppard enforces in his plays a high degree of responsibility and moral action, without which any action turns heartless and immoral. The important issue is not whether God exists or does not exist as regards ethical behavior; but human actions motivated, as the playwright believes, by hard practicability and logical

inferences alone would produce a demented absolute. To him, a wholly rational society is like a machine, a merciless performer of presupposed objectives. George Moore states in *Jumpers*:

> The irrational, the emotional, the whimsical…these are the stamp of humanity which makes reason a civilizing force. In a wholly rational society the moralist will be a variety of crank, haranguing the bus queue with the demented certitude of one blessed with privileged information—'Good and Evil are metaphysical absolutes!'[11]

George is presented not as a crank moralist, or a self-confirmed philosopher haranguing on his absolute beliefs. But he puts up a counterpoint to the Logical Positivism held as the only truth by Archie, a radical-liberal, a believer in Leninist Marxism. Perhaps after Stoppard himself, his character George presents an idealistic priggishness to be overcome by reality or compromise. Stoppard has aimed at a middle course between privileged discourse and counterdiscourse. Thus, his plays including *Jumpers* evidence, what he in the afore-mentioned interview said, i.e, contriving the perfect marriage of serious ideas with high comedy.

Stoppard's theatrical practice has a resonance of the postmodern critique of structuralist binary by which poststructuralists argue that there is always a connection in the terms of one being dependent on the other for significations. Thus the oppositional and interactive 'Good' and 'Evil' complement the philosophical value, since it is crucial to know 'evil' to define 'good'. There can be no fixed meaning in a text which is always vacillating from one text to the other. Likewise,

thoughts and ideas of authors waver according to the attendant perceivers. According to Catherine Belsey:

> Poststructuralism proposes that the meanings of words, images, stories or other texts are not to be found elsewhere, in the mind of the author or in the world depicted. Since they have no external, extratextual guarantees, meanings are unfixed, discontinuous and unstable.[12]

This view has been projected in the realms of society, religion, culture, politics and economics of the everyday life. Stoppard induces this poststructuralist retribution through morality and contests the existence of life and living. This view of Stoppard gets illustrated in his plays *Jumpers*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Enter a Free Man*.

In his plays Stoppard portrays different instances of life, he juggles the ideas and morals of his plays as a juggler would with different color balls in his hands. He has his own way of investigating truth in a comic way travestying the very notion of life and living, further giving audience the freedom to form their own views. Derek Marlowe, comments on Stoppard's work as a writer:

> For Tom, writing a play is like sitting for an examination. He spends ages on research, does all the necessary cramming, reads all the relevant books, and then gestates the results. Once he's proposed the exam—with the public and the critics—he forgets all about it and moves on to the next subject.[13]

This fairly suggests that the playwright is not complacent about any ideal dealt with as final, or about his achieved truth. Moreover, his gestation in other texts points to his intellectual search for existing philosophies, concepts and convictions of the tradition, which invite his critical reflections.

Stoppard's works are philosophical parodies of his predecessors. His play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* moves between fate and free will, and interwoven with this, there 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 is structured around a conceit, in which the two characters trapped in a play, is equated with man trapped in a deterministic universe. It functions thus throughout and the play draws attention to itself as a play, in relation to us, the audience. He uses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, visibly 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 absurdists' anti-hero in the universe, and this, with an obvious debt to *Waiting for Godot.* 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.

However, Stoppard has attempted to complicate the simple clowns into growing as self-conscious yet helpless tramps. The inevitability of death 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 to the credit of a mature playwright that they are not transformed into tragically senile men.

> It's silly to be depressed by it. I mean one thinks of it like being alive in a box, one keeps forgetting to take into account the fact that one is dead I mean, you'd never know you were in a box, would you? It would be just like being asleep in a box. Not that I'd like to sleep in a box ... you'd wake up dead for a start.[14]

The tragedians are brought into a dialectical situation with the clowns holding their separate views on death, fate, reality and many things. When the Players, specialists in illusion, arrive, the whole relationship between illusion and reality is thrown into doubt.

> GUIL: You die so many times: how can you expect them to believe in your death?
>
> PLAYER: On the contrary, it's the only kind they do believe. They're conditioned to it. I had an actor once who was condemned to hang for stealing a sheep ... I got permission to have him hanged in the middle of a play ... and you wouldn't believe it, he just wasn't convincing It was impossible to suspend one's disbelief.[15]

The suggestion is that we cannot believe in reality even when we see it. And that we are all too eager to believe in illusions. Stoppard is aware of what the audience expectations and brilliantly induces in his plays a world filled with illusions. The

player thus states: “Audiences know what to expect, and that is all that they are prepared to believe in.”[16] The Player proves his point later when Guildenstern stabs him and he falls to the ground and ‘dies.’ Guildenstern is completely taken in by the Player’s act, thinking he has killed him, until the Player revives and says: “For a moment you thought I’d – cheated.”[17] The scene working on the established ‘convictions’ surprises us with sudden changes and the audience seem to be ‘cheated’ by substituting reality for the illusion. The play turns the spectators around showing the unexpected, defamiliarizing the spectator rooted in some convictions. The formalist literariness of defamiliarization may be better understood from Victor Shklovsky’s de-authomatization of responses, that the role of art and literature is to help us see with fresh eyes:

> Habituation devours works, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war . . . And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stony stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known.[18]

Brecht also postulates a similar idea ‘verfrumdungs effekt’ whereby distancing the audience from emotional involvement in the play surprising the onlookers with a different perspective in theatrical performances. Such dramatic techniques may be said to serve Stoppard’s interests, but more importantly these support his purpose of ‘no convictions.’ These ideas relate to an early speech of Guildenstern's which expresses ideas central to all of Stoppard's work:

> GUIL: A man breaking his journey between one place and another at a third place of no name, character, population or significance, sees a unicorn cross his path and disappear. That in itself is startling, but there are precedents for mystical encounters of various kinds, or to be less extreme, a choice of persuasions to put it down to fancy; until "My God," says a second man, "I must be dreaming, I thought I saw a unicorn." At which point, a dimension is added that makes the experience as alarming as it will ever be. A third witness, you understand, adds no further dimension but only spreads it thinner, and a fourth thinner still, and the more witnesses there are the thinner it gets and the more reasonable it becomes until it is as thin as reality, the name we give to the common experience. "Look, look," recites the crowd. "A horse with an arrow in its forehead. It must have been mistaken for a deer."[19]

The nature of reality is disputable: is it thin as dream, fancy, mystical magic, or as thick as a tale with images of a horse or deer with an arrow in its forehead? Not only is the experience of the teller unreliable; the reception of the story about the real by different men is equally subject to skepticism. To be reasonable, therefore, reality is a construct.

Rosencratnz and Guildenstern are Dead implies a different attitude towards death not the death instated by Shakespeare and believed by the Elizabethans:

> A hero looks death in the face, real death, not just the image of death. Behaving honourably in a crisis doesn't mean being able to look death itself in the eye.
>
> For an actor may play lots of different roles, but at the end of it all he himself, the human being, is the one who has to die.[20]

'Looking death in the face' is a figurative construction of critical experience, not of death itself. Ros and Guil as actors play the part of death; they actually die their own death while performing on stage. There is a kind of uncertainty in life as well as death, even though the Player in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* guarantees that "his" performing crew plays the best role in the act of death.

Stoppard skeptically plays with the ideas that are conceived from philosophy and that this makes forth towards the end of the morals that have been induced in us through ideological inclinations. As per Stoppard's idea of the instability, there does not seem to be a perfect death, instead death can occur through different causes.

> GUIL (*tired, drained, but still an edge of impatience; over the mime*): No…no…not for us, not like that. Dying is not romantic, and death is not a game which will soon be over…Death is not anything…death is not…Its absence of presence, nothing more…the endless time of never coming back…a gap you can't see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound…

(*The light has gone upstage. Only* GUIL *and* ROS *are visible as* ROS'*S clapping flatters to silence*.)[21]

Stoppard suggests that death is 'not', a timeless no-return, which cannot be contemplated materially as presence gone absent. Death has been presented by Stoppard as irrational. He states death in the play as something which is not logical or reasonable but rather as something crazy and insane something which is not profound. Death cannot be seen, rather it is felt in the 'absence of presence'. Death portrayed by Stoppard in this play may mean that we can never be absolutely sure of knowing whether something we perceive is an illusion, a rationalization of an illusion, or reality. This concept occurs again and again in Stoppard's work. One implication is a radical disavowal of the religious faith in salvation and divine decree; secondly, whatever the terror associated with death has been trivialized by Stoppard. He instigates enquiries, guarantees no conclusive answers- this is also part of his dialectical mode.

