

ENDLESS PURSUIT OF REALITY THROUGH METADRAMATIC DEVICES IN
TOM STOPPARD'S PLAYS *ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD*,
THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND, AND *TRAVESTIES*.

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to investigate the question of reality in Tom Stoppard's plays *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, and *Travesties*. Each of these plays closely examines the nature of reality and certainty and shows Stoppard as the critique of grand narratives of Reality, Truth, and Art. By deconstructing these master narratives, Stoppard attempts to invalidate the convictions that reality is fixed and that art should faithfully reproduce the material world in which reality is perceived as permanent. His challenge creates a realization in the audience and makes them question the issues they previously took for granted. To divest the audience of certainty and to display the endless pursuit of reality both in life and in art, Stoppard, in his plays, makes use of some metadramatic devices. Stoppard's distinctive use of the metadramatic devices which reveal the unaccountable nature of reality and the limits of knowledge is the core of this study

Key Words: Metadrama, Postmodern Drama, Tom Stoppard

ÖZ

TOM STOPPARDIN ROSENCRANTZ VE GÜLDENSTERN ÖLDÜLER, GERÇEK MÜFETTİŞ HOUND VE TRAVESTİLER OYUNLARINDA METADRAMATİK TEKNİKLERLE YANSITILAN BITMEYEN GERÇEKLİK ARAYIŞI

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Bu tezin amacı Tom Stoppard'ın *Rosencrantz ve Guildenstern Öldüler*, *Gerçek Müfettiş Hound* ve *Travestiler* oyunlarında gerçeklik sorunsalını araştırmaktır. Her bir oyun gerçeklik ve kesinlik olgularının doğasını yakından inceler ve Stoppard'ı Gerçek, Doğru ve Sanat hakkındaki büyük anlatıların bir eleştirmeni olarak tanıtır. Bu büyük anlatıların yapı-bozumunu yaparken, Stoppard tek bir gerçek vardır ve sanat gerçeğin kalıcı olarak algılandığı fiziksel dünyanın sađık kopyasını üretmekle yükümlüdür anlayışlarını geçersiz kılmaya çalışır. Bu meydan okuma seyircilerde bir farkındalık yaratarak onların daha önce doğru olarak kabul ettikleri konuları sorgulamalarını sağlar. Seyircileri kesinlik duygusundan mahrum bırakmak ve hayatta ve sanatta var olan bitmek bilmeyen gerçeklik arayışını yansıtmak için Stoppard oyunlarında bazı metadramatik teknikler kullanır. Stoppardın kendine has bir şekilde kullandığı, gerçekliğin anlaşılabilir doğasını ve bilginin sınırlılığını ortaya koyan bu teknikler çalışmanın özünü oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Metadrama, Podtmodern Drama Tom Stoppard

To my family

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The 19th century witnessed a number of drastic and dramatic changes in the United Kingdom. Especially, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, England became the leading power of the world with its economy which was now based on trade and manufacturing rather than ownership of land. Besides, by the end of the century England became the world's primary imperial power as it had many colonies and this strengthened its economy, too. However, the country's transformation was an especially painful one as it experienced many social and economic problems consequent to "rapid and unregulated industrialization". (Abrams, 1043-1044). Though the new industrial age helped make life easier in many ways, many people could not keep up with the rapid changes and they became disappointed as they see the norms and traditions which they had been counting on and shaped their lives were not as useful as they used to be. They were living in a new world where they had to deal with the new rules and norms which created pessimism and sense of loss.

As a result of the new rules and norms, people started to change as well. As they understood the invalidity of the old rules and ways, they changed the way they perceive the world. This change in perspective is described by Harold Victor Routh:

But this age was realizing, every day more forcibly, that man is also a social being, and that industrial problems were already menacing the peace of Europe. Many who in an earlier age would have been content with the cult of self-perfection were now ready to accept the duty of working for others... Young men and even women were no longer too genteel to earn money; besides, there were more opportunities; and having once realized the prospect of financial independence, they quickly realized the burden of parental authority and domestic narrowness – a series of irritating frustrations, misrepresented as filial duty. (4).

Together with the economic growth and technological developments, scientific advances shaped the new society of the 19th century. With the help of the improving technology, scientists were able to work on new theories and inventions.

As a result, scientific thought was becoming superior over spiritual or metaphysical thought which later on affected the mentality of the society.

The best example of the scientific works that weakened spiritual thought is Darwin's *Origin of Species*. With the publication of Darwin's work, even the religious beliefs were questioned since Darwin rejected the creation theory derived from the Bible and came up with the evolution theory. The work suggested that "life had its own laws of reproduction and variation, leading to an endless prospect of dynamic change". (Marcus, Nicholls, 12). Darwin asserted that there was a change in the universe and religion can change too.

Some chose to assume that evolution was synonymous with progress, but most readers recognized that Darwin's theory of natural selection conflicted not only with the concept of creation derived from the Bible but also with long-established assumptions of the values attached to humanity's special role in the world. (Abrams, 1052).

Darwin's work was haunting as it challenged the accepted beliefs and norms which had been thought as 'true' or 'certain' for centuries, and it started a dispute between religion and science and gave birth to the crisis of faith.

Another important figure in the 19th century was Friedrich Nietzsche whose ideas are considered to be closely related to the existential philosophy and who affected modernists and postmodernist writers as well as the 19th century thought. Similar to Darwin, Nietzsche questioned the accepted beliefs and challenged the traditional religious thoughts. He harshly criticized the accepted moral codes and rejected any certain morality. Damrosch and Dettmar designate the significance of his ideas:

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche described his lifelong philosophical project as 'the revaluation of all values'; in his 1882 treatise *The Joyful Science*, he went so far as to assert that 'God is dead.' Nietzsche was suggesting that traditional religion had been discredited by advances in the natural and physical sciences, and as transcendent standards of truth

disappeared, so logically must all moral and ethical systems depending on some faith for their force. (2114).

Nietzsche established a ground to question all accepted beliefs. Similar to Darwin, he caused people to debate on the most secure topic: religion.

Scientific and technological developments forced people to open their eyes and question the traditional and religious rules, norms, and values that they had been taking for granted for centuries. Man started to question destiny and God's authority. Science was becoming superior to religion as it could give reasonable answers to the questions that religion failed to. In short, Industrial Revolution and accordingly, scientific and technological advances, brought about social, cultural, ideological, and philosophical changes.

The 20th century was a new phase for the continuation of these changes. 19th century ideas gained strength and affected 20th century Britain. The new atmosphere created by the scientific thought was maintained by Einstein's and Freud's theories and ideas. Einstein developed a groundbreaking theory between the years 1905 – 1915. Though his "theory of relativity" was mostly related to space-time, gravity, and equivalence, it shattered the accepted mechanistic, reductionist and deterministic Newtonian view of the universe (Damrosch and Dettmar, 2115). The greatest impact of the theory is that nothing is absolute, there is no fixed frame of reference, and thus, everything is relative. The theory of relativity began people questioning supposedly "certain" grand-narratives. It was soon found out that these grand narratives actually say nothing about man, the world and the universe. All times and positions are relative and accordingly nothing is certain or predictable.

Sigmund Freud was another crucial name whose works and ideas influenced the 20th century thought, as well. With his theories of the unconscious mind and the defence mechanism of repression Freud challenged man's confidence in the rational and moral framework within which human behaviour had seemed to be subject to regulation and control. (Blamires, 5). Blamires discusses the results of Einstein's and Freud's theories and claims that with their epoch-making theories,

great movements towards emancipation and social reform gained ground. Besides, religious faith and man's ability to control his own destiny was weakened. (6).

In the first decade of the 20th century technology, which made an important progress in the 19th century, was now working to improve guns to be used in the First World War (1914-1918). The war caused numbers of deaths, damaged cities and brought serious economic problems. Sanders describes the situation of Britain after the Great War explaining that though Britain had international prestige, its military success was now relative (483). When it comes to economy, Sanders indicates that the economy which started to improve in the 19th century was stagnating after the war (484). He also asserts that in spite of the social reforms initiated by pre-war Liberal governments, the condition of the industrial and agricultural poor, and of the unemployed, often contrasted with that of the rich. (508).

The effects of the war were felt not only economically or physically. The pessimism resulted from the loss of values and meaning especially after the Industrial Revolution began to be felt stronger with the Great War as it created sense of waste, frustration and hopelessness. Moreover, Great Depression also affected Britain and augmented the negative effects of the war.

The post-war disillusion of the 1920s was, it might be said, a spiritual matter, just as Eliot's *Waste Land* was a spiritual and not a literal wasteland. Depression and unemployment in the early 1930s, followed by the rise of Hitler and the cruel shadow of Fascism and Nazism over Europe, with its threat to another war, represented another sort of wasteland that produces another sort of effect on poets and novelists (1685).

Art and literature responded to all these changes and developments through a series of innovations and experiments. New ideas and philosophies created a distinctive atmosphere which inspired artists to search for a new start in art. Modernism was born with this mood in the 20th century. Modernists felt that a new start should be made both in form and in content. They did not want to follow conventions as they were not appropriate for the new age and ideas and "too limiting and lifeless". (Damrosch and Dettmar, 2116). Damrosch and Dettmar explain that

modern writers had to carry out a significant task which they call a *Nietzschean task*: “to create new and appropriate values for modern culture, and a style appropriate to those values. As a consequence, there is often a probing, nervous quality in the modernist explanations of ultimate questions” (Damrosch and Dettmar, 2116)).

One of the most eminent playwrights of the 20th century, Brecht, and his theories had a huge influence on contemporary drama and its forms. Brecht supported the general opinion that traditional forms and techniques were not capable of reflecting the problems and issues of the new age. He adopted quite different techniques and aims related to art. He created “epic theatre” which gave birth to many metadramatic techniques. Epic theatre could be considered as the opposite of the dramatic theatre or realist drama and Aristotelian ideas of drama.

The main goal of Epic Theatre was to force the spectator to think. Brecht supported the idea that a play should discuss political issues on the stage and the audience should contemplate on these issues instead of being carried away by the story. Thus, Brecht’s theatre could be considered as dialectic since it attempts to teach the audience the ideas presented on the stage. Brecht did not want the spectator to be carried away by their emotions or to be under the magic of the play when it ends, but he wanted them to leave the theatre building with an awareness of social and political problems, think about life rather than what was on the stage, and take a decision about these problems. In order to achieve his goal, to enable the spectator to look at with detachment, he used certain dramatic techniques which also constitute the basis of some metadramatic devices.

To disrupt the sentimental identification of spectators with characters, Brecht used *alienation effect* which is also known as *a-effect*, the aim of which is to change the spectator’s viewpoint from the cliché one and which makes them see from different perspectives; what is familiar becomes strange for the audience. Narrative and episodic structure are the tools used to create alienation. Loosely connected episodic structure prevents the audience from focusing on the story because there is no complex, linear or circular plot. Through narrative techniques, the actors address the audience, which keeps them from getting carried away by the play because they

know that the characters on the stage are actors and they are playing their parts and the story is told by them as well. The actors do not become part of the action, they are just vehicles. The actor just presents a character, he is not that character, so he must be treated as a construct. This technique Brecht used is called *gestus*. Actors may also play several parts, which again reflects the fictional nature of the play and the characters, as well.

The period after World War I only gave birth to a new world war which strengthened the sense of loss, meaningless, uncertainty, and ambiguity with widespread disillusionment about such things as God, humanity, society and the self. The Second World War has been identified as one of the most important turning points in history shaking man's absolute sense of certainty. It was an enormous destruction for the whole world, especially for Britain, which was once considered to be the most tremendous power in the world. Having lost its economic and strategic dominance, Britain went through a formidable period. The country that started to lose its economic power after the Great War now had to deal with serious financial difficulties. Since the economic power was continuously declining in the decades following the war, Britain had to make some regulations and improvements, but they were unfortunately not sufficient and the nation had to accept that it was no longer the "dominant player of the world stage". (John Peck and Martin Coyle, 267)

As well as dealing with the economic crisis, Britain had to reconstruct its damaged cities. Fire bombs and weapons left awful traces on streets and houses. As Andrew Sanders pictures, "Whole districts were in ruins and most streets somehow bore the signs of blast, shrapnel, fire bombs, or high explosives" (577). As a result of aerial bombing, British cities, those safe refuges, were destroyed. The places that had formerly been thought as safe were not secure anymore which caused people to go through a tragic paranoia, doubt, and distrust.

Together with economic problems, the growing sense of insecurity created a persistent feeling that there was something fundamentally wrong in Britain. Seeing that their untroubled, carefree, and powerful country was now in a miserable situation, people suffered from a dreadful disillusionment. As a result of emotional

dislocation, they started to feel that nothing can be taken for granted anymore. John Peck and Martin Coyle state that: “What we tend to witness ... is a sense of individuals caught up in events that they can neither comprehend nor control; more often than not, they are decent people in a world that has become different to decency” (270). Loss of control mentioned in this statement caused people to think that they would not be able to live as they used to do. They became aware of the fact that the things that they had relied on most and that had led them to carry on were gone now. The old values, traditions, and norms that were questioned in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, left their places to an unbearable sense of emptiness.

People realized that there was nothing to which they could relate themselves and through which they could give meaning to their existence. They had many questions but no certain answers to them, which substituted order with chaos. Jim Hunter talks about this lack of order in the new world: “Typically an individual consciousness is alarmingly in on itself, no longer trusting contact with others; uncertain even of external reality, let alone of any lasting value” (27). As this statement argues, the order disappeared with the accepted norms; consequently, the world lost its centre and meaning. There was no source for reference now. These ideas and issues were mainly discussed by postmodern philosophy which came into prominence especially after the 60s.

Postmodernism suggests that people tend to create “centres” for themselves and to rely upon such grand narratives as God, reality, morality, and truth. However, it is impossible to talk about a permanent centre in a world in which everything changes so fast. Jean François Lyotard claims that people “now live in an era in which legitimizing ‘master narratives’ – unquestioned and accepted institutions and regulations - are in crisis and in decline” (Butler, 138). According to Lyotard, these master narratives can no longer function in contemporary society as they have “lost their credibility” (Butler, 138). This assertion offers a sceptic view of the totalizing and clear-cut explanations and solutions.

Another postmodernist philosopher, Jacques Derrida in his deconstruction theory, which is based on relativism, affirms that truth is always relative; any text – whether literary or not – contains contradictions and internal oppositions; therefore, it has more than one interpretation (Sarup, 36). Derrida focuses on language's inability to convey meaning and reality. The relationship of language to reality is not given, or even reliable as all language systems are basically unreliable cultural constructs (Butler, 17). "Whatever we say, we are caught within a linguistic system that does not relate to external reality in the way we expect, because every term within each system also alludes to, or depends upon, the existence of other terms" (Butler, 19). The postmodernist deconstructor wants to show how a previously trusted relationship, like the one between language and the world, will go amiss.

The common point in Lyotard's argument of master narratives and Derrida's deconstruction theory as well as his ideas about language is their focus on the relation of art with life. They offer that art cannot claim to be true to life because it is created by the narrator, in other words, it is human construct. Similar to the fictional works, the master narratives Lyotard talks about "have no unique or reliable fit to the world, no certain correspondence with reality" (18). Therefore, it could be asserted that they are just another form of fiction. According to postmodernism, just as the textual worlds created in a work of art, life is a human construct full of grand narratives created by some authority such as religion, government, family, and traditions.