Stoppard's play *Enter a Free Man (1968)*, is concerned with the problems of the individual as a private being, having to exist in a society which does not agree with him. The play is a comedy with a serious farce. The central character George Riley is different from ordinary people, he does not want to take part in the conventional routines of life and sees himself fundamentally opposed to the rest of the society. George Riley a Stoppardian hero can be related to Arthur Miller's Willy Loman, the central character of the play *Death of a Salesman*, a play about self-delusion and about families. Willy's quest for the American Dream leads to his failure because throughout his life, he pursues the illusion of the American Dream and not the reality of it. Riley and Loman are tragic-comic figures, while one

believes to be an undiscovered inventor, the other believes to be great eligible salesman. Riley thinks to be just on the brink of a great discovery which will make his fortune; his wife, his daughter and the people he meets in the pub simply do not understand him. No one ever understands him or takes his inventions seriously, even at the time when he says he is leaving home for good:

> RILEY: I'm going! (*And he makes a move*.)
>
> (*It snaps off* LINDA'S *hysteria, and she comes close and speaks with a strained gentleness.*)
>
> LINDA: Listen, dad—father—you don't have to go this time. You really don't. You don't have to prove anything for us. Just stay and don't bother, don't worry about having to prove anything—will you?—Just stay and be like other people. Put that case back, and we'll have dinner, and go for a walk if you like, and tomorrow I'll go to the Labour Exchange with you and you can register. It's only signing your name. And you'll get money, every week, if you just register, and maybe they'll find you something you really like, and you'll get more money, and if you don't like you don't have to do it, and you still get money—it's the Government—it's all there—official, do you see? Please?[22]

Human aspiration is the core of Stoppard's early works. What everyone does is to be a barrier in the way of aspiration. Further, Stoppard parodies romantic aspirations in individuals like Riley. Unlike his well-known play *Arcadia (1994)*, the focus here is on human emotions rather than word play, and in particular on man's frustrated

desire for independence and individuality. All the characters have aspirations, but are trapped by their social obligations and dwarfed by such convictions, because they do not define them as who they really are. Riley lives in a world which limits him of his inner freedom as well as the outer freedom, his aspiration of becoming a famous inventor and of being a role model as a capable father looking after his family, is but a dream to be fulfilled by him whichever way he chooses. Riley's character portrays a victim of the American Dream. This dream is commonly described as "the ability to achieve any amount of success through hard work." It indicates actually "a great mixture of ideas, just as America is a great melting pot of cultures. The dream varies from ethnicity to ethnicity, from culture to culture, and even from person to person."[23] The American Dream creates a false hope that prevents people from feeling proud of their accomplishments rather than their looking for opportunities in other countries. Thus, Stoppard implies that grand dreams like metanaratives which structure ways to grand 'convictions' do also deprive men of their natural capacities and inclinations.

There seems to be a conflict between social convictions and private aspirations between the characters in *Enter a Free Man*. Riley holds his desires as more important than what is reasonable according to his family, society or culture that surrounds him. He never gives up his inventions whether it be a 'bottle-opener' of which no one had invented the particular 'bottle-top', or a pipe that 'would never go out as long as you smoked it upside down.'[24] As the play shows, George Riley is never a successful inventor living in England in the 1960's. An individual who has never been accepted as a person fit at home, he seems to be a burden to home as

well as for the local pub where no one is interested in his ideas and the infamous inventions that he claims.

The best and worst thing about *Enter a Free Man* is its depiction of ingenuity unassisted by industry or social uptake, which is very much a Stoppardian theme, in the sense that Stoppard realizes the potential of his moral dialectic in such contexts. In the bar, Riley's conversation with Able reveals social reality of his failure:

> The world is full of Harrys. People who'll never get anywhere until someone gives them the impetus. They've got ideas of getting on, but not the whole means, some vital elements missing. They try to make it up with a loud mouth, but they never get far….It's self-deceiving. They need that steadying influence of more thoughtful nature…that's the combination of success. Ingenuity plus industry. He's got his little capital but not the…intellect to use it to advantage. I'll be able to get him on all right…We should have quite a little business going if things go well. Quite a little business. [25]

Riley is an instantly recognizable character, socially awkward, but absurdly sure of his intellectual superiority and full of desire for recognition of it. He, though belonging to the same social structure, has no equal access to its wealth, he is underprivileged occupying an economically discriminated status. His position is certainly a comment on the prevailing social convictions about economics and intellect. He feels more at home in his own daydreams, "What the creative mind needs is respect for its independence."[26] On the other hand, Stoppard sees that Riley

is a ‘never –do- well’ who has ‘flailed’ from one aborted invention to another, never making a mark on the work but never gives up. After all hardship comes up with something he feels will change his future in becoming someone of importance to his friends at the pub as well as to his family, for inventing an envelope with a double seal for two—time use. There can be similar instances compared to the inventor, Riley and the invention and an envelope with double seal. Riley and the envelope seems to be two important things very familiar to us, they are both different with the ones of their kind but are very useful when reached to their depths, and both are being unnoticed as to who and what they are.

Enter a Free Man ends on a note of compromise and re-establishment of harmony. George Riley and Linda both make failed attempts to escape the situation by leaving home, then understand each other better when they return. George Riley makes steps towards coming to terms with reality by deciding to go to the labour exchange, and Linda grows more tolerant towards his ‘eccentricities’. Riley’s wife has always tolerated his odd behaviour without expecting him to be a success. In fact she married him because he was ‘different’, and she defends him as an individual, against Linda’s attack on his social status. Her defense may be seen from different dialogues:

> There’s lots of people like your father different. Some make more money because they’re different. And some make none because they’re different.[27]

> If he was going to be a failure anyway, he was better off failing at something he wanted to succeed at .[28]

He got hold of a bit of enthusiasm. That was worth a lot. [29]

Stoppard wants society to be more tolerant of people with oddities, by way of allowing them a space for odd inventions even if unworkable, or for not being result-oriented, not for socially acceptable morals.

Stoppard's play *Jumpers* portrays the problems faced in the theater world which does not satisfy each and every audience**.** *Jumpers* is a kind of play which is unusual and out of mind, an intellectual play with obnoxious scenes more towards a psychological perspective. Stoppard surprises us with *Jumpers* which is sometimes a philosophical farce, a genre that converts ideas into dramatic action with devastating yet confusing consequences touching upon all aspects of humanity. All the rare elements are being infested in this play, a philosophical play with a touch of murder mystery not excluding the acrobatics that completes the play.

Jumpers is structured on roughly the same lines as *Enter a Free Man*. George Moore, like George Riley, holds convictions which put him in conflict with the society around him. And like George Riley, his standpoint is partially discredited by his being somewhat 'out of touch with reality' in the everyday sense. Moore is a professor of moral philosophy engaged in preparing a speech about the existence of God. He is unique in his department in that he believes in God, and it is evident that in this respect he is virtually unique in the whole society, (where) a policeman is bribed with the chair of divinity, churches are converted into gymnasiums, murder is regarded as an inconvenience, and an atheist is appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. The play is full of evidence that the institutions of law, politics, and religion have been debased to serve the self-interest of those in power.

Against this background George is struggling to find convincing arguments to support his intuitive belief that God exists and that moral standards are absolute. To do so he has to tackle the philosophical questions of 'knowledge' and 'belief', and it is on this theme that *Jumpers* functions as a play, with the intellectual concepts put on a dramatic parallel. *Jumpers* is, basically, a domestic farce with philosophical postulates, and Stoppard uses some of the traditional elements of farce: misunderstanding, deception and ambiguity, to highlight the problem of 'knowledge', with its dependence on perception and interpretation of 'reality.' George's wife Dotty has an enchanted appreciation for Archie, the university vice-chancellor, who also happens to be a psychiatrist, doctor, lawyer, and ladies' man. The scenes in which we see Dotty and Archie together are presented ambiguously, not only to George, but also to us audience.

Another of George Moore's arguments is that the universe must have had a 'First Cause', and this is also paralleled dramatically. In the opening scene an acrobat is mysteriously shot and killed; the 'first cause' of one of the main strands in the plot, the murder enquiry, which remains completely unresolved. The policeman conducting the case is far more concerned with pursuing his personal interests like fascinations for Dotty than with looking for the murder mystery. The moral here seems about the individuals' misuse or dereliction of official positions and their lack of control over sensual propensities.

In spite of his domestic and professional failings we sympathize with George Moore because he stands for values which give life meaning beyond logic and self-interest. Dotty's role parallels George's in this respect. She is a singer with

a repertoire of songs referring to the Moon as an agent of love and romance. Her 'belief' in these songs is shattered by news of the first British moon landing, and she is unable to continue singing. Modern science has made the moon accessible to man and thereby banished the romantic associations. She expresses the feeling of change this brings about in a way familiar to us from Guildenstern's 'unicorn' speech:

> When they first landed, it was as though I'd seen a unicorn on the television news. It was very interesting, of course. But it certainly spoiled unicorns.[30]

On the news report we see that it is not only romance which is gone, but also chivalry and responsibility too. The spacecraft only has enough power to bring one man home, and in a reversal of the usual heroic gesture the captain fights off his companion and flies home alone. What is more significant to note is that George and Dotty are Stoppard's representatives of human beings trying to remain human in this world of rationalism and petty self-interest. Their viewpoints are dialectically different as they are themselves distant by their intellectual pursuits. This central concept Stoppard is working on is expressed in this speech of Dotty's:

> DOTTY (dry, drained): Well, it's all over now. Not only are we no longer the still centre of God's universe, we're not even uniquely graced by his footprint in man's image. Man is on the Moon, his feet on solid ground, and he has seen us whole, all in one go, little - local ... and all our absolutes, the thou-shalts and the thou-shalt-nots that seemed to be the very condition of our existence, how did they look to two moonmen with a single neck to save between them? Like the

> local customs of another place. When that thought drips through to the bottom, people won't just carry on. Because the truths that have been taken on trust, they've never had edges before, there was no vantage point to stand on and see where they stopped.[31]

The message is similar to the 'no-one was watching' speech made by the Player in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. It points to the idea that without God, and without absolute moral values, Man is suddenly stripped of a security which has supported him for thousands of years. The Jumpers themselves symbolize the mentality of the new age. The metaphor has a number of meanings; they jump through the vice-chancellor's hoop, they jump to the conclusion that there is no God, and in general they are automatons whose gymnastics represent the soulless process of reason which has replaced religious faith. Acting as a team they are able to form the impressive display of a human pyramid. But, as the spectacular opening of the play demonstrates it only takes the removal of one man to cause the collapse of the whole structure. This represents the idea that the philosophical standpoint taken by the university and the society as a whole, though impressive and convincing, is a series of 'intellectual jumps' starting from a dubious first premise, "That knowledge is only a possibility in matters that can be demonstrated as true or false".[32] Stoppard's radical interrogations may confound the conventional mind, but it drives a moral that men need to give the hidden and suppressed view a thought.

As usual no conclusion is reached, but by the end of the play Stoppard has presented us with a picture of his perception of trends in modern society. Belief in God and the validity of moral values has become the exception rather than the rule,

and the whole concept of the 'value' of human life is being eroded without any viable replacement of religion. This is the play in which Stoppard deals with the sickness of modern man in such generalized terms. His concern with humanitarian problems later takes on a different form, a change of direction gleaned in these lines from *Jumpers*:

> DOTTY: The Theory of Descriptions was not what was on his [Bertrand Russell's] mind that night … he was trying to telephone Mao Tse Tung.
>
> GEORGE: I was simply trying to bring his mind back to matters of universal import, and away from the day-to-day parochialism of international politics.
>
> DOTTY: Universal Import You're living in Dreamland.[33]

Dotty a semi-famous former musical comedy actress has been coupled with George Moore who is a professor of Moral Philosophy. For some, the play may work better as a comedy of mismatch. His play may be best in tracing the dysfunctional marriage and the problems faced by mismatched couples. The play is also convicted with the political values and a musical theater all the way long. Stoppard brings forth an imperfect world of Moore and Dotty who are paired with different interests and brilliantly infuses ambiguity of life. Moore's situation in the play and his convictions towards the reality of God, his sense of logic adds towards Stoppard's view of morality.

While the play is a comedy filled with laughter, what seems interesting is the murder of the jumpers that takes place of which only Dotty is aware of. The dead body cannot be seen by George as the bedroom door hides it. George seems to be blind about what is happening around the house which becomes absurd and relevant in today's world. This could also be perceived as the psychological death of Dotty who, on the contrary, cries for the attention of her husband in every possible way. She becomes a character worth studying, a typical woman of the contemporary world once famous with admirers but marries a husband old enough to be her father whose philosophical commitments do not permit him to her fascinations and interests. Hinden observes:

> Throughout *Jumpers* slapstick devices and acrobatics persistently undercut George's endless speech-making. Despite his sympathetic attitude toward George, Stoppard deftly caricatures his efforts, and "de-constructs" the argument in progress. George refuses to accept absurd conclusions, yet his refusal is itself refused; his position, like that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, is "dismantled" (recalling Stoppard's favorite "Beckett joke"). In a sense, the very continuity of the play depends on such self-interruptions and distractions.[34]

The argument between George and Archie about God raises the different moral standing between them. Archie is a humanist and empiricist, while George is a believer and a philosopher. The dramatist is fully aware of the materialistic and theistic positions on god and religion, to which he allows equal space for deliberation:

> George: It occurred to you that belief in God and the conviction that God doesn't exist amount to much the same thing.
>
> Archie: It gains from careful phrasing. Religious faith and atheism differ mainly about God; about man they are in accord; Man is the highest form of life, he has duties he has rights, etcetera, and it is usually better to be kind than cruel. Even if there is some inscrutable divinity behind it all, our condition for good or ill is apparently determined by our choice of actions, and choosing seems to be a genuine human possibility. Indeed, it is surely religious zeal rather than atheism which is historically notorious in the fortunes of mankind.[35]

Stoppard represents the postmodern views of existence, which depends on how one deals with it in the social and cultural norms of life. All meaning is culturally constructed; no meaning is divinely ordained- no singular truth, no origin, no presence. All is human construct. Thus, every culture is dependent or interrelated, good and bad, well-meaning and prejudiced, creative and destructive, at the same time. So is man's identity. So is man's conception. Presupposed truths are perceived as more exploitive, subjugating, dividing man from man, nation from nation, Muslim from Christian, so forth. It abundantly appears that Stoppard enjoys a postmodern sense of ethics. This is how Derrida writes, "There is no ethics without the presence of the other, but also, and consequently without absence, dissimulation, detour, difference, writing."[3] Postmodernism is more open, more liberating, more democratic, and secular, more dialogic. It does not prescribe panacea for all ills, for it has many limitations, but it pulls down some of man's old,

outworn beliefs. There cannot be a perfect orderly and planned life in reality and that these can only be presented in the imagination which never leads to reality.

The 'on – off' appearance of the dead jumper with music persists (the existence of death in life and living. Psychologically Dotty is being ignored whatever attempt she makes to distract her husband from concentrating on the lecture he is trying to prepare, she has no voice, in such a way her voice becomes silent, she needs a silent listener, which she finds in none other than the psychologist Archie. But is Dotty really satisfied with Archie in confiding her deepest secrets? She likes to be admired; she wants to be loved more than she could possibly love herself. There seems to be something missing in every character suggesting an incomplete and finite world.

Stoppard's moral dialectic may be gauged from his position on Dotty's and Archie's logical positivism:

> (…)Things are one way or they are another way; 'better' is how we see them…But good and bad, better and worse, these are not real properties of things, they are just expressions of things, they are just expressions of our feelings about them.[37]

Even if this sounds logically reasonable, it actually insists that man's egoistic readings are the sole meaning of the world and of the existence, which Stoppard would accept as questionable assertions. Hutchings aptly sees Stoppard's plays illustrate a maxim: 'Truth depends upon where we are standing.' Such relativistic position ignores the great revelation of the Bible. In the book of St. John, Jesus preaches about truth, "I am the way the truth and the life: no man comes to the

Father but by me."[38] Stoppard calls himself a 'moralist affronted by relativism'. In every case, in Stoppard, one realizes there are two choices: one can 'stick to a principle' or one can 'make a mental adjustment.'[39] Hutchings calls the decisive choice a compromise. By the term of compromise, one may be aware of an individualistic position in dilution; rather Stoppard would better appreciate going for any consensual position among all contenders, since no position, to him, would be accepted as dogmatically right, or the only truth.