Postmodern philosophy asserts that reality is already/always interpreted by some other people; it is impossible to reach an ultimate reality. Speaking of a literary work, for instance, one cannot know what really happens in the text. The writer has the authority to present the characters and the story the way she wants by means of language. However, as Derrida suggests, language is elusive, therefore one cannot trust the reliability of a literary text. People cannot reach an ultimate or one and only reality in life either as it is full of man-made rules, regulations and metanarratives. As a result, postmodernism offers that reality has an unaccountable and uncertain nature in art and real life as in both reality itself is a construct.

The sense of uncertainty and the postmodern attitude can be observed in drama as well. The old theatrical forms and techniques were not appropriate or enough to reflect the new world view. They lost their validity and vitality. The playwrights of the time first challenged realist conventions which were questioned by the modernist writers once. According to them, since it was impossible to reach an ultimate truth or reality, it was also impossible to write a play true to reality. Thus, realist playwrights' claim that what they offer the audience is true to life was no longer convincing. Ruby Cohn talks about the reason why realism was not appropriate anymore explaining that as opposed to the first half of the twentieth century, contemporary dramatists know that they are not able to compete with photograph in surface fidelity to a familiar world (1).

Realism with its rules and conventions such as triangular, well-made plot, definite ending, and realistic setting was difficult to follow. Instead of using these techniques to present surface reality, playwrights focus on how human imagination responds to reality as they came to comprehend that reality was not one and only, there are many realities or is no reality at all. Reality comes to us through interpretations and it could change in accordance with time, place and people. Playwrights were curious about new stylistic and technical experimentations and this curiosity was followed by a considerably fruitful period in terms of forms and techniques. A new trend in drama, Theatre of the Absurd emerged in France and spread in Europe, including England.

This new type of drama is highly affected by the existential philosophy. It tends to depict human experience as irrational or futile while representing the world as meaningless. Therefore, similar to existentialism, Theatre of the Absurd deals with man's frightening isolation in an uncaring universe. Man's existence is a very important matter in absurd plays. They foreground the questions "Who am I? What am I doing in this world?" It is not easy to give exact answers to these questions. The Theatre of the Absurd offers that man's existence is meaningless as life has no inherent meaning and man feels stranger in the meaningless universe. Hence, all his actions become futile and absurd and this idea constitutes the core of absurd plays. Martin Esslin discusses the attitudes of absurd plays:

The hallmark of this attitude (the attitude of the absurd plays) is its sense that the certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away, that they have been tested and found wanting, that they have been discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions. The decline of religious faith was masked until the end of the Second World War by the substitute religions of faith in progress, nationalism and various totalitarian fallacies. All this was shattered by the war. By 1942, Albert Camus was calmly putting the question why, since life had lost all meaning, man should not seek escape in suicide. In one of the great, seminal heart-searchings of our time, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus tried to diagnose the human situation in a world of shattered beliefs. (23).

The Theatre of the Absurd has a quite pessimistic mode as it presents the anxiety and despair from the recognition that man can never know his true nature and purpose, and that no one will provide him with ready-made rules of conduct (428). Thus, in these plays, the more man tries to run away from his meaningless life and existence, the more he gets caught by them. His efforts to find certainties are all in vain.

Theatre of the Absurd throws aside all the dramatic techniques of realism. Absurd plays make use of repetitive scenes and dialogues to underline Camus' idea of the "Myth of Sisyphus", which offer that life is such a sick cycle where man is trapped and his endeavour to change things are all in vain. Unlike traditional plays, absurd plays do not have a triangular plot structure where the story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In fact, it is mostly impossible to talk about a story at all. Normal perception of the course of time and setting is disturbed and in most cases defamiliarized. The characters find themselves in the same situation over and over again. Moreover, absurdist playwrights employ language to create discontinuities, anti-climaxes and futility of communication. Language is only a means of comfort in isolation, of self assertion against uncertainty and of protection in emptiness.

When it comes to the mode of characterization, as Esslin explains, in absurd plays character is a construction. The audience are confronted with characters whose motives and actions are incomprehensible. Therefore, characters are almost

impossible to be identified with. As these characters are mysterious in their action and their nature, they become less human which results in difficulty in being carried away into seeing the world from their point of view (411). Therefore, both with its fragmented plot structure, language games and the constructedness of characters, absurd plays do not let the audience forget that they are watching a play.

Metadrama is another form which is pretty appropriate for the concerns of the age. It was highly affected by the Theatre of the Absurd whereas it has some differences. In order to deal with these similarities and differences between the Theatre of the Absurd and metadrama, it is crucial to present what metadrama is with its aims and techniques.

Metadrama is a term coined by Lionel Abel, an essayist, critic and the playwright of such plays as *Absalom*, *The Death of Odysseus*, *The Pretender*, and *The Wives*. Martin Puchner puts forth that Abel's *Metatheatre* became an inspiration for a whole generation of playwrights and critics since 1963, the year the term was coined (Puncher, Holmes and Meier) As Puncher further explains, Abel started using the term for the plays that "reconstruct" the plays of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Calderón, Racine, Wilde, Genet, Brecht, Beckett, and Pirandello. (Puncher, Holmes and Meier).According to Punchner, Abel "illuminates" classical plays; thus, he offers fresh and "insightful" interpretations of them (Puncher, Holmes and Meier).

Jim Hunter describes metadrama as jargon "with overtones of postmodernist theory". He focuses on the fact that metadrama is closely related to postmodern literature. In fact, as both terms are used for the literature with the same aims and techniques, they could be –and are- used interchangeably. Therefore, in this thesis, postmodernism and postmodern drama (or theatre) will sometimes be used in replacement of metadrama.

Richard Hornby defines metadrama simply as "drama on drama" adding that metadrama occurs "whenever the subject of a play turns out to be; in some sense, drama itself" (31). As Hornby designates, the main feature of metadrama is its being a comment on the play itself (31). Metadrama presents a commentary on its own

narrative and production by revealing textual awareness. The most noteworthy feature of metadrama and postmodern literature could be considered as its self-reflexivity. Critics, theorists, and academicians also focus on self-reflexivity when defining both metadrama and postmodernism. Julia Kristeva's definition of postmodernism verifies this assumption. She defines postmodernism as "literature which writes itself" (Nealon, 84). Another definition of postmodernism from Edmund J Symth presents the importance of self-reflexivity: "...it [postmodernism] has been applied to a style or a sensibility manifesting itself in cultural productions as varied as fiction, film, drama – in short, in any creative endeavour which exhibits some element of self-consciousness and reflexivity" (9).

It could be claimed that though metadrama is a revolutionary form, its most noteworthy technique, self-consciousness, can be seen in previous literary forms. As Jim Hunter points out, Shakespeare used the idea centuries ago comparing God to the playwright. Moreover, it is known that he used an embedded play in *Hamlet – The Murder of Gonzaga*- within the plot of the main play. This embedded play was known to be fictional by both the audience and the actors. However, neither Shakespeare nor other playwrights before postmodernism used self-consciousness to create theatre about theatre. For this reason, self reflexive nature of metadrama can be considered as a revolutionary innovation at the time - especially after the decades of sovereignty of realism- as the previous playwrights did not use the device to create consciousness in the audience. This difference of metadrama from other forms when it comes to self-conscious nature of literature is made clear by Kristeva. Kristeva sees the use of self-consciousness by postmodernist writers as the "exploration of the limits" and she suggests that never before was it used for this purpose. Besides, "it has never been used without religious, mystical, or any other justification" (Martin and Still, 137-141).

Another significant feature of metadrama is its rejection of previous rules and regulations. Patrick Pavis defines postmodern theatre by its incredulity toward the "specificity of the dramatic text", its denial of the "existence of rules and regulations governing dialogue, character, dramatic structure, etc.," and its banishment of

narrative as well as “conversational dialogue from the stage as a relic of dramaturgy based on conflict and exchange.” (37).

The purpose of metadrama is to expose the new ideas and attitudes towards life which developed especially after World War II and to make the audience aware of the changing world. It aims to make the audience recognise that nothing will ever be the same again in this new world. Metadrama forces the audience to think. Those playwrights who use metadramatic devices in their plays do not want their audience to simply watch the play and passively receive whatever is given to them. Quite the contrary, their plays endeavour to disturb the audience and to make them contemplate the issues that are discussed on the stage. In other words, as opposed to the traditional forms which see the audience as passive observers, metadrama prefers a more conscious audience who always question what is going on on the stage. The playwrights create this preferred consciousness with the issues and techniques which the audience have not been familiar with. Questioning and pondering the matters pointed out on the stage and not being able to take the things that are shown on the stage for granted, now the audience are ready to think over their lives or the “real” life in the same way.

As Richard Hornby notes, the audience are shown something new, something that they were never aware of, become more alert, and review their beliefs and ideas, which results in “dislocation of perception” (32). As their minds are more receptive and active, they start to question the values and notions that they previously took for granted and rethink about metanarratives – such as religion, history, meaning, including certainty, reality, and truth which will be the focus of attention all through the thesis. Hornby comments on this process and its importance as, a “...great playwright conceives his mission to be one of altering the norms and standards by which his audience views the world, and is thus more likely to attack those norms frontally” (32).

To attain the intended purposes indicated, playwrights and directors use some methods and techniques. As stated before, the main feature of metadrama is its self-reflexivity, that is, the textual awareness which results in doubleness. Doubleness is

generally achieved by a special device called *play within the play*. This special device can be explained as a play's having two plots; the main one and the frame – embedded- one, the latter of which presents the process of production. To describe *play within the play*, Hornby refers to Derrida's words: "...first there is what is, 'reality', the thing itself, in flesh and blood as the phenomenologists say; then there is, imitating these, the painting, the portrait, the zographeme, the inscriptions or transcription of the thing itself"(148). Derrida's statement puts forth that the main plot is shown to the audience and is generally considered to be "real" at first; then the audience see the imitation of this "reality" which makes them question the reliability of the play, as a result, of art. In other words, the play makes the audience become aware that what they see on the stage is just a play. It is written, organised, and staged and the world created on the stage is just an illusionary one, thus, it cannot promise truth or reality at all. Therefore, the traditional perception of a play is shattered.

Another idea behind this doubleness is to present the audience the plural and unstable nature of reality. Metadrama aims to show the audience that there is and can never be one ultimate reality. In other words, reality is not stable or objective. As Jeffrey T Nealon asserts, similarly, postmodern writers defend the idea that there is no stable, knowable, transcendental ground of "truth." (72). Edmund J Smyth also talks about the writer's responsibility to problematise reality:

....it [postmodernism] should 'problematise reality' 'unsettle the reader's sense of "reality" or unmask or lay bare 'the process of world-construction... (textual) strategies are designed to foreground the textuality of the fiction ('metafictional' strategies), to force constant reinterpretation by 'reframing', or to generate multiple ontologies, a plurality of words. (138)

As Smyth suggests, writers or playwrights use some techniques to problematise, to question reality. The use of double plot in metadrama works here, too. Once the audience see two plots –the main and the embedded- on the stage, they cannot decide which one is true or if any is true at all. They come to understand that both of these plays may be "real" or none of them is "real" at all. Stephen Hu

describes this achievement of metadrama pointing out that the play does not present a “single-faceted, homogenous system of signs” (7). Instead, it gives many messages throughout the whole performance; hence, the audience receives different types of messages which widen their perspectives (7). As Hu states, the audience become aware of the fact that it is not necessary or possible to reach a single, ultimate reality on the stage as it is not possible in life.

It could be noted that playing with the possibilities of form and meaning, reflecting its own process of writing instead of empirical reality, metadrama shows self-reflexivity. Self reflexivity creates another effect on the audience: alienation. Estrangement is the device used by the playwrights to achieve this effect. Once the audience are made aware that what is on the stage is just fiction, they start to experience alienation. They are always reminded that they are watching a play and they need to think it over. This is what epic theatre and metadrama have in common, but while epic theatre wants the audience to think about political and social concerns of their time, metadrama by confusing the levels of fiction and reality draws the attention to the invalidity of ideologies in a world of uncertainty. Alienation is created through many techniques. Mostly, the actors show awareness in the play. Characters are generally the actors of the framing play as well, they are aware of their fictionality, they talk to the audience, and they comment on the play. Sometimes there is a narrator in the play, and sometimes the audience watch the rehearsal of the main play. Using repetitive patterns is another instrument to create estrangement. Nicole Bourus explains the relation between repetitiveness and alienation as, “Awareness of the repetitive pattern leads the spectator from heightened experience to self-knowledge, and in a word, to the revelation of the theatre as ritual. The play’s the thing in which the anxiety of repetition acts itself out” (148) According to Bourus, since the audience see that the same things are happening over and over again, it becomes very hard for them to be engrossed in the play.

Now that the plays and approaches that promise “ultimate reality” and “absolute certainty” were questioned and seen as failure, people could not believe in stability anymore. Hornby says, in the 1960s “Debord and Derrida describe great

historical trajectories that suppose a culture moving from stability – whether rooted in reality or in illusion universally accepted as actuality – toward and into a new instability of which theatre becomes both model and agent” (149). He sees the theatre of the 70s as a source of cultural change in society since masses started to accept the instability and uncertainty of art, as a result, of life. (149).

As stated before, metadrama questions certainty and the nature of reality. Another thing that metadrama questions is the past. Metadrama rewrites the previous texts – especially the classical ones in order to get rid of a definite, absolute past. It defends the idea that past cannot be observed objectively; it is human construct similar to fiction. Therefore, it is impossible to take the past for granted. In other words, metadrama problematizes the representation of the past. Nicole Bourus calls this “reappropriation of the past” and explains that it enables the playwrights to examine the past with a completely new approach (xiv). This new approach shows that as opposed to what people have been thinking, history cannot be taken as something “real”. It should be viewed similar to fiction. The comments on the past events may change from person to person or nation to nation. In other words, metadrama’s idea of plurality of meaning is valid when it comes to history and the past.

One way to recreate the past and previous works is taking references from previously written texts either openly or covertly. By doing so, these texts are re-studied and they are re-written from a critical perspective. This device is called “intertextuality” and by means of it, metadrama offers plurality of the past and truths. Linda Hutcheon suggests that the more the past is written, the more we prevent it from being conclusive (6). Through intertextuality, single, totalisable meanings of the past are challenged; their objectivity is questioned.

Having explained metadrama, its features, aims, and devices, it is necessary to discuss metadrama in relation to the other forms that have been mentioned in this chapter because as stated before, metadrama cannot be considered as the one and only form that questions grand narratives.

Epic Theatre has a great influence on metadrama as many metadramatic devices that reveal the illusionary world of theatre are taken from Brecht. As discussed before, both forms use doubling plots, narrative techniques, actors who are aware of their fictionality, and fragmented plot structure in order to make the audience realize the illusionary world of the theatre. Both forms aim to make the audience think and contemplate the matters that are discussed on the stage instead of just observing it and being carried away by the story. However, while Brecht tries to expose his own political views to the audience and make them think the way he wants, playwrights of metadrama do not try to shape the audience's thoughts. Metadrama only wakes the audience up, and divest them to challenge the accepted norms and beliefs, look at them from different perspectives; the rest is up to the audience. In other words, metadrama does not try to give a message –either political or social-, neither does it impose any political ideas as Brecht's Epic Theatre tries to do.

Though the Theatre of the Absurd affected metadrama very much, too, there are some discrepancies between the two. Similar to metadrama, Theatre of the Absurd is concerned with the uncertainty comprised especially after World War II and deals with the changing values and loss of faith and morals. In the way metadrama does, it questions metanarratives and foregrounds the idea that nothing can be taken for granted. However, the main objective of the absurdist plays is to focus on the meaninglessness of man's existence in an uncaring universe rather than making the audience aware of the fictional world of theatre; revealing its illusionary world.