Another aspect of Stoppard's theater may attract critical attention, that is, he does not seem to give much importance to the female characters in his plays, rather he portrays them as characters with significant roles subservient to their male counterparts, and as a tool for reinventing the self. In *Jumpers*, the only female character Dotty does not seem to have a stable mind, rather she is confused to make choices between George Moore and Archie. Dotty is being ignored whatever attempt she makes to distract her husband from concentrating on the moral lecture he is trying to prepare, she has no voice; in such a way her voice becomes silent needing a silent listener. Miss Maddie Gotobed in *Dirty Linen and New-found-land* is a secretary who does not have knowledge about secretarial work; as a typist she is slow and lacks the qualifications of a secretary. Throughout the play she is being teased by the members of the House of Commons and has been told what to record through specific dictations. Riley's wife in *Enter a Free Man* becomes one of the mime supporters of Riley where everyone rejects him, his daughter always seems to oppose his inventions and wants him to enroll himself in the 'Labour Exchange'. Though Stoppard powerfully portrays the male characters, he does not seem to be

equally confident in defining and empowering his female characters with intellect and self-possession.

On the whole, he has refused to entertain "the unquestioning affirmation"[40] of dogmatism. His mode of dialectic abundantly presents the moral of consensual attitude in every aspect of life. This attitude on the part of Stoppard is connected with his use of parody and play, which will form major discussions in the next chapter.

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Chapter V: Parody and the Play.

Parody renders Stoppard's theater to be an entertaining performance with serious morals. However, the serious intents are by no means a legitimate formula for old assumptions and beliefs to revive; the more significant purpose rather is to reclaim the fundamentals of life's values and the freedom of conviction. To Stoppard the freedom of conviction is not to be exercised from certain imposed presuppositions; in other words, it may be cultivated in interactive discourses, in dialogic processes such as the present is in a dialogue with the past, the self-reflexive contemporary with the self-legitimating traditions. On looking at the characterization in Stoppard's major plays, a steady impression is gathered that his characters are not individuals engaged in exploring from a distance what has been conventionally held as truth; rather they appear in spirit to be more Socratic or even pre-Socratic in fresh dialectics on various traditional postulates from radical perspectives. 'Dialectic, the final stage of education for a philosopher is also serious play,' as Krentz observes. 'The very topic of the Republic, which of a just life in a just society, reveals a Socrates addressing a serious issue in a playful frame: he jokes with Adeimantos and Glaucon, he uses allegories, comparisons and irony.'[1]

Stoppard's dramatic approach comes close to the dialectically playful serious mode rather than the self-perpetuating monologic dogmas or illusionary realism. And in this interplay of views, discourses and premises charting plays of Stoppard, parody creates a full state of play in the playful sense. Thus parody has its

preeminent position in an entire dialogic relationship to make truth as open-ended as life is.

In the *Travesties*, Carr provides some of the best parodies by his reactionary exchanges, while presenting crucial clashes of philosophy that demean the position of both Joyce and the Dadaist Tzara:

> What is an artist? For every thousand people there's nine hundred doing the work, ninety doing well, nine doing good and one lucky bastard who's the artist.[2]

Further, Carr argues:

> Artists are members of a privileged class. Art is absurdly overrated by artists, which is understandable, but what is strange is that it is absurdly overrated by everyone else….
>
> The idea of artist as a special human being is art's greatest achievement, and it's a fake![3]

The crisscross of views held by great ideologues in the play unfolds that every structure, every image, every opinion is subject to interrogation from a different angle, and that no meaning is universally stable.

Robert Phiddian makes up a case that is built on the Derridean sense of deconstruction that parody and deconstruction are almost the same thing. Considering a passage from *Of Grammatology*, Phiddian remarks:

> It is clear that deconstruction, especially as Derrida practices it, nests in the structure of the texts and ideas it criticizes, as a cuckoo infiltrates and takes over the nests of other birds. It operates from inside the arguments of metaphysical texts and systems such as structuralism and phenomenology, showing how they cannot totalize the visions they proclaim, and precisely where they double and collapse. It is not primary thought, always secondary, always "borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure." And this is precisely what parody does too.[4]

Since the beginning of the present thesis, it is strongly felt that Stoppard's plays are also examples which illustrate the Derridean sense of deconstruction and play.

Stoppard's susceptibility to word-play is wonderfully diverting, but it is no more 'diversionary' than Shakespeare's cultivation of the quibble. Like Beckett, he knows that the precision and flexibility of our language measures the breadth and generosity of our vision of life. A concern with 'the way language and logic can be used and misused' is in the end a moral concern, as well as a source of amusement. And Stoppard's own achievement, in spite of his talk about 'seriousness compromised by frivolity,' endorses his claim that 'art . . . is important because it provides the moral matrix, the moral sensibility, from which we make our judgments about the world.'[5]

Sometimes, the confusion arises when the participants approach a conversation with different sets of assumptions about the context in which it is being

conducted. As Clive James has put it, in one of the most perceptive accounts of the significance of Stoppard's word-games:

> [. . .]he is at his strongest when one precise meaning is transformed into another precise meaning with the context full-blown in each case . . . .it is the plurality of contexts that concerns Stoppard: ambiguities are just places where contexts join.[6]

English theater has been adorned with celebrated names having distinctive parodic intent such as G B Shaw, Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett, to name only a few among others. In certain aspects of drama, Stoppard resembles each of his predecessors only at certain moments. However, his plays consistently exploit and celebrate the semiotic energy of intertextuality in which the inverting and re-contextualizing art of parody and the paradoxical involvement of play are invariably present.

Literary critics, philosophers and cultural theorists express deep interest in the concept of play and playfulness of human consciousness. Some critics affirm that play exists actually as "a way of being, not only a way of knowing[7] Contemporary critics and playwrights are now advancing play (playfulness) as an important dimension of serious action inherent and present in the expression of artistic and non-artistic human. A journey into various philosophical undertakings of its concept seems to lead to the conclusion that play is crucial as traditional philosophical concepts like truth, knowledge, meaning, and value are in drama. The sense of play however mostly undermines the self-authenticated reference of the traditional. In *Dirty Linen*, Stoppard induces such type of advancement of play

where forth the political system of the House of Commons have been artistically postulated parodying the political system of his times. A meeting held in the chairman's chamber discusses about newspapers and columnists:

> Maddie: It isn't the people, it's the newspapers.
>
> Mc Teazle: That's true.
>
> Cocklebury Smythe: Well the newspapers are the people in a sense—they are the channel of the government's answerability to the governed. The Fourth Estate of the realm speaking for the hearts and minds of the people.
>
> Mrs. Ebury: And on top of that they're as smug a collection of inaccurate, hypocritical, self-important, bullying, shoddily printed sag-bags as you'd hope to find in a month of Sundays, and dailies, and weeklies aren't much better.[8]

Stoppard plays with the political House of Commons and the committee under it. It's just that, "you can't have a committee washing dirty linen in the corridors of power unless every member is above suspicion."[9] This system has been ideologically inclined playing the minds of the commons by the authority. Stoppard names his characters in the play appropriately, for instance Miss Maddie Gotobed is the secretary who ironically gets her job "with flying knickers."[10] Mr Mc Teazle a member of the committee seems to be a teaser and Cocklebury-Smythe a womanizer.

Derrida's idea of play postulates that the relationship between world and things is one of intimacy, but not fusion. It is a relationship in which the entities- world and thing- penetrate each other, divide and remain separated: "The intimacy of world and thing is present in the separation of the between; it is present in the difference"[11]. According to Derrida, "*différance* is literally neither a word nor a concept."[12] Differance are rather opposites that are already united; they depend on each other integrally, thus, no presence without absence.

Stoppardian play seems to mean dealing with philosophical concepts in a witty, ironic and linguistically complex way, usually with multiple timelines and visual humour. A good example is *Arcadia* (1993), a bittersweet country-house comedy that sweeps between Regency England and today, taking in discussions of romanticism, classicism and thermodynamics. The play suggests that we are forever re-enacting the patterns of the past with mild variations – or, in other words, that the human heart beats to an iterated algorithm. Thomasina's distant relatives echo her lines through time, with a word misplaced. When Thomasina weeps for the destruction of the library of Alexandria and all the lost plays of the Athenians, Septimus says:

> You should no more grieve for [them] than for a buckle from your first shoe, or for your lesson book which shall be lost when you are old. We shed as we pick up, like travelers who must carry everything in our arms, and what we let fall will be picked up by those behind. The procession is very long and life is very short. But there is nothing outside the march, so nothing can be lost.[13]

The most important speech in the play, Hannah suggests that the answer lies in the process of trying to understand, while we can. We find meaning by questing on, even in the face of failure and extinction. She tells Valentine:

> It's all trivial – your grouse, my hermit, Bernard's Byron. Comparing what we're looking for misses the point. It's wanting to know that makes us matter. That's why you can't believe in the afterlife, Valentine. Believe in the after, by all means, but not the life. Believe in God, the soul, the spirit, believe in angels if you like, but not in the great celestial get-together for an exchange of views. If the answers are in the back of the book I can wait, but what a drag. Better to struggle on knowing that failure is final.[14]

This is a sardonic comment on afterlife, holiness; endorsement of faith in life. And so in the end, Stoppard suggests the division that obsessed the 18th century – between romantics and classicists – exists in all of us. Hannah prides herself on her classical reserve, but by the final scene, it is faltering. She finally agrees to dance with Gus, the mysterious, mute young son of the house who seems to have an inexplicable knowledge of the distant past. He is a symbol of all the things that lie beyond her rational explanations – and she embraces him. Septimus is a stern scientist who venerates geometry, but he ends as the most romantic figure of all – hermit in a Gothic garden trying vainly to vindicate the theories of his lost love. In this light, it may be said that Stoppard believes that a fully human self does not deny its being by holding together all mutually discontented tendencies; in other words, as his characters exemplify, contextually above, without both halves of the 18th

century self, an impulse to understand the rules that govern the world, and an impulse to overthrow them and create ourselves anew, we are not fully human.[15]

In the last scene *(Arcadia)*, the characters from the 18th century and the 20th century are on stage together, occupying the same space. They cannot see each other, yet they seem to be speaking to each other all the same, as the implications of Thomasina's discoveries tumble out. As the music rises, Thomasina and Septimus waltz together for the last time – a dance that is another iterated algorithm, always the same, always slightly different – and Hannah takes Gus's hand for a dance of their own. The sound of the coming fire slowly rises. The waltzing couples dance in circles past each other, oblivious to each other, and intensely aware of each other, all at once.

It is a moment that shows the power of the play of ideas to fuse together concepts and characters into a theatrical grenade. This final scene is the waltz that takes place inside all of us – of our ancestors dancing with our present, of reason dancing with irrationality, and of hope dancing with despair, as the roaring, crackling sound of the heat-death draws ever closer.[16]

Johan Huizinga defines in his Homo Ludens (1938) humans as playful beings and argues that play is a fundamental fact of every human expression. For him, play is older than culture, because culture presupposes human society, but "animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing."[17] Law, poetry, war, culture, and music, all encompass playfulness in both their essence and manifestation:

> The spirit of playful competition is, as a social impulse, older than culture itself and pervades all life like a veritable ferment. Ritual grew up in sacred play; poetry was born in play and nourished on play; music and dancing were pure play...We have to conclude, therefore, that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come from play...it arises in and as play, and never leaves it.[18]

In "*The Ontology of the Work of Art and its Hermeneutic Significance*" in his *Truth and Method (1960),* Hans Georg Gadamer discusses play in the context of philosophy. To him play is neither the state of mind of the author, nor the work of art, nor the freedom of subjectivity in play, but "the mode of being of the work of art itself."[19] The existentialist philosopher clarifies that play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play. He also mentions Huizinga, who investigated the element of play anthropologically in all cultures and who wrote that "the savage himself knows no conceptual distinctions between being and playing."[20] In conclusion Gadamer observes that "man too, plays". He significantly states, "all the sacred games of art are only remote imitations of the infinite play of the world, the eternally self -creating work of art"[21]. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Stoppard induces the playfulness of the Player. The Player and his band are also on the ship, but he is not especially surprised to learn of this treacherous turn of events, saying, "In our experience, most things end in death." Infuriated, Guildenstern plunges a knife into the Player's throat and watches him die spectacularly. After a moment, the Player jumps up, brushes himself off and reveals the knife to be a spring-loaded fake. Guildenstern is too distraught to be impressed,

saying that dying is not a romantic idea and death is not a game that will soon be over.[22]

It may be said that death unsettles the monologic of absolute beliefs, presupposed truths of life; it is 'not'. Further, ironic inversion, i.e. an essential characteristic of all parody can be appropriately seen in the context of Ros and Guil, when Shakespeare's minor characters are pertinently recalled. Even the Stoppardian thought uncannily reminds us of the Derridian differance, particularly in terms of game and play. If difference is realized in the process by a spirit of play, death is weirdly experienced only in the process of living. Death is defined as "the absence of presence." The phrase 'nothing more' does the travestying of death's mythologized terror. Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy* conceives the notion of play as inseparable from différance, which is neither existence, nor essence. Bass has brought out its fine implications thus:

> It (differenace) cannot be followed by the lines of logical-philosophical discourse or by empirical-logical approaches. Différance is not; where "not" is the silent/invisible unfolding of the ontological difference. Différance is not a being or phenomenon, neither is it a sign or a concept. This process is both temporal and spatial. Derrida describes it as the trace beyond that which profoundly links fundamental ontology and phenomenology. Always differing and deferring, the trace is never as it is in the presentation of itself. [23]

In the end, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern resign themselves to their fate, though Guildenstern says: "There must have been a moment, at the beginning, when we could have said -- no. But somehow we missed it."[24] Missing a possibility speaks also of having accepted a responsibility at a certain time. In the flow of time, one rarely reaches back to the beginning for a new start in life. So the clowns slide on without of course any movement to transformation. In Derrida's thought, as *Of Grammatology* insistently repeats, originary moments are hardly traceable: all begins with the trace, but there is no originary trace [25]; this spells out the disappearance of the logocentric presence. As Marian Hobson notes, "again against Nietzsche, Heidegger, says Derrida, points to a rupture between what he calls 'voice of being' and sound, *phonè*, between originary sense of being and the word, between the call of being and articulated sound."[26] For Derrida, 'But as that (originary) sense is nothing outside of language and the language of words, it is tied, if not to a particular word or to a particular system of language (concesso non dato), at least to the possibility of the word in general.'[27] They have already been consigned to death in their conception; so the play ends with two ambassadors from England informing Horatio that, at long last, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.

Stoppard's dramatic writing is interesting to read and also spectacular rather than internally structured in the classical sense. Each play by Stoppard has been conceived with an aim to engender semiotic energy on the stage, suggesting brand-new perspectives to actors, directors, and stage -costume-lighting designers as well as a new mode of perception to the spectator. The Stoppardian "play text" serves as a bridge between the "spectacle" and the contexts that interest through a constant process of association and dissociation. The pleasure to be

derived from a production of a play by Stoppard hinges on the artist's and spectator's capacity to keep up with the varying doses of "attachment" and "detachment" that the dynamic structuring of the stage-event requires".[28]

> Theatre is particularly suited to enriching our experience, vicariously and acceptably, by such representations; it is also particularly good at the study of deception itself…The potentially religious force of theatre, like the potentially sensationalized, is there in J*umpers* and *Travesties* as well as in more solemn plays; and they are performances, for us to watch together.[29]

Towards the end of Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Rosencrantz an actor gives a convincing rendering of death in agony. It is clear to the audience that these two characters are only playing the part of 'death' which can 'never be acted from personal experience.' Jim Hunter comments:

> [...]since the actor is in this case acting an actor (Player) who has previously boasted that his team can die 'heroically, comically, ironically, slowly, suddenly, distinguishingly, charmingly, or from a great height', we are also not sure whether he is acting death, or only acting an actor acting death. It is partly on whose reaction we watch: if we watch Guil's, we see he is sure he has killed the Player; so is Ros; if we watch the tragedians, we see on their faces only 'interest'. So, theatre shows us different reactions, which become different versions of the event. If Guil has 'really' killed the Player, […] it means the gentle, fastidious Guil has committed murder; and it means

> that he has proved himself able to interfere in the fixed destiny of himself.[30]

Stoppard's sense of play does mostly not evidence a predetermined field of play unlike Gadamer's theory of play in which certain fundamental rules guide and maintain game and play, the breaking of which would invite some disaster. It may reasonably be assumed that in art as in Stoppard's drama, difference and discursivity set the spirit of play for the spectacle that each play of his turns out. On the other hand, Stoppard's examples might illustrate nearly what Roland Barthes says of a literary text.