Though Theatre of the Absurd puts emphasis on uncertainty, it asserts that man's existence is meaningless and no matter how hard man tries to change this, he fails. This assertion itself could be considered as a certain conclusion. Nonetheless, metadrama is against any certainty and it does not try to come up with definite statements. It does not propagate meaninglessness, it asks the audience "what are you going to do?" In other words, though Theatre of the Absurd foregrounds uncertainty and it affected much of metadrama, it cannot escape from giving certainties.

Therefore, it could be put forth that metadrama and absurdist plays have many things in common both in terms of form and content, yet their aspirations and emphasis are different from each other.

Under the light of all this information, it could be asserted that metadrama is a unique form which has borrowed from other forms and blended them with its own aims and techniques. This distinctive form was used by many playwrights and Tom Stoppard is considered as one of the most important representatives of the form. The following chapters of this study will introduce the most outstanding metadramatic techniques used by Tom Stoppard and discuss them with references to three of his plays to reveal how unaccessible reality is both in art and in life. While analyzing the plays, Richard Hornby's classification and scheme of metadramatic techniques will be taken into consideration.

CHAPTER II

METADRAMATIC DEVICES USED BY STOPPARD

Once Stoppard's plays are investigated, it can be seen that Stoppard deals with quite serious issues. First of all, he philosophizes life, challenges the values and certainties that people have accepted for centuries, discusses man's ability to question and change, and most importantly, queries "reality". What makes Stoppard a distinctive playwright is that he has "a light touch" while dealing with these serious issues (Doll, 118). In other words, he has a unique style which is considered as "playful" by many critics. While pointing out the features of postmodern playwrights, Mary A. Doll discusses Stoppard's style and explains:

Stoppard's tone is paradoxically both lighter – 'English high comedy' as Esslin puts it – and weightier. Important issues are presented elegantly, often in the guise of gaming, including everything from bridge and billiards to ping pong, charades and cricket. But these games are really stylised rituals, meant to be seen as the games people play against two parts of themselves, against others, or against some higher ethical code (118).

Doll sees Stoppard's style "paradoxical" as his tone is light, whereas his content is serious. She states that to deal with essential issues, Stoppard uses games played against "ultimate" certainties. Christopher Innes also pinpoints Stoppard's playful style telling that Stoppard uses verbal wit, visual humour, and farce to depict crucially important topics: "will versus fate; the existence of God; the function of art; the nature of freedom and the responsibility of the press; the existential implications of modern physics" (23). These comments support that Stoppard deals with the issues of metadrama with a very playful and unique style.

Stoppard is well aware of the fact that there is certainty neither in art nor in life. As a playwright, he does not suggest any "absolute" or "clear-cut" answers,

morals, or even ends in his plays. “My plays, he has said, ‘are a lot to do with the fact that I JUST DON’T KNOW’; such not knowing he calls the *definite maybe*” (Doll, 118). His definite maybe is valid for norms and values of any kind. Jim Hunter emphasizes Stoppard’s disapproval of stable, absolute moral codes and argues that Stoppard deals with human values and he does not ever reach a single view or point (19). Stoppard’s own words display his idea that neither art nor life can promise certainty: “...life doesn’t guarantee us a denouement, and why should you believe the ones you’re given in the theatre? (Gussow, 12).

Stoppard believes in plurality of views, truths, and meanings. He avoids being didactic since he thinks that morality is not something that can be relied on. As Stoppard does not accept any kind of certainty or fixed reality, he is compared with Einstein, whose theory of “relativism” offers that “some central aspect of experience, thought, evaluation, or even reality is somehow relative to something else” (Plato Stanford). As Jim Hunter quotes from James’ article:

James’s Encounter essay has some of the nerve of Stoppard’s own ingenuities, sketching an extravagant parallel between Stoppard and Einstein. Einstein, James says, produced his baffling relativity not to confuse people but to clarify reality – to clarify the fact that reality cannot be pinned down. Stoppard’s ‘not knowing’ is a determination to tell the truth; ‘his impulse to clarify’ leads him ‘to create a dramatic universe of perpetual transformations’ (19).

This comparison suggests that Stoppard believes in relativity and he uses this idea in his plays. Since it is easier to have certainties in life, people do not want to lose these “absolutes” and once their certainties become uncertainties, they get baffled. However, as Hunter offers, Stoppard does not create uncertainties to make things foggy. He aims to show people that things always change in form; they cannot stay stable, fixed. He tries to tell his audience that all they should do is to open themselves to the plurality of views and interpretations; to change. James Acheosan also discusses Stoppard’s “not knowing”:

Instead of a Newtonian universe, where problems can be solved, Stoppard ascribes to what post-modern science

calls 'chaos theory'. Gaps, punctures, and breaks in sequence sabotage every logical attempt to formulate a hypothesis. Indeed, Stoppard's greatest contribution to theatre may be his concept of the indeterminacies of what it is 'to know' as a hired professional, a spectator, or even as an ordinary human being (118).

This quotation indicates that being against all kinds of logical explanations, Stoppard influenced the theatre of his time by divesting his audience of their certainties.

According to Stoppard, the act of rejecting accepted values and truths is an endless process. In one of his interviews, he says, "I'm the kind of person who embarks on an endless leapfrog down the great moral issues. I out a position, rebut it, refuse the rebuttal, and rebut the refutation. Forever. Endlessly... We live in an age where the leper is the don't-know" (Gussow, 3). Stoppard likens his process of questioning fixed moral issues to "leapfrog" and he explains that he does not shatter accepted values and truths only once. As he believes that there is nothing that could last forever, he shatters the shattered values again and again and this process goes on and on forever. Moreover, Stoppard explains that he does not respect people who have rigid and unquestionable values and who do not attempt to question certainties (Gussow, 6). He says he likes people who do not repeat themselves, who review their thoughts "every five years" (Gussow, 6).

Stoppard believes that art, like life, cannot promise for answers or certainties. He is against the idea that what is played on the stage is true to life and it can teach the audience a lesson. He thinks that art is irrational. Jim Hunter presents Stoppard's opinions about art telling that according to Stoppard, art is often "wise, lucid, and carefully reasoned" (16). However, it is "always" irrational and it does not have a certain purpose. Art does not try to give a message because "it is bad at giving messages" as Stoppard expresses in *Theatre Quarterly* in 1974 (16). Hunter suggests that Stoppard wants to save art from people who see it as "helpful, therapeutic, and informative" (16-17). Stoppard is against any attempt to rationalize art. He sees art as "playing" (17). For him, art cannot give exact answers. Nor can it offer solutions to man's problems. In his plays, his effort is to show the audience that they are only watching/ reading a play. He sometimes presents characters from the past or

belonging to previous texts to remind his audience that they are watching fictional entities on the stage. As Stoppard comments on the past through “re-writing” it, he describes himself as “an innocent time traveller, in whose luggage a customs inspector discovers a number of undeclared objects” (Hu, 2).

Stoppard shows the process of production in his plays through characters that are aware of their fictionality. Stephen Hu comments on the fictional nature of Stoppard’s plays indicating that Stoppard uses “expressionistic” techniques that hinder the principles of the “illusionistic” theatre (8). Nicole Boireau also describes anti-illusionistic theatre of Stoppard: “Stoppard’s plays never fail to advertise that whatever is presented on stage looks like theatre and *is* first and foremost theatre” (137). Therefore, Stoppard does not ever try to fool the audience; quite the contrary, he wants the audience to be alert all the time, to question, to think, and to contemplate. He accomplishes all these through some metadramatic devices: literary reference, play within the play, role play within the role, and self reference. This chapter aims to investigate these devices.

II.1. Literary Reference

Literary reference is a metadramatic device which enables the playwright to allude to previous works. This device is also known as “intertextuality” which is, as a term, coined by Julia Kristeva (1). The idea behind intertextuality is the assumption that no text could claim to be “original. Michale Worton and Judith Still explain the idea suggesting that a text cannot exist as a “self-sufficient whole” as the writer of texts is also the reader of the previous texts (1). As the writers of the texts have already read many works of others before they write their own, they have been affected by these previous works. Therefore, a writer or a playwright cannot claim to be the first one to write about a certain type of literature or about certain themes (1). There are many ways in which a play can refer to other literary works. However, in order for a literary reference to be called a metadramatic device, the audience should recognize the allusion. In other words, the author should intentionally refer to a previous work and s/he should do it in an explicit way. Michael Riffaterre clarifies the difference of intertextuality from a pure reference explaining that in order to call

a text an intertext, the audience or the reader should be aware of the intertext that is being commented on (75)

Literary reference, as a dramatic device, can be seen before metadrama, but in order for a literary reference to be called metadramatic, it has to bring a new perspective to the previous text. Richard Hornby discusses in *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception*, that in Chekhov's plays, characters constantly cite previous works of literature (92). However, he gives Chekhov as an example to make it clear that Chekhov does not use this device to criticize or restudy these works and create a new perspective. Hornby puts forth the difference of metadrama: "...when literary citation within the play moves literary criticism, it also moves toward the play as self reference" (92). As Hornby suggests, once the playwright makes a kind of "literary criticism", or comments on a previous work, it could be considered a metadramatic device. (92). Next, the reference to previous works should divest the audience so as to make them realize the fictional nature of the play they are watching. The audience should be given the courage that in the way the previous texts cited in the play are criticized and reevaluated they can criticize and/or interpret differently the play performed on the stage as art is not a certain entity.

With the help of the literary reference, the imaginary world of the play is disrupted. While watching the play, the audience unconsciously get involved in the play. However, as soon as they see the characters from a previous work they know, a scene they have seen before or hear quotations from a well-known play, their involvement is destroyed. Literary reference shatters the illusionary world of theatre and the audience realize the fictional world that is created on the stage and question the certainty and reliability of art and life.

As well as making the audience question certainty and reality, literary reference impels the audience to see the old texts from new perspectives. In the past, the fictional worlds of previous works were always presented from the same perspective since they remained as they had been written. However, in metadrama these previous works are used by different authors in different times, and the story and/or the characters are reshaped and the essence of the previous works changes

completely. All these enable the audience to see the old texts from different perspectives. They have the chance to investigate the previous works with distinct, alternative opinions and to come up with their own opinions about these texts. Graham Allen gives voice to Roland Barthes' ideas related to this issue:

For Barthes, literary meaning can never be fully stabilized by the reader, since the literary work's intertextual nature always leads readers on to new textual relations. Authors, therefore, cannot be held responsible for the multiple meanings readers can discover within literary texts. Barthes views such a situation as a liberation for readers; a liberation from the traditional power and authority for the figure of the 'author', who is now 'dead' (3-4).

As is seen, intertextuality gives the reader or the audience freedom to find/create their own meanings (4). In short, with literary reference, the familiar works are made unfamiliar, the audience's perspective is widened and they are pushed to see the plurality of meanings which is another way of realizing that art is not certain or reliable. Moreover, the audience question, evaluate and alter their views of the accepted norms in life.

II.2. Play Within The Play

Play within the play is a device in which one play is performed or told during the action of another play. While the audience are watching "the original" play, they also see another play which is performed within the "original" one. Therefore, there are two plays; the inner play and the outer play. The outer play is generally considered as the "original" play. The audience may consider this play as the "real" play in traditional sense. The inner play, however, is the one which is performed within this "real" or "original" play by the same actors. There is often a connection between the inner and the outer plays. The boundary between these two plays may be recognised clearly, or it may be blurred, but in both situations, they should be related to each other. Richard Hornby suggests that: "...there must be *some* integration of the inner play with the outer; that is, the outer play must in some way acknowledge the inner play's existence" (34).

Gerhard Fischer and Bernhard Greiner give definition of play within the play presenting its main function:

Dramaturgically speaking it [the play within the play] describes a strategy for constructing play texts that contain, within the perimeter of their fictional reality, a second or internal theatrical performance, in which actors appear as actors who play an additional role... Its most salient feature is that it doubles an aesthetic experience which already presents a dual reality: the actor, who appears on stage both in his/her own physical presence and in the part he/she portrays, assumes and plays yet another role, thus adding a third identity which itself is constructed in the context of a third level of time, space, characterisation and action. (xi)

As this definition indicates, the most important function of play within the play is to present “dual reality” through making the audience see double (xi). The act of “seeing double” is achieved in many ways. The inner play is performed by the actors of the outer play. In other words, the characters of the outer play become the actors of the inner play. As a result, the audience try to figure out which “role” is the “real” one and consequently, which play/plot is “real”. Having been confused by these questions, the audience are made to understand that the characters are just actors playing their parts which are decided by the author; therefore, what they see on the stage is just a play, nothing else. As a result, they become aware of the fictional and illusionary nature of theatre and art.

Until the emergence of metadrama, the audience always thought plays or art in general as a reflection of life. They used to be captivated by the story/plot. They were convinced to accept everything that was shown on the stage as reality or possibility which may become reality. In other words, they took for granted that art is “true” to life. However, with metadrama and the devices it brings, the idea that art is “true” to life is challenged and questioned. The audience start to reconsider the nature of reality and art. They see that the plays they have been watching comfortably on their seats do not have the same certain, ultimate, answering and resolving nature anymore. The experience they have while watching a metadramatic piece is one of unease now.

The impossibility of reaching certainties and realities through art makes the audience question the nature of reality and certainty in life as well. In this case, the play within the play becomes a metaphor for life itself. A play may seem vivid, but it is illusionary. Similarly, life seems vivid, but it is also illusionary. It is not possible to reach a single, ultimate truth or certainty either in art or in life. In both there are uncertainties, enigmas and plurality of meanings.

When the history of the theatre is investigated, it is seen that metadrama is not the first to use the play within the play technique. For instance, in Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, the play within the play technique is used. Similarly, Shakespeare uses this device in *Hamlet* in the famous *mousetrap* scene. However, in these plays, as a theatrical device play within the play was not used to divest the audience to ask questions about life, art, and certainty. Neither was it used to create *estrangement* effect which forces the audience to think about the nature of reality. Richard Hornby indicates that especially in realist drama, as it may cause an uneasy estrangement in the audience, play within the play device was not acceptable (33).

II. 3. Role Play Within The Role

Similar to play within the play, role play within the role is a metadramatic device which provides layers of "reality". Therefore, it creates complexity for the audience with its "double" nature. Traditionally, actors are the characters of a play. They play their parts and the audience accept them as "true to life" entities and are carried away by the action. Role play within the role steps in here; the characters of the outer play become "actors" in the inner play, which creates "duality". This duality creates ambiguity and gives the audience a great sense of alienation.

As a metadramatic device, role play within the role presents "doubleness of portrayal". The audience who are confused by "double plot" created by play within the play cannot now decide which "role" is the "real" one, which is a part of the "real" action. When they fail to find certain answers to these crucial questions, they start to question the actuality and reliability of the play(s) and the character(s) – actors. Thus, role play within the role strengthens the effect of estrangement formerly created by play within the play.

Alienated from the play that is performed on the stage, the audience start to question the nature of art and its claim to be “true to life”. With the help of performers, who constantly remind the audience of their fictionality, they come to realize that art is not capable of giving exact answers; therefore, it is not something that can be taken for granted. Moreover, the audience are challenged to consider their own roles in life, the sources of these roles, and their reliability and certainty.

Role play within the role asserts that the performers have been told to play some roles decided by the playwright who represents some kind of authority. Accordingly, individuals realize that they are given roles in their lives by some authority and all through their lives they try to play these roles. Richard Hornby indicates that:

From the first instance, the infant gradually learns to define the boundaries of its ego, developing a sense of self. Identity theorists maintain that this process continues throughout one’s lifetime because we must continually redefine who we are as we grow older and called upon to take on different roles – boy or girl, daughter or son, student, adolescent, youth, adult, lover, worker, parent, grandparent, “senior citizen”, etc... Identity, then, is something that human beings have to learn, and the learning is an inherently painful process (69-70).