Barthes's work informs the reader that "the text is structured like play-children's play, musical performance, or the excess motion in a machine."[31] For Barthes, In *From Work to Text*, Barthes presents in structuralist terms a Bakhtinian view: the text exhibits an infinite playfulness of the signifier; the text provokes "the activity of associations, contiguities, carryings-over coincides with a liberation of symbolic energy (lacking it, man would die)"[32] Text is also "a system with neither close, nor centre"[33]. For Barthes: the author is dead, and the act of reading is not an act of playing with a text. "Text itself plays," and what the reader does, is he/she "plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game"[34] Extrapolating from Barthes's position, God, as a writer of a six-day play and a reader during the seventh day, may actually play twice over even while seen in a non-play state.

In spite of the more recent reader-response theories of Wolfgang Iser or Stanley Fish, the center, or the power of reading has shifted historically from the work of art to author, then to reader, and seems to be now centered on the critic as

the most indispensable part in the process. Stoppard places the two theater critics Birdboot and Moon at the centre of the play *The Real Inspector Hound*. He goes on to satirize the profession of theater critics by exploring the hierarchy of society, particularly the role of fill-ins, second-strings, and substitutes in relation to their "betters". Nowhere else is this more evident than in the fretting of Moon over the existence of Higgs:

> Moon : It is as if we only existed one at a time, combining to achieve continuity. I keep space warm for Higgs. My presence defines his absence, his absence confirms my presence, his presence precludes mine […][35]

The play also explores the cynical approach that critics take to plays and appears to deliver a message claiming that all critiques are subject to their own ideologies or biases. While Moon and Birdboot are understandably extreme examples, Stoppard uses these characters to show how self-aggrandizement can muddle the true purpose of a play through Moon (who uses the play as an attempt to show off his skills in the brief period where Higgs, the person he is standing in for, is absent) or how other interests can jeopardize the integrity of a play through Birdboot, who pens lavish reviews as long as there are visually pleasing female leads in the play:

> It is at this point that the play for me comes alive. The groundwork has been well and truly laid, and the author has taken the trouble to learn from the masters of the genre. He has created a real situation, and few will doubt his ability to resolve it with a startling

> denouement. Certainly that is what it so far lacks, but it has a beginning, a middle and I have no doubt it will prove to have an end. For this let us give thanks, and double thanks for a good clean show without a trace of smut. But perhaps even all this would be for nothing, were it not for a performance which I consider to be one of the summits in the range of contemporary theatre. In what is possibly the finest Cynthia since the war.[36]

Critics are holding the key to the multiple, layered mysteries of the play by having a more comprehensive view upon the intricate rules; no informed reader could dream to compete with those who master the scholarship of the theory of language and literature. The reader's anxiety becomes the following: how will the multiple, dead, or decentered author continue to play/write with such accompanying deconstructive critical Cerberus eyeing him/her? readers are allowed the power of their own interpretive community, for every reader will appreciate a work of art according to his/her own socially or otherwise determined standards of taste. Stanley Fish has multi-layered the play, decentering the center again: the interpretation game is taking place today among various "interpretive communities," [37] working the same path as language did once heteroglossically for Bakhtin.

Play according to Whitaker is something "grounded not in impotent mastery but in spontaneous reciprocity, inherent mutuality."[38] Gussow gives his opinion about Stoppard's art in theater:

> (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 of badinage, arguing himself in and out of a quandary.[39]

Stoppard induces parody and the role of playing in his plays as well as in everyday life. He plays the conscious mind and postulates life as a comic event staged in front of the audience, mimicking life. Stoppard has his own ethics in writing plays, he states that:

> The subject matter of the play exists before the story and it is always something abstract. I get interested by a notion of some kind and see that it has dramatic possibilities. Gradually I see how a pure idea can be married with a dramatic event. But it is still not a play until you invent a plausible narrative.[40]

The different concepts informing ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ become apparent here. He talks about the importance of stage settings, but what most important to him is the conscious mind of the writer connecting his spectators with puns. Our ordinary day to day lives are inherent in a play. The act of talking, singing, speaking all imposes upon play. Stoppard further states that:

> In the theater there is often a tension, almost a contradiction, between the way real people would think and behave, and a kind of imposed dramaticness. I like dialogue that is slightly more brittle than life.[41]

Stoppard imposes something which is dramatic and contradicts reality with playfulness. His plays induce a kind of humour which seems quite amusing with laughter and caricature. He goes on to say that:

> I write plays from beginning to end, without making stabs at intermediate scenes, so the first thing I write is the first line of the play. By that time I have formed some idea of the set, but I don't write that down. I don't write down anything that I can keep in my head—stage directions and so on. When I have got to the end of the play—which I write with a fountain pen, you can't scribble with a typewriter—there is almost nothing on the page except what people say. Then I dictate the play, ad-libbing all the stage directions, into a tape machine from which my secretary transcribes the first script.[42]

Theater has been and always will be a part of life in the world that we live in. It can be used as a means of portraying the day to day life of a culture, group of persons, identity, political, social and economic aspects of life and living. Stoppard deems important human values and paves towards the norm of making his plays interesting, absorbing, and comic by making his plays wide and open in such a way that every idea has a role to play in the big game of life. He implies the truth of life in his plays, life which is filled with chaos trying to hide our worse enemy through perfection and denial. Jim Hunter talks about Stoppard's theatricality:

> Stoppard takes abundant risks; and although he likes to be involved in the first production of the play, and has admitted a Beckettian fantasy of being able to score every detail and gesture, he also admits the fantasy is misguided, and he hands his director and actors an unpredictable, restless text with many changes of mood, many theatrical set-pieces, and a number of options.[43]

Stoppard feels that a play should be well equipped with a perfect setting fit for the mood and theme of a play. In *Travesties*, Stoppard takes care that every detail is kept in mind, in Act I of the play, he postulates a relevant stage setting:

> *The play is set in Zurich, in two locations: the drawing room of Henry Carr's apartment* ('THE ROOM'), *and a section of the Zurich Public Library* ("THE LIBRAY"). *Most of the action takes place within Carr's memory, which goes back to the period of the First World War, and this period is reflected appropriately in the design and costumes, etc. It is supposed that Old Carr has lived in the same apartment since that time.*[44]

As well as in Act II, the library has been staged carefully with the right amount of light:

> *The set however is not "lit" at the beginning of the Act.*
>
> *Apart from the bookcases, etc. the Library's furniture includes* CECILY*'S desk, which is perhaps more like a counter forming three sides of a square.*

> *Most of the light is on* CECILY *who stands patiently at the front of the stage, waiting for the last members of the audience to come in and sit down.*[45]

The play is a memory play, Carr's memory has been portrayed as faulty, taking place in two time frames, one in 1974, during Carr's old age and the other in 1917, when Carr's life intersected with those of three major thinkers: writer James Joyce, artist Tristan Tzara and the revolutionary Lenin.

Stoppard brilliantly trivializes language and playful action in his play, which Frank Marcus approves in *Travesties*:

> The effect of *Travesties* […] is exhilarating! It is nothing short of miraculous […] brilliant and replete with limericks, puns, wordplay, contradiction and paradoxes.[46]

He induces ideas in his plays in such a way that it entertains his audiences as well as portrays the harsh realities of life through stage performances. To accept life as it is by being conscious of the hardships in life that one has to face through truth and reality. In *Enter a Free Man*, George Riley faces life as it is, he seems to be the prototype of a postmodernist character. Riley's friend Harry talks about humanity:

> […] This is every man for himself. Survival of the fittest. Dog eat dog. Sink or swim. That's how things are in this cruel commercial world. It offends a man of my sensitive nature.[47]

Stoppard's plays tell us at once that the happenings and characters in them are of the playwright's invention. The playwright images and adds reason by observing the world. Thus instigating truth not only because they convince us of real occurrences or existing persons, but because they show the reality of the dramatic imagination, instanced by the playwright and also by that of his characters. We may also say that for Stoppard "The play's the thing."[48]

In *The Real Inspector Hound* While the story is set in a theatre, the play within the play is set in Muldoon Manor, a lavish manor surrounded by "desolate marshes" and "treacherous swamps" and paradoxically also located near a cliff. It is a direct parody of Agatha Christie's "closed" settings in which no one can enter or leave, so the characters know that the murderer must be one of them. A happy juxtaposition between fantasy and reality is observed in *The Real Inspector Hound* as Birdboot and Moon are able to live out their fantasies through their involvement in the play. Birdboot becomes the handsome young dapper who promiscuously gallivants about the stage in the role formerly occupied by Simon, while Moon finally transforms into the first-string critic and is able to play the role of the leading man when he puts on the shoes of Inspector Hound. Both critics become the characters of their dreams; they no longer are the husband that sneaks around behind his wife's back and the man who desperately wants to be recognized and admired. They in essence become the characters of the play, further blurring the line between a "stage world" and reality.