What Hornby tries to claim is that identity is not something innate; it is not something that individuals choose either. On the contrary, it is learned and/or exposed to individuals. Just as the actors are made to play their roles, individuals try to carry on their assigned roles. Having realized this, the audience start to question their roles in life and their validity, which may be considered as an uneasy process. As a result of this conscious process, they may redefine their identities once more, which makes Hornby call theatre as a kind of “identity laboratory” (68). Hornby presents his opinion as:

Theatre, in which actors take on changing roles, has, among its many other functions, the examination of identity. For the individual, theatre is a kind of identity laboratory, in which social roles can be examined vicariously. In a safe environment, detached from

everyday reality, the audience member can forget his own identity for a while, and identify with the characters he sees. Both performers and audience members are in a sense “actors” in the theatrical experience, dropping their regular identities and trying out new ones (71).

Once the characters become aware of the fact that they have some roles ascribed to them, they could either refuse them or have a playful attitude toward them. In other words, as opposed to the characters of the traditional plays, characters of a postmodern play are not carried away by their roles; they do not become passive entities who just play their parts. Similar to them, the audience may shift their attitude towards their roles as soon as they realize the fact that they have parts that they have to play, they may either refuse them or have a playful and “humorist” approach toward them just in the way the characters do (Fischer and Greiner, xiii-xiv).

The actors who play their roles also show how different shapes a role can take with different actors and how the same actor may change while playing different roles. Consequently, the relative and slippery nature of actors and roles brings out the idea that all human roles are relative and slippery as well. The way a role is played may alter according to the performer who plays the role; similarly, identities may change through different people. Just as the critics Moon and Birdboot, in *The Real Inspector Hound*, play the role of literary critics as well as becoming the characters of the play that they are criticising, a mother may become a teacher, a wife, a musician, and a liar at the same time; or similar to Moon and Birdboot who have the same roles as critics but play this role in different ways, two people who have the role of mother in life have peculiar actions as mothers. Hence, the audience begin to realize the relative and multiple nature of role and identity.

Role play within the role is found in the plays before metadrama. The most well-known example is Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The travelling players are professional actors in *Hamlet*, but they become characters of “Murder of Gonzago”. However, as in the case of play within the play, this technique is not used to make the audience question the nature of reality and validity of roles and identities.

II. 4. Self- Reference

All metadramatic devices have the same purposes. Nonetheless, unlike the other metadramatic devices that have been discussed, self-reference is a direct metadramatic technique. It directly calls attention to the play itself as a fictional construction. The difference between self-reference and other dramatic devices is explained by Richard Hornby:

The play within the play has this same ultimate effect of reminding the audience that what they have been watching is actually a play, but such reminders are indirect, while self reference is direct and immediate, a splash of cold water thrown into the face of a dreaming, imagining audience (104).

This shocking effect may be created with the help of the characters who talk to the audience and comment on the acting process, or a narrator that tells the story to the audience. In each case, self-reference distracts the audience's attention.

It is true that art creates a virtual reality for the spectator/reader: "... we imaginatively shift ourselves from the real world in which we are currently living, into a hypothetical state of existence, which we can drop at any time (it is not a state of insanity), but which nonetheless is strangely compelling." (Hornby, 106). This temporal shift of state puts the audience into a passive position. With self- reference, on the other hand, the actors present their respect and talk to the audience and show that they are aware of the fact that the audience are there, watching their play. Therefore, the actors invite them to be involved in the play. The audience think logically and make their own comments with their eyes and minds wide open.

According to Richard Hornby, both the process of creating a work of art and of responding to it are examples of intuitive thinking. He thinks that intuitive thought is wholistic and it integrates, synthesizes, unifies; whereas logical thought isolates, analyzes, separates. (109). Therefore, it could be argued that while watching a play written in a traditional form, one is taken away from the rational thought since s/he is captivated by the unreal, illusionary world of the play. With the help of self reference, logical thought steps in. Once the audience become aware of the

illusionary world, they start to question and analyze the play. Richard Hornby also points out that we tend to separate and analyze the real life situations; our thought is fragmentary; not wholistic as in the case of art (111). He says: “whatever we are perceiving always has further aspects of itself that at a given time are unavailable, backgrounds, causes, ramifications, and effects that we do not know about” (111). Therefore, it could be asserted that metadrama keeps the audience away from intuitive thought and encourages them to think rationally, logically, and fragmentally.

Another effect that self-reference creates is the change of attitude towards real life situations. Self –reference with its playful nature presents the audience the fact that they are only watching a play and the issues that are being discussed should not be taken too seriously. After all, the actions are all fictional no matter how vivid and essential they seem. Hornby describes this process:

While the dramatic action was moving forward, it seemed to be serious and important, but here the audience is reminded that it is not. It is only a “playing holiday”. It is interesting that we call a dramatic composition both a “play” and a “work,” and here Shakespeare juxtaposes these two apparently antithetical concepts, examining the paradoxical phenomenon that a play can simultaneously be “sport” and “work,” trivial and serious, meaningless and meaningful. (104)

As the audience come to realize that the issues presented are not meaningful at all, they carry out this awareness into real life situations once again. Once their trust and belief on the seriousness of the things that they see on the stage has been shattered, they start to question and thrash the things that they are forced to see as serious in real life. Self-reference helps to challenge, in a sudden and drastic manner, the complacencies of the audience’s world view.

The effects of self-reference on the audience may be really disturbing as it is easier for people to believe what they used to and are forced to believe. Richard Hornby explains this situation as a clash between order and chaos:

When something seems orderly and comprehensible, whether it is the organization of society, the workings of a piece of machinery, or the behaviour of a person we meet, it makes us feel comforted and pleased. Incomprehensibility in such circumstances can be painful and threatening...., an intuitive sense of order yields pleasure, while a sense of chaos yields pain. (108).

Thus, blurring the line between art and real life, metadrama also asserts that real life situations, accepted norms, and values should not be seen as certain either.

In conclusion, the metadramatic devices discussed in this chapter work in order to reach certain goals such as making the audience aware of the fictional nature of the play on the stage and question art's reality certainty as well as its claim to be true to life. This, supposedly, results in questioning certainties and realities in "real" life. The following chapters will study how Tom Stoppard's three plays *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, and *Travesties* use the devices in order to deal with the unaccountable nature of reality and certainty in art and in life.

CHAPTER III

METADRAMATIC DEVICES IN *ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD*

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is considered to be the most famous play of Tom Stoppard. The play is based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Stoppard takes both the plot and certain characters from Shakespeare's play; however, he does not use Hamlet as the play's major character. In Stoppard's play, the story revolves around two minor characters from *Hamlet*; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and focuses on these characters' perspectives.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is about two courtiers' confusions in a puzzling universe. All through the play, the identical couple tries to understand why they are *there* and what their mission is. However, it is impossible for them to find an exact answer to these questions. They are in a world full of uncertainties and they can neither know what is happening around them nor get to the point. Richard A. Andretta explains the situation of these two men: "*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is a play about man's confusion and frustration as he finds no satisfactory answer to any of the mysteries that surround him. He has to accept uncertainty as the normal condition of mankind" (23). Andretta sees these two men as the representative of man in general and he points out that neither Rosencrantz nor Guildenstern can find a way out of the ambiguities (23).

The fact that the couple does not have a certain past or memory is an important point which strengthens the theme of uncertainty. Though it is not stated in the play, the couple's mission is to go to the royal castle and learn the reason why Hamlet is depressed, which is expected to be known by the audience as they are supposedly already familiar with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, as the couple is not aware of this fact, throughout the play, in many instances they ask each other where they came from or how they started to deal with the thing they are dealing with, yet each and every question remains unanswered. For instance, in Act I,

Guildenstern refers to the game of coin tossing: “We have been spinning coins since I don’t know when , and in all that time (if it is all that time) I don’t suppose either of us was more than a couple of gold pieces up or down” (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 18). Their memory is so blurred that they do not even know when they started playing that game. Another case when the couple reveals the uncertainty of their situation comes when they try to figure out why they are *there*:

ROS: We were sent for.

GUIL: Yes.

ROS: That’s why we’re here. [He looks round, seems doubtful, then the explanation.] Travelling.

GUIL: Yes.

ROS [dramatically]: It was urgent – a matter of extreme urgency, a royal summons, his very words: official business and no questions asked – lights in the stable-yard, saddle up and off headlong and hotfoot across the land, our guides outstripped in breakneck pursuit of our duty! Fearful lest we come too late!

[Small pause.]

GUIL: Too late for what?

ROS: How do I know? We haven’t got there yet.

GUIL: Then what are we doing here, I ask myself.

ROS: You might well ask....

GUIL: We better get on.

ROS: [actively]: Right! [Pause] On where?

GUIL: Forward.

ROS: [forward to footlights]: Ah. [Hesitates.] Which way do we –[He turns round] Which way did we - ? (19-20).

They have quite limited information about their job and aim. They cannot be sure about the reason or the possible results of their actions; they can neither remember their previous steps nor guess the next ones. All they have is uncertainty. They are so full of uncertainties and ambivalences that they are in a vicious circle where only the points of birth and death are definite which is expressed by Guildenstern as well:

“The only beginning is birth and the only end is death – if you can’t count on that, what can you count on?” (40).

Unlike Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the Player, one of the tragedians, is aware of the inevitability of uncertainty and he accepts it when he says: “Uncertainty is the normal state. You’re nobody special” (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 66). However, this uncertainty confuses Guildenstern so much that he rises against it: “But for God’s sake what are we supposed to do?!” (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 66).

No matter how hard the couple tries, there is no way to find certainty in their world. Uncertainty is something that they have to accept as the “normal state”. Presenting uncertainty and impossibility of reaching ultimate answers or realities as the main themes of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Stoppard wants the audience to think about the things that they trust or count on in daily life. He displays the unaccountable nature of reality and certainty through the characters who have no certain past or memory, no idea of their aims and actions or the reason why they are there. In order to strengthen the sense of uncertainty and to display the unaccountable nature of reality, Stoppard uses some metadramatic devices.

As stated before, *Hamlet* becomes the main source for the story of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. However, the play is not a mere “replica” of Shakespeare’s work. While using the story and characters from *Hamlet*, Stoppard employs them as literary reference. The fact that Stoppard uses *Hamlet* as a literary reference creates a kind of alienation in the audience. They realize that – supposing that the audience have seen or at least read the play before - they have seen those on the stage before and perceive that they are actually characters. As the characters and the story are used by another playwright on another stage and the characters are played by some other actors, the audience once again is made realized that both Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz, Guildenstern* are fictional entities and that both plays are just fictional works presenting illusory worlds.

The fictional world created by literary reference is made clear through dialogues in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Especially, at the beginning of

the play the characters cannot concentrate on the circumstances, nor can they remember their previous actions. For instance, Rosencrantz cannot even name the first thing he remembers:

GUIL:What's the first thing you remember?

ROS: Oh, let's see... The first thing that comes into my head, you mean?

GUIL: No – the first thing you remember.

ROS: Ah. [Pause.] No, it's no good, it's gone. It was a long time ago. (16)

It could be asserted that as Rosencrantz was a character in Shakespeare's play "long time ago", and now he is in another play, his situation is ambiguous. He is not aware of his fictionality and as he is a character played on the stage over and over again, he cannot find where it all started. He cannot differentiate between his roles in Shakespeare's and Stoppard's plays.

Another point where Stoppard uses Shakespeare's play as a literary reference is the moments when he directly gives quotations from *Hamlet*. Direct quotations from Shakespeare's play make the audience realize that both plays are fictitious. Stoppard disrupts *Hamlet*'s authority as a tragedy through parody as these direct quotations are irrelevant to a contemporary play. Though Stoppard penetrates the quotations directly into his own plot, the shift is abrupt, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who talk ordinary English used at present, suddenly start to talk in a different way, in verse, when Stoppard introduces quotations from Shakespeare's play:

ROS: Both your majesties

Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,

Put your dread pleasures more into command

Than to entreaty.

GUIL: But we both obey,

And here give up ourselves in the full bent

To lay our service freely at your feet,

To be commanded. (36).

The transformation of the way the couple talks is so fast and explicit that it prevents the audience from getting carried away by the action since they realize that they are watching a scene from Shakespeare's play.

Another instance where Stoppard refers to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is when Rosencrantz mentions the time that things were not as complicated as it is now: "I remember when there were no questions" (38). Rosencrantz remembers the time when he was a character only in Shakespeare's play. However, now he is in a play where there are two plays and two plots, which makes things complicated and hard to understand. For this reason, Rosencrantz longs for the past, that is, the previous text.

At the end of the play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern read the letter that was changed by Hamlet and that is going to be given to the King of England. When they see that the letter demands both of them to be killed, Guildenstern cannot understand why the king wants their deaths: "But why? Was it all for this? Who are we that so much should converge on our little deaths?" (122). Guildenstern sees theirs as "little deaths" for they were "little" characters in Shakespeare's play. He cannot understand how come their deaths have become the main aim of the play when they are supposed to be minor characters in Shakespeare's play. Here, Stoppard makes another reference to Shakespeare's play just to draw the attention to the previous roles of his play's main characters and thus to the fictionality of both plays.

Although he borrows much from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Stoppard creates a different and a unique play of his own through making many changes. The biggest change, as stated before, is the shift of major characters from Hamlet to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. As Christopher Innes claims, Stoppard's play reverses the traditional view of tragedy through turning the most minor figures in *Hamlet* into the central characters (332). Similarly, Terry Hodgson explains that Stoppard takes these "supporting characters" and puts their "off-stage lives" on the stage which becomes the main focus (183). Stoppard's attitude towards these two characters has the possibility of changing the audience's attitude, as well. Seeing that unimportant

characters in one's play become important in another's, the audience deduce that identity and value cannot be fixed. They could conclude that, like these characters, they may be unimportant in some people's lives whereas they could mean much for others'. Therefore, the nature of identity is questioned by the audience.

Stoppard re-writes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by using dialogues, events, and character attitudes that do not exist in Shakespeare's play. For instance, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are constantly confused with one another by the royal family which is not seen in *Hamlet*. When Hamlet sees Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for the first time at the end of Act I, he confuses the couple raising his arm to Rosencrantz calling him Guildenstern and then he corrects himself (53). However, there is no such confusion in Shakespeare's play. In this way, Stoppard re-creates; deconstructs Shakespeare's work according to his own imagination. To illustrate, in Shakespeare's play, Hamlet utters: "The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remember'd" at the end of his famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy (43). In Stoppard's play, however, he says these words directly to Ophelia (75).

Another example to the deconstruction of *Hamlet* by Stoppard is seen at the end of the first act. In order to find out the reason for Hamlet's strange behaviour, the couple plays a question game. Guildenstern pretends to be Hamlet for a while and Rosencrantz asks him a couple of questions about Gertrude and Claudius so that they can put themselves in Hamlet's place and figure out his problems:

GUIL: Don't think I haven't thought of it.

ROS: And with her husband's brother.

GUIL: Then they were close.

ROS: She went to him –

GUIL: - Too close –

ROS: - for comfort –

GUIL: It looks bad.

ROS: It adds up.

GUIL: Incest to adultery (51).

The whole conversation which does not exist in Shakespeare's work brings about a new view to the play. This way, Hamlet's inner psyche is given voice by Stoppard. Thanks to the "fake" Hamlet played by Guildenstern, the audience could see a Hamlet who can talk about his "madness", his depressive behaviour openly. At the end of this question game, Rosencrantz makes a summary of what he understands: "To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother popped onto his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice" (51). This could be considered as "*Hamlet* in a nutshell" as it summarizes the play in a very simple way. However, the summary is so simple that one could assert that Stoppard challenges *Hamlet* as an "ultimate tragedy" through undermining and playing with it. He shows that the plot could be summed up in a short paragraph; therefore, the audience should not see the play as a "meta-play" or a "meta-tragedy" anymore.

By deconstructing *Hamlet* Stoppard displays that he does not see *Hamlet* and the characters it has in the same way Shakespeare did, and he does not feel to be bounded to see it as its writer did. By playing with this famous work, changing it and coming up with his own perspective, Stoppard also invites the audience to understand that they can come up with their own opinions and perspectives, as well. This idea offers that neither a literary work nor art in general can be seen as a certain and unquestionable entity; on the contrary, a work of art could be questioned, played upon, and present multiple meanings. Every single person has the right to become active and comment on the play freely so that they can come up with their own ideas and conclusions, which will bring about many meanings and truths for one single work of art. The audience see that they can create their own perspectives of *Hamlet* as Stoppard created his own. Besides, through questioning a previous work belonging to the past, they see that they can also question the past events that they thought as certain.

Stoppard places Shakespeare's story into his own plot structure. As a result, there occurs two plots in the same play, which gives birth to another metadramatic technique; play within the play. The story of courtiers, which is not shown in Shakespeare's play is the outer play and Shakespeare's plot is the inner play.

Douglas Colby elucidates how Stoppard uses play within the play technique: “He [Stoppard] presents a world on the other side of the looking glass, in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern “do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off” (31).

As the play begins, the audience see on the stage “Two ELIZABETHANS passing the time in a place without any visible character” (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 11). At the beginning, there is no clue for the audience to understand that they are Shakespeare’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They just pass time having pointless conversations and playing the game of coin tossing over and over again. The audience watch Stoppard’s play comfortably in their seats until the sudden change of the scene from *exterior mood* to *interior* while Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are having a conversation about the coin tossing game: [He tosses the coin to GUIL who watches it. Simultaneously – a lighting change sufficient to alter the exterior mood into interior, but nothing violet] [And OPHELIA runs on in some alarm, holding up her skirts – followed by Hamlet] (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 34). At this point of the play, the inner play comes in. Other characters from *Hamlet* –Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia, and Polonius- appear on the stage within Stoppard’s play. They have the same dialogues as they do in Shakespeare’s play. With this abrupt interruption of Shakespeare’s plot, the audience become startled while they have been getting carried away by the action of the outer plot. Having been puzzled, they try to understand which plot is the real one or if any of them is real at all. They begin to understand that what they have been watching is just a play written by a playwright who uses the story of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The story of both plays which the audience have taken for granted and by which they have been carried away begin to be seen as fictive and fake. When they understand the fact that Stoppard’s play is false and illusionary, they also come to realize that the story of *Hamlet*, which is used by Stoppard, is also false and illusionary.

There are other instances where Stoppard uses play within the play technique. For instance, when the tragedians make a rehearsal at the court, they perform another short play as they are making a rehearsal of *Murder of Gonzaga* which takes place in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. While the audience are watching Stoppard’s play, which has

already two plays, they see another play within the “outer play” (77-78). Similarly, near the end of the play, the Player pretends to be dead which seems so “real” and plausible at first but which turns out to be fake (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 123). This could be considered as another case where Stoppard forces the audience to see the fictional world of theatre through play within the play technique. Paul Delaney comments on this scene and its effect on the audience explaining that while “it is happening”, the audience have no idea that what they see is “artifice” as it looks real. However, when the audience recognize its artificiality, they think about the play’s reality as well as life’s (32). Similarly, at the end of the play, all tragedians perform death. Here, both the audience and the tragedians are aware of the fact that they are only “pretending”, in other words, “performing” death:

[ALFRED, still in his Queen’s costume, dies by poison: the PLAYER, with rapier, kills the ‘KING’ and duels with a fourth TRAGEDIAN, inflicting and receiving a wound. The two remaining TRAGEDIANS, the two ‘SPIES’ dressed in the same coats as ROS and GUIL, are stabbed, as before. And the light is fading over the deaths which take place right upstage.] (124).

This part of the play mocks the multiple deaths in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and in other tragedies. Though, they do not die at the same time, showing their simultaneous deaths one after another, Stoppard, in a way, makes fun of *Hamlet* and other great tragedies in order to challenge traditional tragedy and its rules and stimulate the audience to question grand narratives of art. Play within the play structure directs the audience to think about *Hamlet* and see it as a play which has a fabricated structure.

Having realized the fictional worlds of these two plays, the audience start to question art’s aim to be “true to life”. As Stoppard exposes the imaginary and false nature of art on the stage, the audience begin to ask how come *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* or *Hamlet* could promise to reflect ‘real life’ situations. They are all illusionary and fictitious. The audience’s trust in the reliability of Shakespeare’s and Stoppard’s works, and as a result, art is shaken. Consequently, their reliance on the material world and its certainties decreases, too. They come to realize that if art, which has had the claim of presenting “real life”, cannot be certain and cannot give answers, “real life” cannot be certain, either. Therefore, they question metanarratives that they have been counting on in their lives.

Another metadramatic device that Stoppard uses in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is role play within the role. This technique is used with play within the play correspondingly. Similar to play within the play, it creates a realization in the audience since now they can understand that the people they see on the stage are just fictional entities. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the fictional nature of the characters is exposed twice as the audience acknowledge that these are fictive characters both in Shakespeare's and in Stoppard's plays. The audience undergo a series of confusions as a result of the duality created by the metadramatic devices and cannot be sure if Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are playing their roles in Shakespeare's play or in Stoppard's. They start to question the reliability of these roles.

The same questioning process could be applied to the tragedians. Throughout the play, they constantly change their role, which both demonstrates the fictional world of theatre and puzzles the audience. The tragedians also constantly make clear that all on the stage are actors playing their parts.

PLAYER: ... I recognized you at once –

ROS: And who are we?

PLAYER: - as fellow artists. (23)

These lines expose the fact that the Player remembers the two courtiers as actors who have played their roles in Shakespeare's work. He makes it clear that they are fellow artists. Similarly, in the second act, the Player talks about their mission as artists: "We're actors.... We pledged our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade that someone would be watching" (64).

Unlike the Player, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are generally unaware of their fictionality in the play. However, there are some instances that they remember they are characters from Shakespeare's play and they have played the same roles before:

GUIL: I've been taken in before.

ROS:[looks out over the audience] Rings a bell (85).

Having been awakened by these metadramatic devices, the audience come to realize that these fictional entities cannot exist outside the text. Once again, art cannot claim to be “true to life”. The people the audience see on the stage are not real, but just actors.

In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, no matter how hard the couple tires, they cannot change the direction of their lives or the story. They are only playing the roles Stoppard wrote for them. Douglas Colby comments on the issue:

One of the central ideas in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is that characters in any play are predestined by its author. From the moment it begins until the last scene is ended, that play can head in only one direction, the one prescribed by the script. The characters, who are swept along by the plot, have no free will. The playwright has chosen a course for them, and they are forced to follow it (35-36).

As Colby indicates, whatever Stoppard has written for them becomes the destiny of Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and the other characters. Their existence depends on the playwright. For example, at the beginning of Act III, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern suddenly find themselves on the ship though they don't know how they got there (97). They got there suddenly because the writer wanted to open the third act with that scene. They become puppet-like creatures in the hands of the playwright, but since they are not aware of this fact most of the time, they just try to understand their situation. For instance, during the game of coin tossing, heads keeps coming up and Guildenstern tries to find a reasonable explanation:

GUIL: It must be the law of diminishing returns.... I feel the spell about to be broken. [Energizing himself somewhat. He takes out a coin, spins it high, catches it, turns it over on to the back of his other hand, studies the coin – and tosses it to ROS. His energy deflates and he sits.] Well, it was an even chance... if my calculations are correct (13).

Though Guildenstern endeavours to find a meaning behind heads coming up all the time, he cannot. He fails to see that it is so because the playwright wants it to be so. In other words, Stoppard has the control of these characters and they do not have the capacity to do anything without the playwright's will. As Andretta also indicates: “Ros and Guil have no future, only a series of to-days. They have no identity and no purpose in life until they receive instructions or patronage from their superiors” (34).

Andretta goes on explaining that the couple is unable to realize that they do not have any guidance “except words” (38): “Words, words. They are all we have to go on” (41). Neither Rosencrantz nor Guildenstern may have an identity “without words”; outside the text. The Player is the one who is well aware of the fact that the characters do not have any control: “... We have no control. Tonight we play to the court. Or, the night after. Or to the tavern. Or not” (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 25). Since he is just an actor and a character both in Stoppard’s and Shakespeare’s plays, he has to do whatever is written for him. He does not know when or where he is going to play next. Similarly, in the second act, he explains to Guildenstern that the actors do whatever is written, they cannot change it, they don’t have the right to comment:

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

GUIL: Marked?

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

GUIL: Who decides?

PLAYER: Decides? It is written... We’re tragedians, you see. We follow directions – there is no choice involved. The bad end unhappily, the good luckily. That is what tragedy means (79-80).

As the player expresses, once their parts are “written”, the actors just play the roles given to them. Since the Player is aware of his fictionality, he is more comfortable than Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He accepts the fact that he is only a character played by an actor.

However, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are most of the time unaware of their fictionality, get so confused that they do not know what they should do or where they are. In the first act, for example, Rosencrantz displays his uneasiness and Guildenstern seems to be sharing the same feeling:

ROS: [at footlights]How very intriguing! [Turns] I feel like a spectator – an appalling business. The only thing that makes it bearable is the irrational belief that somebody interesting will come on in a minute....

GUIL: See anyone?

ROS: No. You?

GUIL: No. [At footlights.]What a fine persecution – to be kept intrigued without ever quite being enlightened... (41).

The couple cannot bear not having any control and becoming mere observers of their own lives. In the final act, Rosencrantz displays his anger once again: “Incidents! All we get is incidents! Dear God, is it too much to expect a little sustained action?” (118)

Douglas Colby comments on this anger: “Rosencrantz again laments the sporadic nature of his work at the court; he also questions Shakespeare, the source of his creation and therefore his God, as to why he and Guildenstern were not blessed with a more constant existence in *Hamlet*” (41). As Colby suggests, since Shakespeare and Stoppard are the ones to decide the couple’s destiny, they could be taken as gods for the characters. The couple, therefore, is angry with their gods who deprive them of certainties. Another instant when Guildenstern complains about not having control is when he has a conversation with the Player soon after the Player informs the couple about the tasks of actors in the second act: “We only know what we are told, and that’s little enough and for all we know it isn’t even true” (66). Though he accepts that he is only a character, he cannot be happy with the uncertainty of their situation resulting from the fact that they are led by some other authority.

The couple’s attitude towards their situation is generally negative and complaining, yet they do not take a certain action to change their condition. Moreover, it is understood that being controlled by an authority seems easier for them as Guildenstern offers: “There’s a logic at work – it’s all done for you, don’t worry. Enjoy it. Relax. To be taken in hand and led, like being a child again, even without the innocence, a child, - it’s like being given a prize, an extra slice of childhood when you least expect it, as a prize for being good, or compensation for

never having had one....” (40). The fact that no matter how hard they try, they cannot change the lines written for them, nor can they understand makes the couple accept their quiescence. It is understood that being controlled by the playwright is confusing yet at the same time convenient for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Having seen the control of playwright over the characters and actors, the audience would draw an analogy. They come to realize that, like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, they are controlled by some authority in their lives. As the characters of Stoppard’s play perform whatever is written for them, the audience play their roles attributed to them. Andretta explains this analogy as:

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead confronts art with life, traditional or Aristotelian tragedy with modern absurdity, and actors with audiences. It aims at showing that actors, audiences, and characters in a play share the same destiny of limited comprehension. The actors and the characters they impersonate do not know more than their assigned parts. The audience, likewise, do not know more than what he relates to their daily routine. None are offered any insight into a comprehensive reality, a metaphysical pattern, or even a moral or logical purpose that is being worked out. (24).

Except for their daily routines, neither the audience know what is going on around them. Andretta also likens Guildenstern’s dilemma to the dilemma of people. He offers that though man thinks that he enjoys freedom, he is not aware of the fact that his actions are all pre-determined by some authority which prevents his freedom (32). Therefore, just as the characters, the audience are helpless, puppet-like beings. Thanks to the realization created by Stoppard’s play, they have the chance to question and, if possible, challenge these authorities.

Another realization created by *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is the fact that the roles given by the authority are not one and only. Each person has many roles to play in their lives, which is made clear by role play within the role technique. In the play, the Tragedians are both characters and actors. As well as being characters in both plays, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern become spectators (82). The multiple roles attributed to the characters by Stoppard mimic the multiple roles the audience have in their lives.

The final metadramatic device that will be discussed is self-reference which is, as stated before, a direct reference to the artificial world of theatre. In order to prevent the audience from getting carried away by the story, Stoppard uses many self-referential techniques in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Most of the time, he creates dialogues which display the fact that the audience are watching a play. The Player, whose name already suggests his fictionality and who is the most conscious character in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, becomes Stoppard's most important tool to present self-reference. For example, in the first act, when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come across the Tragedians, the Player gives information about their job and, as a result, the art of theatre: "... We transport you into a world of intrigue and illusion...clowns, if you like, murderers – we can do you ghosts and battles, on the skirmish level,...., but that comes under realism for which there are special terms" (23). Through these claims, the Player declares that as actors, they have some mission and they consciously play their roles, which creates consciousness in the audience.

The conversation between Guildenstern and the Player which takes place when the tragedians are getting prepared for a rehearsal is another self-referential dialogue in the play:

GUIL: Well... aren't you going to change into your costume?

PLAYER: I never change out it, sir.

GUIL: Always in character.

PLAYER: That's it (33-34).

The Player draws attention to his fictional identity. He asserts that on the stage which constitutes his world, he is always a character; hence, he forces the audience to see him in the same way. He fools neither Guildenstern nor the audience with the illusionary world of theatre. On the contrary, he exposes the artificiality of it.

The second time the Tragedians come across Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the Player blames the couple for having left them without an audience. He talks about the importance of the audience for the actors:

PLAYER [lost]: There we were-demented children mincing about in clothes that no one ever wore, speaking as no man ever spoke, swearing love in wigs and rhymed couplets, killing each other with wooden swords, hollow protestations of faith hurled after empty promises of vengeance-and every gesture, every pose, vanishing into the thin, unpopulated air. We ransomed our dignity to the clouds, and the uncomprehending birds listened. [He rounds on them]. Don't you see? We're actors-we're the opposite of people! (63-64).

Announcing that characters are the opposite of people, Stoppard tries to make the audience see that unlike people, characters are fictional identities. Therefore, the impossibility of art's promising real life situations and being true to life is proven through self-reference.

Similar to the Player, though unconsciously, Guildenstern declares the artificial nature of theatre when he tells that he does not find the death performed by the actors convincing.

GUIL: [fear, derision]: Actors! The mechanics of cheap melodrama! That isn't death. [More quietly.] You scream and choke and sink to your knees, but it doesn't bring death home to anyone – it doesn't catch them unawares and start the whisper in their skulls that says – “One day you are going to die.” [He straightens up.] 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... Audiences know what to expect, and that is all that they are prepared to believe in...