So, at times, Stoppard's theater resembles Brecht's Epic Theater in that it reacts against the naturalistic modes of the impressionistic drama. As in Brecht, the

Stoppardian atmosphere wants his audiences to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognize social injustice and exploitation and to be moved to go forth from the theater and effect change in the world outside. By highlighting the constructed nature of the theatrical event, Stoppard like Brecht hopes to communicate that the audience's reality was equally constructed and, as such, was changeable. From his actors Stoppard demanded not realism and identification with the role but an objective style of playing, to become in a sense detached observers. The dominant mode of representing ideas concerning realism and philosophy in Stoppard has been one of parody and play.

The sense of play and parody may be realized from the players' situation of uncertainties in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* where Stoppard employs such ways of inducing reality in the real where communication deems meaningless between the two major characters Ros and Guil;

> Guil : Why is he mad?
>
> Ros : I don't know!
>
> Player : The old man thinks he is 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]

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are in a world where reason and expectations does not seem to be operating. The game that they play, a game of questions, for passing time is also quite ironic. The two characters play a game by asking questions and answer with another question, instigating the audience that the world is full of questions for which we have no answers but another question and this goes on and never seem to end in our lives.

For Derrida, identity and meaning are not necessarily stable or permanent, they are processes. Thus, what is at play is the differentiation between elements in an open-ended un-ordered temporal arrangement. Whatever can be thought is always conceived in relation to something else, differing from something else, and consequently always in the process of forming its own identity; any concept, any sign, any structure, any being.[50]

Stoppard's works are full of intellectual arguments. He uses playful manner to present serious matters like perspectives of art and science. His critics are of different opinions, while some sing praises on his intellectuality, others degrade the very fact that his plays lack intensity:

> To his detractors, 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.[51]

Stoppard's theater works to the point of a spectacle most of the times. His characters do not project the progress of truth from the Shavian war of ideas, nor do they develop from the dark inner conflicts as in Pinter's plays. However conscious of the traditions of Shaw, Pinter and Beckett among others, Stoppard has developed a postmodern theater which successfully and playfully renders the message, political or otherwise, by modes of parody and play.

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Chapter VI: Conclusion.

The present study explores the creative construct of the Stoppardian play and examines how far the dramatist has succeeded in turning his construct into a meaningful experience for the spectator beyond the bounds of unhelpful criticism of his plays as the texts of plagiarism and pastiche. Still, one would agree with Stoppard that the play is the thing. He has emphasized that plays are events rather than texts, not to be merely interpreted by professionals. They are written to happen, not to be read. So, the interest of the present study consists in exploring the possibility of parody radically affecting his creative vision. As expressed in chapter I, Parody has been elevated as one of the most important artistic device, one of the agents of artistic creation and innovation. According to Greek writers, parody has been described as elements of a work reused but not necessarily ridiculed. There may also be inclinations towards the use of other intentions than ridicule. Pope and Dryden used satire as a dominant mode to ridicule prevalent social realities. Parody in the twentieth century, has been used as a weapon to target not only the parodied text but also something else. The postmodernist parodists move towards recontextualizing, connecting the past while registering differences brought by modernity.

Stoppard has been reputed as a writer of serious comedy. Evolving from the modernist tradition of English drama he has brilliantly moved a step ahead from his contemporaries. Being a radical parodist, Stoppard has made his way through recontextualizing and parodying the well known works of William Shakespeare,

Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Oscar Wilde, Arnold Wesker and Arthur Miller among others. His intellectual inclinations are with a difference portraying in his works uncertainties and incompatibilities between the ability of an individual and perception towards reality. Parody seems to play a major role in the plays of Stoppard which he does with deep interest and wit. For him, parody is a crucial element found in his dramatic art as well as in his theatricality. He imitates his predecessors with contrasting ideas and languages with a different perspective.

In chapter II, Stoppard makes creative use of intertextuality with a network of textual relationships. In *Arcadia*, Stoppard talks about knowledge and explores the nature of the world with questions that examine staple truths of science, religion and romanticism. He establishes that no being is superior to the other and that one is always connected with the other. Plurality of life and freedom of the perception is being shown. The splits between reason and desire have been treated in Stoppard. In *Jumpers*, Dotty in her desire to be noticed by her husband George Moore screams intentionally for his attention, but the philosopher husband seems to be only interested in preparing for a lecture on moral philosophy. Stoppard's play *Arcadia* is an intertext of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest.* The interweaving of time span from the present to past in the nineteenth century makes the Stoppardian reader aware that love and romance has been going on since olden times. The characters of the play are separated by centuries yet united by the mysteries of chaos and attraction in the concluding scene of the play where the two pairs Thomasina and Septimus, Hanna and Gus are dancing on the stage. Throughout, *Arcadia* reminds us of Derrida's difference where opposites are placed and played simultaneously, where chaos and order, attraction and repulsion, past and

present, young and old seem to be dependent on each other integrally, henceforth, no presence is possible without absence and no absence without presence.

Through an intertextual reading of Stoppardian plays, "[…] all forms of interpretation involve interplay among texts." [1] His predecessors from Shakespeare to Pinter, parodic innovations have been construed with language constructs through characters. Stoppard brilliantly exhorts the varied aspects of "textual interplay" and strictly controls the very aspects of defying the play. John Heilpern talks about stoppard's art of interplay:

> The dramatist of champagne ideas and intellectual curiosity can become dense and difficult in his joy of mind. But the "Shakespeare Defense" will not do. It is said that we don't always understand Shakespeare's plays, either. But Shakespeare is a breeze compared to Mr. Stoppard. And Mr. Stoppard doesn't borrow other dramatists' plots. He has no need. He has no plots.[2]

Parody as a device has been used by Stoppard in his plays not by imitating but by re-working and relating the original works of his predecessors from a different perspective. His plays are invested with critical as well as sympathetic innovations of the past text or contexts. *Rosencrantz and Guildensern Are Dead* parodies Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but without a narrative form. For Stoppard the narrative line in a play does not seem to be important, on the other hand he believes that ideas are not to be taken for granted. Unlike Beckett's *Waitng for Godot* where communication is not possible, Stoppard radically induces in his plays a meandering signification of life. The two tramps Vladimir and Estragon have been dehumanized

in a meaningless world where life is stuck on existentialist waiting, waiting for something that is unknown and unavoidable. Stoppard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* parodies Beckett to some extent; Ros and Guil appear to be more philosophical and communication between them seems to have more sense compared to the stale mate situation of Vladimir and Estragon. Unlike the modernist structures and traditions, Stoppard's plays enact a postmodern situation where an acknowledgement of the undecidable, however incoherently comprehended, is met with realistic, identifiable men but with witty measures of parody, inscribed with an enlivening sense of playfulness. The Absurd Theater as in chapter III is thus taken to a next level in the hands of Stoppard.

Stoppard hypothesizes about the use of language in his plays. He reuses Wittgeinstein's idea of language which holds that language cannot mirror the real world. This notion can be detected in Stoppard's plays especially in *Dogg's Hamlet* where, a new kind of language called Dogg language which has been invented to serve a particular purpose like a scaffold raised to the purpose of completing a building. Stoppard's neologism is supplemented by gestures and actions to render the meaning possible, and it is felt towards the end of the play that the spectators are well versed with the Dogg language postulated by playwright. The clashing of conflicting ideas has been brought into account in his plays making use of dialogues especially in *Travesties*. In the play Stoppard brings forth a rigorous dialogue wherein ideas of different personalities like Tzara, Lenin, Joyce and Carr are brought into account, each having their own personal stand. This portrayal of diverse ideas in one situation has been one of the techniques of Stoppard postulating the paradox in language. Nevertheless, he warns us like postmodernist of over-

estimation of the language in representing reality or in inherently holding the essential meaning.