GUIL: ... you can't act death. The fact of it is nothing to do with seeing it happen – it's not gasps and blood and falling about – that isn't what makes it death. It's just a man fallin to reappear, that's all – now you see him, now you don't that's the only thing that's real: here one minute and gone the next and never coming back – an exit, unobtrusive and unannounced, a disappearance gathering weight as it goes on, until, finally, it is heavy with death. (83-84).

Guildenstern directly calls attention to the falsity of art. He thinks that though characters seem to be dead on the stage, it is clear they are men “falling to reappear” (83); they are actors, who are only performing death which, for him, seems phony and unreal. Here, the Player shows the audience as responsible ones since they are the ones who are conditioned to believe. Therefore, Stoppard wakes the audience up showing them that they have all the control; it is their decision whether to realize that they are only watching a play or to take what they see on the stage as real.

The process that the audience go through when they are watching a self-referential play is shown on the stage by Stoppard when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern watch the Spies in the Tragedians' play. The Spies represent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Rosencrantz realizes this and becomes very uneasy:

[The whole mime has been fluid and continuous but now ROS moves forward and brings it to a pause. What Brings ROS forward is the fact that under their cloaks the two SPIES are wearing coats identical to those worn by ROS and GUIL, whose coats are now covered by their cloaks. ROS approaches "his" SPY doubtfully. He does not quite understand why the coats are familiar. ROS stands close, touches the coat, thoughtfully...]

ROS: Well, if it isn't - ! No, wait a minute, don't tell me - it's a long time since - where was it? Ah, this is taking me back to - when was it? I know you, don't I? I never forget a face - (he looks into the SPY's face) ... not that I know yours, that is. For a moment I thought - no, I don't know you, do I? Yes, I'm afraid you're quite wrong. You must have mistaken me for someone else (82).

The reason why Rosencrantz is disturbed is that becoming aware of the fictionality of his world is challenging. As it is easier to ignore the fact that he lives in an artificial world, Rosencrantz does not want to see that the Spy is playing him. The same disturbing and uneasy process is valid for the audience, too. Stoppard exposes the fictionality of theatre which they have been counting on. Whether to realize the artificiality and uncertainty of art and question it as well as questioning the uncertainty and reality of their lives is left to the audience. If they want, they could become aware and mull over, if they do not, they could ignore and live with eyes closed just as Rosencrantz does. The audience could also conceive that just as *Hamlet*, which they have taken as a serious tragedy, could be played upon, the things that they take serious in their lives could be challenged too.

As a result of the metadramatic devices he uses in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Stoppard investigates certainty and reality. He challenges the common view that art is true to life and it should present reality which is considered to be fixed. Once the audience watch *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, they also join the process of questioning and challenging these assumptions.

CHAPTER IV

METADRAMATIC DEVICES IN *THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND*

Similar to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties*, *The Real Inspector Hound* tries to explore the nature of reality in art and life. The play includes a number of uncertainties which confuse the characters and the audience. All these uncertainties are created and presented by metadramatic devices. Most of the critics offer that Stoppard borrows from Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*; however, he does not give a direct reference neither to the characters and dialogues nor to the plot structure of that particular work. For this reason, *The Real Inspector Hound* is different from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties* in terms of its usage of literary reference. It is not based on a single literary work, but it takes from and deconstructs whodunit genre which consists of complicated detective stories in which the main aim is to find out the killer.

Now that he does not have any particular work for reference, it is hard for Stoppard to make the audience realize the fictional nature of his play. As he cannot present familiar characters and direct quotations from another work, he employs other methods; he parodies whodunit genre by exposing its clichés in an exaggerated way. Katherine E. Kelly explains how *The Real Inspector Hound* is different in terms of the use of literary reference: "...the mockery is general, not particular. Thus, the pleasure of this parody initially lies not in recognizing the differences between a particular Christie and Stoppard's copy but in recognizing in the copy they distorted echoes of multiple plays united by their use of stock features" (*Tom Stoppard and The Craft of Comedy: Medium and Genre at Play: "On Stage: Re-Playing, Re-Vising, Re-Presenting*, 82).

One of the things Stoppard parodies is the setting and the atmosphere. In the first scene of the play - in the form of a whodunit - , the phone rings and Mrs. Drudge, one of the characters of the mystery, the maid of the Muldoon Manor, answers the phone by presenting the setting in a very funny way: "Hello, the

drawing-room of Lady Muldoon's country residence one morning in early spring?" (11). This particular description, on its own, includes both literary and self reference since the setting of the play is depicted for the audience by a character, which is unexpected for them and which creates alienation. Mrs Drudge further continues: "... Hello! – the draw – Who? Who did you wish to speak to? I'm afraid there is no one of that name here, this is all very mysterious and I'm sure it's leading up to something, I hope nothing is amiss for we, that is Lady Muldoon and her houseguests, are here cut off from the world,..." (11). This speech enables Stoppard to make fun of the general atmosphere created in mysteries. People who have read or watched at least one work in the form of a whodunit could realize what the typical "mysterious" place "cut off from the world" is in these works. The fact that in an irrelevant situation a character gives the atmosphere on the phone creates a comic effect and this prevents the audience from being enveloped by fear or tension. On the contrary, they could understand that the playwright is parodying the features of whodunit genre.

The typical atmosphere is strengthened with another depiction of Mrs Drudge: "Should I close the windows, my lady? The fog is beginning to roll off the sea like a deadly –" (19). Foggy weather is one of the classic elements of whodunit creating suspense. Simon is another character that talks about the setting: "I took the short cut over the cliffs and followed one of the old smugglers' paths through the treacherous swamps that surround this strangely inaccessible house" (12). With these descriptions the audience could be sure that the setting is perfect for a mystery. The house is "strangely inaccessible" and "cut off from the world", the weather is foggy, and the place is "mysterious". However, while exposing these details, Stoppard exaggerates them and explicitly creates a funny story out of a mystery and the realization of this causes the audience to have a critical eye rather than being emotionally involved.

Another thing that is exaggerated and made fun of is the typical radio announcements in mysteries which inform the listeners of the latest news of the murder. It is bizarre for the audience that whenever the characters turn on the radio, they hear a police announcement warning people against the killer. As well as the

absurdity of this coincidence, the description the police give for the killer is quite farcical as it sounds too general: “The man is wearing a darkish suit with a lightish shirt. He is of medium height and build and youngish. Anyone seeing a man answering to this description and acting suspiciously is advised to phone the nearest police station (9). The adjectives used for the killer are quite broad; everyone can come across such a person, let alone defining the killer.

Another coincidence occurs when the characters obstinately cannot see the corpse that the audience can see. This continues until the end of the play. The situation is given in the stage direction: [MRS. DRUDGE turns off the radio and resumes her cleaning. She does not see the body. Quite fortuitously, her view of the body is always blocked, and when it isn't she has her back to it. However, she is dusting and polishing her way towards it] (9). Stoppard's description of the situation as “fortuitous” makes the situation even more ironic. Here, Stoppard shows the audience that he is mocking the typical plot structure which conceals the identity of the corpse and the murderer until the end in order to keep the tension high.

Clichés of whodunit genre can also be seen when the Inspector Hound asks about details to investigate the murder. As a stereotypical Inspector – with his “swamp boots” and a “foghorn” (26) - of a typical whodunit, Hound asks usual questions to Muldoon Manor inhabitants; however, different from inspectors in classic whodunits, his attitude makes the situation funny.

HOUND: “... If anyone of you have recently encountered a youngish good-looking fellow in a smart suit, white shirt, hatless, well-spoken – someone possibly claiming to have just moved into the neighbourhood, someone who on the surface seems as sane as you or I, then now is the time to speak!

FELICITY: I –

HOUND: Don't interrupt! (28).

The comic arises from the fact that Hound both wants them to speak and hinders them when they want. Apparently he is taking his task as an inspector too seriously. Another example could be found in the same scene when Hound thinks that he knows who the dead person is:

HOUND: ... Fear naught Lady Muldoon – I shall apprehend the man who killed your husband.

CYNTHIA: My Husband? I don't understand.

HOUND: Everything points to Gascoyne.

CYNTHIA: But who's that? [The Corpse]

HOUND: Your husband.

CYNTHIA: No, it's not.

HOUND: Yes, it is.

CYNTHIA: I tell you it's not.

HOUND: I'm in charge of this case!

CYNTHIA: But that's not my husband.

HOUND: Are you sure?

CYNTHIA: For goodness sake! (29-30).

Hound is so preoccupied with his identity as an inspector that he could even claim that he can identify one's husband better than she does. As Hound goes on his investigation, Stoppard's ridicule continues:

HOUND: This case is becoming an utter shambles.

CYNTHIA: But what are we going to do?

HOUND: [snatching the phone]: I'll call then police!

CYNTHIA: But you are the police!

HOUND: Thank God I'm here – the lines have been cut!

CYNTHIA: You mean?

HOUND: Yes! – we're on our own, cut off from the world and in grave danger!

FELICITY: You mean - ?

HOUND: Yes! – I think the killer will strike again!

MAGNUS: You mean - ?

HOUND: Yes! One of us ordinary mortals thrown together by fate and cut off by the elements, in the murderer! He must be found – search the house!

Though Hound has many similarities with a typical inspector figure – his self-confidence, his determination to find the murder, etc.-, it is weird that he says he will call the police. He does not show good judgement and reason though he is the responsible officer for the case. His offer to call the police is used by Stoppard to mock the clichés.

These conversations and references seem ridiculous for the audience and they cannot concentrate on the story. Every single detail leads them to the realization that Stoppard is giving references to previous mysteries to make fun of them. Stoppard shows the audience that he does not have to take whodunits serious and fear them; on the contrary he can mock them and laugh at them. The audience come to realize that their reactions could also change towards a particular genre, which indicates the existence of plurality of meanings and reactions.

Like *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound* consists of two plots. The comments and conversations of the two theatre critics, Moon and Birdboot, form the outer play. The inner play includes the actions that take place in the Muldoon Manor in the form of a whodunit as stated before. All through the play both actions go hand in hand and there is a non-stop transition between the inner and the outer play. Unlike the characters in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the characters in *The Real Inspector Hound* are aware of the existence of the inner play because their job is to watch the play and comment on it as they are theatre critics.

Similar to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the play starts with the outer play. The two critics are waiting for the play to start and while they are talking about their private lives, the play they intend to watch – the inner play of *The Real Inspector Hound* – starts with Moon asking Birdboot about the girl he has mentioned. From the very beginning, both plays go together:

MOON: Is that her?

[For MRS. DRUDGE has entered.]

BIRDBOOT: - don't be absurd, wouldn't be seen dead with the old – ah.

[MRS. DRUDGE is the char, middle-aged, turbaned. She heads straight for the radio, dusting of the trot.]

MOON: [reading his programme]: Mrs. Drudge the Help.

RADIO: [without preamble, having been switched on by MRS DRUDGE]:

We interrupt our programme for a special police message.

[MRS. DRUDGE stops to listen.] (8-9).

The scene goes on with Mrs Drudge's reactions and these reactions coincide with Moon and Birdboot's conversation. In other words, while the characters of the inner play continue with their story, Moon and Birdboot have irrelevant discussions. These two different plots even intersect each other.

MRS. DRUDGE: Major Magnus, the crippled half-brother of Lord Muldoon who turned up out of the blue from Canada just the other day, completes the house-party.

[MRS. DRUDGE leaves on this, SIMON is undecided.]

MOON: [ruminating quietly]: I think I must be waiting for Higgs to die.

BIRDBOOT: What?

MOON: Half afraid that I will vanish when he does.

[The phone rings. SIMPN picks it up.]

SIMON: Hello?

MOON: I wonder if it's the same for Puckeridge?

BIRDBOOT AND SIMON [together]: Who?

MOON: Third string.

BIRDBOOT: Your stand-in?

MOON: Does he wait for Higgs and I to write each other's obituary – does he dream - ?

SIMON: To whom did you wish to speak?

BIRDBOOT: Whats he like?

MOON: Bitter.

SIMON: There is no one of that name here (14).

The audience could watch both plots at the same time. These two plots even coincide when both Simon and Birdboot ask “who?”

As well as irrelevant conversations, the inner play is cut by the critics’ comment on a particular scene:

MRS. DRUDGE: [to CYNTHIA]: Biscuit, my lady?

CYNTHIA: No thank you.

BIRDBOOT [writing elaborately in his notebook]: The second act, however, fails to fulfil the promise...

FELICITY: If you ask me there’s something funny going on (25).

The comments belong to the outer play and the audience could easily realize the division between the two plots and the use of play within the play technique. From these scenes, it could be understood that in *The Real Inspector Hound* the inner and outer plays go on simultaneously. The fact that the interaction between the two plays never gives break makes it hard for the audience to concentrate on the play and to get carried away by its plot.

The course of the play completely changes when the inner and outer plays merge into one another in a strange way. The characters of the outer play become the characters of the inner play. They suddenly find themselves in the inner play that they have been watching. This structure is different from the use of play within the play technique in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The interference of the inner play with the outer starts when the phone rings on the stage and Moon answers it:

BIRDBOOT: A rattling good evening out. I was held.

[The phone starts to ring on the empty stage. MOON tries to ignore it.]

MOON: Harder still – Harder still if possible – Harder still if it is possible to be – Neither do I find it easy – Dante and Dorothy L. Sayers. Harder still –

BIRDBOOT: Others taking part included – Moon!

[For MOON has lost patience and is bearing down on the ringing phone. He is frankly irritated.]

MOON [picking up the phone, barks]: Hel-lo! [Pause, turns to BIRDBOOT, quietly]: It's for you. [Pause.]

[BIRDBOOT gets up. He approaches cautiously. MOON gives him the phone and moves back to his seat. BIRDBOOT watches him go. He looks round and smiles weakly, expiating himself.]

BIRDBOOT [into phone]: Hello...

....

[BIRDBOOT mops his brow with his handkerchief. As he turns, a tennis ball bounces into through the French windows, followed by FELICITY, as before, in tennis outfit. The lighting is as it was. Everything is as it was. It is, let us say, the same moment of time] (33).

As Birdboot comes on the stage, the same scene that both the audience and Moon and Birdboot have watched is repeated. The actor playing Birdnoot starts to play the role of Simon and the audience begin watching the same scene that they watched at the beginning of the play played by a different actor.

After the union of the two plots, remaining as the only character of the outer play, Moon intervenes the inner play by commenting on Birdboot's actions. He is confused and he cannot find any sense in Birdboot's becoming a part of the inner play:

MOON: [from his seat]: Birdboot! – [a tense whisper]. Birdboot!

[BIRDBOOT looks around vaguely.]

What the hell are you doing?

BIRDBOOT: Nothing.

MOON: Stop making an ass of yourself. Come back.

BIRDBOOT: Oh, I know what you're thinking – but the fact is I genuinely consider her performance to be one of the summits –

[CYNTHIA enters as before. MRS. DRUDGE has gone.]

CYNTHIA: Darling!

BIRDBOOT: Ah, good evening – may I say that I genuinely consider –

CYNTHIA: Don't say anything for a moment – just hold me.

[She falls into his arms.]

BIRDBOOT: All right! [They kiss.] (34).

While Moon is commenting, the inner play still continues and this situation goes on for a very long time. For example, while playing his role in the inner play as Simon, Birdboot talks with Moon about Magnus, a character in the inner play:

BIRDBOOT: [to MOON]: Did you see that? Tried to kill me. I told you it was Magnus – not that it is Magnus.

MOON: Who did it you mean?

BIRDBOOT: What?

MOON: You think it's not Magnus who did it?

BIRDBOOT: Get a grip on yourself, Moon – the facts are staring you in the face. He's after Cynthia for one thing (36).

It is seen that both Birdboot and Moon comment on the inner play while Birdboot is playing in that particular play. This makes the collaboration of the inner and outer plays explicit for the audience. The union of them proceeds until Moon also starts to play as the Inspector Hound in the inner play. As soon as he is involved in the inner play, there is no outer play anymore, in other words, the inner and outer plays are completely intermingled. This makes the play even more ambiguous since it is harder for the audience to find an answer to the question “which plot is the real one?” Once the two plots intermingle, the structure of the play becomes more puzzling.

When it comes to role play within the role technique, it is seen that this technique in *The Real Inspector Hound* is quite explicit. From the very beginning of the play the audience come up against a puzzling situation. The play starts with Moon waiting for the inner play to start as if he is a member of the audience. He reads his programme while sitting at the front row and Birdboot arrives. Until the first conversation between Moon and Birdboot, the scene could be quite confusing for the audience since it is not certain whether Moon and Birdboot are spectators like them or characters /actors in the play. As soon as Moon and Birdboot start talking about the inner play that they are going to watch, the audience come to realize that they are theatre critics, characters of the outer play. Therefore, from the very

beginning, the audience have to contemplate about the role playing issue, which enables them to gain consciousness even before the story starts.

Soon after the outer play starts, both critics start talking about the inner play, and even before the characters of the inner play appear on the stage, they talk about the actors that are going to perform soon, which makes the audience wait for another play as well.

BIRDBOOT: I'll give you a tip, then. Watch the girl.

MOON: You think she did it?

BIRDBOOT: No, no – the girl, watch her.

...

MOON: You know her, do you?

BIRDBOOT: [suspiciously, bridling]: What's that supposed to mean?

MOON: I beg your pardon?

BIRDBOOT: I'm trying to tip you a wink – give you a nudge as good as a tip – for God's sake, Moon, what's the matter with you? –

MOON: I suppose you've made dozens of them, like that.

BIRDBOOT: [instantly, outraged]: I'll have you know I'm a family man devoted to my homely but good-natured wife, and if you're suggesting - ... (8).

Moon implies that Birdboot is having an affair with an actress who has a role in the play. This conversation emphasizes the characters' identities as actors. In other words, talking about "the girl" as an actress, not as a character and mentioning that they know "the girl" out of the stage, Moon and Birdboot show that these characters are played by some actors who have personal lives. Therefore, characters are only fictional entities and they could not be taken too serious or for granted.

While they are watching and commenting on the inner play, the two critics continue exposing this fact. For instance, when Simon kisses Cynthia they are surprised that "her mouth is open" (19). This surprises them because they know that she is acting and actually she does not have to "open her mouth", in other words, kiss Simon for real. The audience are compelled to see Cynthia the same way the two

critics do, as an actress playing her role on the stage. Another instance where Cynthia's identity as an actress is revealed comes when Birdboot discusses her talent: "The part as written is a mere cipher but she manages to make Cynthia a real person -" (23). Here the audience is warned against the possibility of perceiving the character Cynthia as a "real person".

The characters in the inner play are not the only ones that Moon and Birdboot realize as fictional. At some points, they realize that they also have some parts to play. Sometimes the two critics are carried away by their personal life discussions and they forget their mission as theatre critics. However, as soon as they remember it, as the stage direction also indicates - "They pull themselves together" because they have to - they start to talk about the play since their role is to act as theatre critics (23). They remind themselves and the audience that they are also actors playing their roles. Therefore, no matter how much they want to talk about other things, they cannot escape from playing their assigned parts.

The Real Inspector Hound could be thought as the strongest of all three plays that are investigated in this thesis in terms of exposing the fact that the characters are puppet-like entities in the hand of the playwright. As stated before, as soon as he answers the phone that rings on the stage, Birdboot becomes a character in the inner play. He does not choose to play in the inner play, nor is he eager to. Though he seems quite controlled and conscious while he is watching and commenting on the inner play- in other words, while he is playing his role in the outer play - , once he is drawn into the inner play he loses all his control. One moment, he is the theatre critic, the other, he is Simon. What makes the play stronger is that unlike the characters in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, he is aware of the fact that he has become a part of the inner play that he has been watching and he at least feels that there is something wrong for some time. Later, however, he easily utters his lines as if he has always been Simon. He does not consider it strange when the other characters call him Simon. In short, he easily adapts to his new role because he is only an actor who has to play whatever the playwright offers.

Moon tries hard to make Birdboot realize that he is in the wrong place when he is on the stage, becoming a part of the inner play and this is another point which makes the play stronger in terms of showing characters' passivity. However, there is nothing Birdboot can do:

MOON: For God's sake pull yourself together.

BIRDBOOT: I can't help it (39).

He can't help because the authority is the playwright and all he can do is to carry out whatever the author wants. Moon does not give up and he wants Birdboot to "come and sit down" as he belongs to the outer play (39). Yet, no matter how hard he tries to prevent Birdboot from becoming a part of the inner play, he cannot achieve because of the full authority of the playwright. Furthermore, he, himself, becomes a puppet in the hand of the playwright when he suddenly becomes the Inspector Hound in the inner play. Birdboot is shot in the way Simon was shot previously, and all of a sudden Moon finds himself as a part of the inner play:

MOON: Birdboot! [He runs on, to BIRDBOOT's body.]

[CYNTHIA appears at the French windows. She stops and stares. All as before.]

CYNTHIA: Oh my God – what happened, Inspector?

MOON [almost to himself]: He's dead... [He rises.] That's a bit rough, isn't it? – A bit extreme! – He may have had his faults – I admit he was a fickle old ... Who did this, and why?

[MOON turns to face her. He stands up and makes swiftly for his seat. Before he gets there he is stopped by the sound of voices.]

[SIMON and HOUND are occupying the critics' seats.]

[MOON freezes] (40).

Moon is surprised because he cannot find any logical reason behind Birdboot's murder. Birdboot's sudden death and Moon's response remind the audience that Birdboot died just because he had to play Simon's part which the playwright wrote. Besides, similar to Birdboot, who did not have any control over his actions, Moon is brought into the play without his will. Interestingly, after this conversation, Simon and Hound, the inner play characters, start to play Moon's and Birdboot's roles

because the author wants to change these characters' roles. This time Simon and Hound comment on the play as theatre critics:

SIMON: To say that it is without pace, point, focus, interest, drama wit or originality is to say simply that it does not happen to be my cup of tea. One has only to compare this ragbag with the masters of the genre to see that there here we have a trifle that is not my cup of tea at all.

HOUND: I'm sorry to be blunt but there is no getting away from it. It lacks pace. A complete ragbag. (41).

Katherine E. Kelly explains the use of role play within the role technique in terms of characters' becoming puppets comparing the play with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*: "We recognize the device from R&GAD: the critics are becoming entrapped in a text. But in the case of *Hound*, the spectators do not know where the text is taking them. Thus, our role in *Hound*, unlike in R&GAD, becomes identical to that of Moon, as we attempt to decipher clues to explain the corpses before us" (84). Moon's first reaction is full of confusion. At first, he cannot understand what is going on and he shows a kind of resistance to his new role asking if this is a joke:

MAGNUS: [pointing to BIRDBOOT' s body]: Well, Inspector, is this your man?

MOON: [warily]: ... Yes.... Yes.....

CYNTHIA: It's Simon...

MOON: Yes.... yes... poor [Up.] Is this some kind of a joke?

MAGNUS: If it is, Inspector, it's in very poor taste.

[MOON pulls himself together and becomes galvanic, a little wild, in grief for Birdboot.]

MOON: All right! I'm going to find out who did this! I want everyone to go to the positions they occupied when the shot was fired – [they move; hysterically]: No one will leave the house! [They move back] (41).

The situation is too baffling for him to accept. Nevertheless, there is no other choice for him except for adapting himself to his new role as the inspector. Therefore, he is suddenly engrossed in his role; he even gives directions to the people so that they can find the killer.

Similar to Birdboot and Moon, other characters are under the control of the playwright. None of the characters in the inner play finds it strange when they have to play the same parts twice. The audience see that when Birdboot is made to play Simon's role, the inner play starts from the beginning and the characters have the same conversations without ever questioning the quaintness of the situation. They are even more passive than Birdboot and Moon. The couple of the outer play at least finds their situation bizarre for some time, but the inner play characters do not even realize it.

As the audience see the changing roles in the inner and outer plays, they cannot decide which roles are the real ones. Birdboot was supposed to be a theatre critic and he was talking about his wife and his relations with the actors, all of which seemed so real for the audience. However, he suddenly became an inner play character and this role also seems real after some time. The same situation is notable for Moon's double role. Michael Billington comments on this: "...Stoppard's two critics are as unreal as the characters in the thriller ... Stoppard regularly establishes different planes of action and then negates the contrast by showing up every plane as equally unreal (64). Therefore, the audience see that no matter how vivid and real the roles the characters have on the stage seem, they are all fake and fiction created by the author and played by the actors. Giving characters different roles and changing them in front of the audience, Tom Stoppard reveals characters' identities as actors once more. Similar to the actors, each of the audience members may have many roles in their lives. Having seen the characters who do not have any willpower or freedom and who carry out whatever is written –whether it seems logical or not -, the audience are compelled to make an analogy between themselves and the characters on the stage. Like these fictive entities, they have different roles assigned to them and in the way the playwright has decided the roles on the stage, some authorities have decided the roles the audience have to play in life. This analogy makes the audience aware of the slippery, fragile and insecure nature of their assumed identities, their lack of control over shaping life, and the necessity of accepting uncertainties and change as the very definition of life.

The final metadramatic device that is going to be investigated in *The Real Inspector Hound* is self-reference. Similar to the use of role play within the role, the use of self-reference in this play is the most distinct one. Even before the play begins, the audience is exposed to the fictional nature of theatre through a huge mirror (7). In this mirror, the audience see “their own reflection”, which enables them to realize their aim as spectators. In other words, the playwright shows signals of his purpose which is never letting the audience get carried away by the story. This huge mirror becomes a disruptive tool for Stoppard.

Soon after they see their own reflection, the audience are introduced to their representatives; Moon and Birdboot. These two characters could be considered as representatives of spectators at the beginning as two seats are occupied by them and they act like spectators waiting for the play to start. One of the most effective uses of self reference occurs when Moon and Birdboot comment on or give information about the play while they are watching it with the audience. They have microphones which enable them to share their opinions and the information about the play with the audience. For instance, at the beginning of the play, Moon introduces Mrs Drudge to the audience reading his programme (8). Another example is seen before the action in the inner play starts. The two theatre critics discuss the genre of the play that they are about to watch:

BIRDBOOT: ... – I mean it’s a sort of thriller, isn’t it?

MOON: Is it?

BIRDBOOT: That’s what I heard. Who killed thing? – no one will leave the house.

MOON: I suppose so. Underneath.

BIRDBOOT: Underneath?!? It’s a whodunit, man! – Look at it! [They look at it. The room. The BODY. Silence.]

Has it started yet?

MOON: Yes.

[Pause. They look at it.]

BIRDBOOT: Are you sure?

MOON: It's a pause.

BIRDBOOT: You can't start with a pause! If you want my opinion there's total panic back there. [Laughs and subsides]... (7).

Birdboot and Moon talk about the type of the play and they comment on the reason why the play has started with a pause. The play has started in this way because either the playwright chose it or "there's total panic" at the backstage as Birdboot offers. As the play continues, Birdboot and Moon carry out their mission as theatre critics and make a thorough comment of the play. They state that the play they are watching together with the audience is a fictitious situation created by the playwright in accordance with the features of a specific genre. There are some instances where the two critics severely criticize the play.

MOON: ...Having said that, and I think it must be said, I am bound to ask – does this play know where it is going?

....

MOON: ... For what in fact is this play concerned with? (24).

The couple does not ever leave the audience alone with the action. They constantly comment on the scenes and the actors which distracts the audience's attention. These comments force the audience to accept that they are watching a play performed by actors.

Another issue that the two critics comment on is the question on the identity of the killer. All through the play, Birdboot and Moon try to guess who the killer is:

BIRDBOOT: I said it's not him.

MOON: Who is it, then?

BIRDBOOT: My guess is Magnus (14).

Their never ending guesses reduce the tension or fear in the play since the audience are busied with these guesses and their attention is drawn from what is going on in the inner play and who the killer is. Indirectly, they suggest that the killer should not be taken serious because he is not real; he is only a character which is going to be found in the end.

The part which starts with Birdboot's involvement in the inner play takes the self-reference technique to its highest as Birdboot now both acts as a character and comments on the play:

BIRDBOOT [to MOON]: Did you see that? Tried to kill me. I told you it was Magnus – not that it is Magnus.

MOON: Who did it, you mean?

BIRDBOOT: What?

MOON: You think it's not Magnus who did it?

BIRDBOOT: Get a grip on yourself, Moon – the facts are staring you in the face. He's after Cynthia for one thing.

MAGNUS: It's Gascoyne, isn't it?

BIRDBOOT: Over my dead body!

MAGNUS: If he comes between us...

MOON: [angrily]: For God's sake sit down!

CYNTHIA: Simon!

BIRDBOOT: She needs me, Moon. I've got to make up a four (36).

At this point of the play it is impossible for the audience to concentrate on the story more than ever since Birdboot both talks about the play and the murder and goes on having conversation with Moon. He does his best to underscore the fictional nature of the play. The fictional nature of theatre which the audience trusted before, this time makes them question all the things they take as true

On the whole, the metadramatic devices used in *The Real Inspector Hound* make the audience realize the illusory nature of theatre and art cannot help them unlock the mysteries of life and offer solutions to man's problems. This leads the audience to the conclusion that theatre is a fabrication of life making them question the nature of reality and the existence of certainty, which they are unwilling to do in daily life.

CHAPTER V

METADRAMATIC DEVICES IN *TRAVESTIES*

Travesties is Tom Stoppard's another noteworthy play which investigates the impossibility of certainty and fixed reality in art and in life. The play, as its title suggests, "travesties" both Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and some historical figures such as James Joyce, Lenin, Tzara, and Henry Carr. Tom Stoppard brings these famous figures together in Zurich during the 1st World War. The story is told through Carr's memory.

Throughout the play, the audience witness different attitudes towards art and its mission –if there is any- and politics. As a strong defender of the impossibility of certainty, Stoppard does not come up with a single view; he presents many different opinions and attitudes towards art, which is defined as a "prism of Joyce-Tzara-and-Lenin," and "Carr's memory" by Thomas R. Whitaker. (197). For example, Tzara represents Dadaist anti-art and he creates poems randomly:

[TZARA finishes writing, then takes up the scissors and cuts the paper, word by word, into his hat. When all the words are in the hat he shakes the hat and empties it on the table. He rapidly separates the bits of paper into random lines, turning a few over, etc., and then reads the result in a loud voice].

TZARA: Eel ate enormous appletza

key dairy chef's hat he'lllearn oompaah!

Ill raced alas whispers kill later nut east,

noon avuncular ill day Clara! (18).

Tzara thinks that one does not need any kind of talent to be an artist and admits that "making poetry should be as natural as making water" (62). The idea, however, is objected by Joyce who is another character with a different attitude towards art:

God send you don't make them in the one hat.... You are an over-excited little man, with a need for self-expression far beyond the scope of your natural gifts. This is not discreditable. Neither does it make you an artist. An artist is

the magician put among men to gratify – capriciously – their urge for immortality (62).