The Socratic dialectic of open dialogue has been used in the plays of Stoppard, which can be illustrated from *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor*, where characters like Alexander and Ivanov are held in a cell together each having opposing views with the other. Alexander seems to be concerned with the political delineations while Ivanov is only interested in music. The two are contradictory of one another and Stoppard induces conversations of questions and answers to bring meaning to the dialogues. Thus awakening the audience about 'freedom' and directing towards the activity of need, desires and ideas. Stoppard also postulates a complicated human situation bringing forth questions and doubts through complexities of truth which remains indefinable. As in chapter IV, to Stoppard no moral standards can claim the meaning of the perfect absolute.

The opposing elements of good and evil, heaven and hell, chaos and order have been worked by Stoppard as something that is and always be a part of politics, society, religion, ethics. These contradictory elements define one another and that no text can have a fixed meaning is what Stoppard implies. He radically uses the past text and molds it with a different perspective. For example in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Stoppard brilliantly interplays Shakespeare's *Hamlet* making the minor characters visible giving them thought provoking roles. He complicates Ros and Guil by making them self-conscious yet helpless. Similarly, *Enter a Free Man* is a play about Riley who seems to be free yet bounded by social convictions. Riley is an inventor who has never succeeded in any of his inventions, becomes acceptable only when he conforms to the nuances of his daughter.

Metatheatere is one device Stoppard frequently uses in his plays. *The Real Inspector Hound* is a metaplay, an adaptation of Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap.* The play is in a 'whodunit' style, where theatre critics enjoy themselves giving their own opinions and ending the play according to their perception. To Stoppard radical interrogations may confound the conventional mind, but it drives a moral that men need to give the hidden and suppressed view a thought. In an interview with Shusha Guppy, Stoppard goes on talking about theatre by stating:

> I write plays from beginning to end, without making stabs at intermediate scenes, so the first thing I write is the first line of the play. By that time I have formed some idea of the set, but I don't write that down. I don't write down anything that I can keep in my head—stage directions and so on. When I have got to the end of the play—which I write with a fountain pen, you can't scribble with a typewriter—there is almost nothing on the page except what people say. Then I dictate the play, ad-libbing all the stage directions, into a tape machine from which my secretary transcribes the first script.[3]

Stoppard emerges as an intellectual and entertaining parodist in his plays. It can be said that parody has a seminal place in Stoppard's dramatic art and theatrical performance. Likewise, chapter V has discussed Stoppard as a radical parodist and an that energetic sense of play is insistent in his plays. The kind of parody Stoppard sensitively apprehends may be underlined as postmodern.

Kennedy's talks about his opinion on Stoppard's art:

> For his own dialogue Stoppard does not resort to pastiche Shakespeare. He writes an exploratory dialogue in a collage of styles for the two attendants and the Player, marked by a short staccato form of stichomythia with echoes of *Waiting for Godot*. And this dialogue encircles the host play, probes it and swallows it. As befits parodic art, which self-consciously displays the codes of style it is discarding, the dialogue points to itself: tells of its failure to sustain structured action and laments its own decay. More than once Aristotelian principles are evoked with ironic nostalgia (in a situation where the 'story' cannot cohere, and all the mirrors reflect further mirrors).[4]

Some of Stoppard's plays frankly aim to be nothing more than what he calls 'nuts-and-bolts comedy,' farces 'without an idea in their funny heads.'[5] Even in the more substantial works, such as *Jumpers* and *Travesties*, this brand of verbal high-spirits has its place. Without being too solemn about what is intended as fun, however, these word-games can be seen as performing the additional function of keeping the audience alert to the endless possibilities for linguistic confusion.

Stoppard thus represents the postmodern views of existence that all meaning is culturally constructed and that no meaning is divinely ordained. There is neither single truth nor presence. Man's identity is dependent or interrelated, good and bad, well-meaning and prejudiced, creative and destructive, at the same time and so is man's conception. Stoppard's postmodern theatre is more open, more

liberating, more democratic, and secular, more dialogic dealing with the dynamics of plurality. There cannot be a perfect orderly and planned life in reality and that these can only be presented in the imagination which never leads to reality. Stoppard's mode of dialectic thus abundantly presents the moral of consensual attitude in every aspect of life.

Stoppard's theater as already discussed is entertaining with serious morals. Interactive discourses, in dialogic processes such as the present is in a dialogue with the past, the self-reflexive contemporary with the self-legitimating traditions. Bhaktin's idea of polyphony and carnivalisque are found relevant in explaining certain aspects of the Stoppardian play. Rodney comments on Stoppard's play *Travesties* as having the texture of "shot-silk, always shifting and shining—and, like life, paradoxical."[6]

Tom Stoppard has been thus portrayed as a postmodernist playwright with high degree of intellect. His plays are worth examining giving insights into the theater world where life becomes more meaningful in different aspects of life whether it be social, political, religious, scientific or psychological. To him, "The subject matter of the play exists before the story and it is always something abstract." He goes on to say "I get interested by a notion of some kind and see that it has dramatic possibilities. Gradually I see how a pure idea can be married with a dramatic event."[7] Postmodern premises and analogies have been found to be invigorating his works whereby he proposes no absolutes.

On the basis of the forgone discussions undertaken in various chapters it may be concluded that Stoppard is a postmodern parodist as well as postmodern

realist. His radical interrogations of conventional beliefs and morality make of him politically a radical and critically a realist having brilliant capacities which playfully entertain as well as morally liberate.

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APPENDICES

Name of Candidate	**:**	**Nelly Vanlalliani Tochhong**
Degree	**:**	**Ph.D**
Department	**:**	**English**
Date of payment of admission fee	**:**	**No.9287, Dt. 20-3-2007.**

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. BPGS	**:**	**27th March 2007.**
2. SCHOOL BOARD	**:**	**26th Feb. 2008.**
3. REGISTRATION	**:**	**MZU/ Ph.D/ 192/ 24.3.2008.**
4. DATE OF SUBMISSION	**:**	**14th September 2012.**
5. Title of Thesis	**:**	**Parody and the Play: A Study of Selected Plays of Tom Stoppard.**

(Dr. Lalrindiki T. Fanai)
Head
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BIO-DATA

Name	**:**	**Nelly Vanlalliani Tochhong**
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Educational Qualification

Examination	**Board/University**	**Div/Grade**	**Percentage**	**Year**
HSLC	Mizoram Board of School Education	Ist	64%	1992
HSSLC	Meghalaya Board of School Education	IInd	54%	1996
BA (Eng)	North Eastern Hill University	IInd	52%	1999
MA (Eng)	Mizoram University	IInd	55.50%	2002
Pre-Ph.D. Course work	Mizoram University	'B'	5.93	2011
B.Ed.	Indira Gandhi National Open University	'B'		

(Nelly Vanlalliani Tochhong)
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OTHER RELEVENT INFORMATION

1 Attended and participated in a National Seminar on '**Narrative and Representation**' organized by the Department of English, Mizoram University on 7th and 8th November, 2002 at Aizawl, Mizoram.

2 Attended and participated in '**Communicative English Workshop**' organized by the Department of English, NEHU, Shillong in collaboration with Cambridge University Press, India from 23rd-24th September, 2008.

3 Attended and participated in a regional seminar entitled '**Rewriting Narratives of North East**' sponsored by Sahitya Akademi and the Department of English, Mizoram University on 18th-19th November, 2008 at Aizawl, Mizoram.

4 Attended and participated in a regional seminar entitled '**The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity: Emerging Literature of the North East India**' organized by the Department of English, Mizoram University in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla on 10th-11th March, 2009 at Aizawl, Mizoram.

5 Attended and participated in workshop on Translation, '**Emergent Literatures of North East India**' organized by the Department of English, Mizoram University in collaboration with UGC – SAP (DRS-I) on 29th-30th March 2012.

6 Published an article entitled '**Tom Stoppard's Play as Playful Intertextuality**' in Labyrinth an International Refereed Journal of Postmodern Studies in the October issue 2012.

7 Attended Pre-Ph.D. course work from August-December 2011.