Joyce believes that artists are superior to ordinary people as they have a talent which makes them immortal. He also foregrounds art for art's sake appeal all through the play. As opposed to Joyce, Lenin “professes a belief in art as an instrument of the Marxist revolution... and Carr holds a relatively innocuous bourgeois view of art” (Dean, 77). None of these four different attitudes towards art is shown as ultimate or certain. Michel Billington explains Stoppard's approach in this sense:

This is good writing: Stoppard doing what he is always claimed to do by giving us mutually contradictory points of view with uninflected fairness. One of the keys to real drama is the presentation of equally balanced arguments...Stoppard offers us multiple perspectives in *Travesties*. If he comes to any conclusion, it is that political and artistic revolutions are entirely different entities (103)

Billington views Stoppard's habit of presenting plurality of meanings as something to be appreciated. Stephen Hu also believes that Stoppard does not show any “individual theory” superior in *Travesties*. (116).

As stated before, the story of *Travesties* is told through Carr's memory. With the help of his imagination, Carr, who is now eighty years old, tells his association with Lenin, Joyce, and Tzara during the First World War. However, his memory is unreliable which strengthens the theme of uncertainty in the play. Whenever he is stuck while presenting the story, he starts from the beginning, which is explained by Stoppard in the stage directions:

[...the scene (and most of the play) is under the erratic control of Old Carr's memory, which is not notably reliable, and also of his various prejudices and delusions. One result is that the story (like a toy train perhaps) occasionally jumps the rails and has to be restarted at the point where it goes wild] (27).

An example to the “toy train” like story can be found in the first act when young Carr has a conversation with Bennett:

BENNETT: ...I have put the newspapers and telegrams on the sideboard, sir.

CARR: Is there anything of interest? (27-31).

This particular conversation is repeated three times in the same scene and after each, Bennett reports the news of the time. Similarly, when Tzara and young Carr meet for the first time on the stage, Carr asks Tzara: “How are you, my dear Tristan? What brings you here?” (32). While Tzara and Carr are talking, Joyce starts reciting poems and is introduced to Carr. After all three talks about art for a while, the conversation between Tzara and Carr starts all over again with the same questions Carr asks (33-36). This shows that Carr’s memory is weak, and thus, the audience cannot rely on his accounts. Carr’s perspective is not objective either. Andretta describes Carr’s narration: “We gradually discover that Carr, in addition to having an unreliable memory, is not offering us an objective account of the events which occurred in 1917 and which he claims to have personally witnessed. His account is coloured by his temperament and prejudices” (183-184). In fact, Carr also accepts the fact that his perspective is not objective and definite. When old Carr gives information about Joyce and Lenin at the beginning of the play, he uses the expressions: “Memories of James Joyce, James Joyce As I knew Him”, “Lenin As I knew Him, The Lenin I knew” (22-3). He explicitly informs the audience that he is talking about these people depending on his own point of view. When it comes to his comments on Tzara, he uses pure imagination as he never met Tzara. Finally, the end of the play reveals Carr’s unreliable and uncertain memory for the last time:

CARR: Great days... Zurich during the war. Refugees, spies, exiles, painters, poets, writers, radicals of all kinds. I knew them all. Used to argue far into the night... at the Odeon, the Terrasse... I learned three things in Zurich during the war. I wrote them down. Firstly, you’re either a revolutionary or you’re not, and if you’re not you might as well be an artist as anything else. Secondly, if you can’t be an artist, you might as well be a revolutionary... I forget the third one (99).

Carr’s cannot remember his own classification which he has done according to his own experiences in the war though he “wrote them down” (99).

Stoppard uses many literary references in *Travesties*. He includes figures like James Joyce and Tzara as characters, thus, it is inevitable for him not to mention their works. Joyce, for example, dictates some parts from *Ulysses* to Gwen in the first scene of the play: “Deshill holles eamus.... Send us bright one, light one,

Horhorn, quickening and wombfruit” (*Travesties*, 18). Here, the audience sees Joyce in the process of writing *Ulysses* and the ones who are familiar with *Ulysses* could realize the reference to Joyce in Stoppard’s play. Shakespeare’s sonnets are referred to in the play, as well. Gwendelon recites Shakespeare’s eighteenth sonnet when she is talking to Tzara (53). With the help of these minor literary references, the effect of the major literary reference is strengthened. It is easier to expose the fact that the play performed on the stage is another literary work.

Apart from these minor literary references, Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* becomes the main source for *Travesties*. As in the case of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Stoppard takes some dialogues, characters and some part of the plot from Wilde to create his own work. Gwendelon and Cecily are two characters taken from Wilde’s work. However, these characters are completely different from the ones in *The Importance of Being Earnest* in many senses. In Wilde’s play, both Gwendelon and Cecily seem quite superficial in character as they are mainly interested in finding the “right husband” and getting married. In Stoppard’s play, however, they are interested in politics and literature. Gwendelon is Joyce’s secretary and Cecily is Lenin’s. One of the best examples to the changes Stoppard has introduced is seen in the first act. Gwen and Tzara have a conversation which is taken from *The Importance of Being Earnest* but changed a lot. The conversation between the couple in Wilde’s play shows Gwendelon with a positive prejudgement about the name Ernest. She says she loves Jack as she thinks his name is Ernest (55). However, the conversation between Gwendelon and Tzara, who is used in replacement of Jack in Stoppard’s play, is quite different:

GWEN: For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. As you know I have been helping Mr. Joyce with his new book, which I am convinced is a work of genius, and I am determined to secure for him the universal recognition he deserves. But alas, in fashionable society a girl receives few opportunities for intellectual connections. When Henry told me that he had a friend who edited a magazine of all that is newest and best in literature, I knew I was destined to love you.

[She has the folder she acquired in the Prologue and gives it to TZARA.]

TZARA: [amazed]: Do you really LOVE ME, Gwendelon?

GWEN: Passionately!

TZARA: Darling, you don't know how happy you've made me. My own Tristan!

[They embrace]

TZARA: [breaking off]: But you don't mean that you couldn't love me if I didn't share your regard for Mr. Joyce as an artist?

GWEN: But you do (55).

In this conversation, Gwen expresses her love for Tzara since she thinks he appreciates James Joyce. Similarly, Cecily likes Carr, who is used in replacement of Wilde's Algernon, because he has read Lenin and shares his ideas (79). The conversations between the couples taken from *The Importance of Being Earnest* and changed by Stoppard designate the difference of the main interest of the same characters in Wilde's and Stoppard's plays. Joan Fitzpatrick Dean explains this difference: "Tzara's and Carr's respective notions about art are the obstacles to their romances with Cecily and Gwen. Whereas Tzara is at least willing to sidestep a confrontation with Gwen about the quality of Joyce's manuscript.... Carr is uncompromising in his condemnation of both the politics and aesthetics of Lenin. Hence, the love interest is complicated not by the insistence upon the name Ernest, but by the demand for compatible aesthetic theories" (77).

Another important point is the repetitive nature of conversations in the play. To illustrate, the conversation between Tzara and Carr when they first meet is repeated over and over again, which represents the first dialogue between John and Algernon:

CARR: How are you my dear Tristan? What brings you here?

[This Tzara (there is to be another) is a Rumanian nonsense. His entrance might be set to appropriate music.]

TZARA: [ebulliently]: Plaizure, plaizure! What else? Eating ex usual, I see 'Enri?! – 'allo- 'allo, what is all the teapots etcetera? Somebody comink? It is Gwendelon I hopp! – I luff'er, 'Enri – I have come by train expressiy to propose a marriage – ah – ha! (32).

Though the dialogue is almost as same as the one in Wilde's play, the language differs as Carr's imagination presents Tzara as someone speaking with French-Rumanian accent. However, when Carr's "time slips" replay this scene, the conversation is repeated in a modified way (*Travesties*, 41). When the conversation is performed for the third time, though the narrator Carr utters both Tzara's and his own lines, the version becomes the closest one to the dialogue in Wilde's play: "How are you my dear Ernest. What brings you up to town? – Pleasure, pleasure – eating as usual, I see Algy..." (63).

By adding his own views and points to the conversations he takes from Wilde's play, Stoppard deconstructs *The Importance of Being Earnest* in the way he deconstructs *Hamlet* in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. What is more, by repeating these "deconstructed" conversations, he deconstructs his own conversation; in other words, literary reference technique is doubled, which doubles the effect of "estrangement". The audience see the same scene over and over again, which both distracts their attention and reveals the process of production. Therefore, their realization that they are watching a play fabricated is strengthened.

There are many other instances when the audience realize that Stoppard makes use of Wilde's play. Similar to the ones mentioned, most of them are direct quotations with some alterations. For instance, the part showing Tzara and Carr's discussion on Tzara's desire to marry Gwendolon is inspired by a similar dialogue between John and Algernon:

CARR: Anyway, there is no need to behave as though you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

TZARA: Why on earth do you say that?

CARR: In the first place, girls never marry Rumanians, and in the second place I don't give my consent (44).

In Wilde's play, Algernon says "girls never marry the men they flirt with" (*Importance of Being Earnest*, 14) Stoppard changes Algernon's lines to fit Tzara in

his play. As the conversation goes on, the part in Wilde's play where John confesses that his name is "Jack in the country" (*Importance of Being Earnest* 16) is shifted. This time, Tzara explains that his real name is Jack, not Tzara. Carr gives a reaction similar to Algernon of *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "you have always told me it was Tristan. I have introduced you to everyone as Tristan. You answer to the name of Tristan. Your notoriety at the Meierei Bar is firmly associated with the name Tristan. It is perfectly absurd saying your name isn't Tristan" (45). The fact that Carr's finding the situation "absurd" forces the audience to view its absurdity too as both the audience and Carr perfectly know that he is Tristan Tzara and this conversation is going on for the sake of giving reference to Wilde's work. It is perfectly clear that Stoppard makes one of the characters reveal a fact which the audience already knows just to make another reference to Wilde's play.

The second act of *Travesties* is richer in terms of reference to *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The plot mainly goes parallel to Wilde's work until the end of the play. However, the conversations include changes like the previous ones. The part where Cecily and Tzara meet for the first time is an example:

CARR: You must be Cecily.

....

CECILY: And you, I see from your calling card, are Jack's decadent nihilist younger brother.

CARR: Oh, I'm not really a decadent nihilist at all, Cecily. You mustn't think that I am a decadent nihilist.

CECILY: If you are not then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. To masquerade as a decadent nihilist – or at any rate to ruminate in different colours and display the results in the Bahnhofstrasse – would be hypocritical. (71).

In this part, Cecily defines Algernon as "wicked" in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (*Importance of Being Earnest*, 32). However, Tzara is defined as "a decadent nihilist" in *Travesties*. This shows how Stoppard both borrows from Wilde

and presents his own unique comment on Wilde's play in order to approach a previous work with his own perspective.

Till the end of the second act, references to Wilde's play through dialogues continue. Just like Wilde's play, the characters end *Travesties* with dance as Stoppard states through stage direction: "Music, appropriate to the period. Light change. A formal, short dance sequence. TZARA dances with GWEN, CARR dances with CECILY. JOYCE and BENNETT dance independently" (97). Here, Stoppard also refers to the comedy genre in general as they generally end with dances. Seeing the famous historical figures - whose names are celebrated because of their important works - dancing on the stage is a weird experience for the audience. This bizarre situation would probably show the audience that these characters could never dance together in such an atmosphere unless they are characters of some play or they represent some characters of another play.

As the audience become aware that the characters, conversations, and some parts of the plot structure are based on *The Importance of Being Earnest*, they realize the fictitious world presented on the stage. "Stoppard's parody of Wilde both distances the spectators, encouraging them to hear the differences between Stoppard's play and its model, and offers them a familiar line of action in a bewildering array of comic texts and styles" (Katherine E. Kelly, 106).

Stoppard uses many references in his work to deconstruct Wilde's work. By changing the names of the characters and the conversations, he comes up with his own view of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This enables him to show the audience that they do not have to take Wilde's play as ultimate and certain, on the contrary, they could comment on the play, which shows the possibility of plurality of meaning for a literary work. As suggested before, this approach could be applied to everyday life experiences by the audience since they could internalize the possibility of plurality of meaning and the impossibility of having certain views and answers. Another significant point about the use of literary reference in *Travesties* is that all the conversations taken from Wilde's work are so abruptly situated that they constantly remind the audience the fictive nature of the play and prevent them from

taking theatre as mere representation of life. Moreover, through commenting on a past text with a different approach, Stoppard shows that texts, events, and situations belonging to the past could be viewed in different ways.

In order to display the illusory nature of theatre and art, Stoppard also uses play within the play device. The use of play within the play in *Travesties* is quite complicated. The play begins in the library with Joyce, Lenin, Tzara, Gwen, Cecily, and Nadya. The audience start to watch the play with this scene: [There are places for JOYCE, LENIN, and TZARA. GWEN sits with JOYCE. They are occupied with books, papers, pencils... LENIN is also writing quietly, among books and papers. TZARA is writing as the play begins] (17). As the scene continues, Joyce dictates *Ulysses* to Gwen and Tzara writes Dadaist poems while Lenin and Nadya are having a conversation in Russian which, later the audience will learn is, about the revolution. Cecily is the librarian who wants the other characters to be quiet in the library. (17-21). The audience is about to get carried away by this realistic setting, yet the outer play is revealed abruptly while Joyce is still reciting a poem:

JOYCE: If you ever go across the sea to Ireland...

It may be at the closing of the day...

you can sit and watch the moon rise over Claddagh

and watch the sun go down on Galway Bay...

[The stage now belongs to OLD CARR, The LIBRARY must now be replaced by the ROOM] (21).

While watching the play comfortably in their seats, the audience suddenly realize that all this is taking place in Carr's memory. The baffled audience now starts to listen to Old Carr's memories in the form of narration. He talks about Joyce, Lenin, and himself. However, while he is narrating, the scene shifts once more (*Travesties*, 26). After this point, the spectator start to watch Carr's memory again until the end of the first act. Therefore, there are two stories which are shaped according to "Carr now" and "Carr then". The actions that take place within Carr's memory could be considered as the inner play and Old Carr's narration as the outer play. Jim Hunter

explains that Carr's memory cannot be taken as simple blurred recollections and he calls Stoppard's use of Carr's memory as "audacious" "theatricality" (30-31).

Stoppard strengthens the effect of play within the play device by repeating the inner play over and over again from the beginning. As mentioned before, some scenes are played many times and this adds many layers to the story. For instance, the conversation between Carr and Bennett undergoes several "time slips" which Stoppard also indicates by means of stage directions (27).

The story of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is situated within this double plot structure. The actions and dialogues taken from Wilde's work constitute another inner play. Therefore, there are generally three layers of plot in *Travesties*. As the plot of *The Importance of Being Earnest* takes place within the memory of Carr as well, the parts which are not related to *The Importance of Being Earnest* could be considered as the outer play of the second inner play.

While the audience are watching the double plot of Stoppard's play, Bennett announces the arrival of Tzara. The second inner play first appears here as Stoppard uses direct quotations from *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Carr uses Algernon's lines and Tzara Jack's (32). It is not hard for the audience who are familiar with *The Importance of Being Earnest* to find out that the dialogue is taken from Oscar Wilde's play. As soon as Joyce is involved in the play, the first inner – now outer-play is mingled with the second inner play. The transitions are not smooth, so it is hard for the audience to follow which plot is Stoppard's, which is Wilde's. The repetition of the first conversation between Carr and Tzara is an example:

CARR: How are you, my dear Tristan? What brings you here?

TZARA: Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring anyone anywhere?

[TZARA, no less than CARR, is straight out of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.]

CARR: I don't know that I approve of these Benthamite ideas, Tristan. I realize they are all the rage in Zurich – even in the most respectable salon, to remark that one was brought there by a sense of duty, leads to terrible scenes but if society is going to ape the fashions of philosophy, the end can only be ruin and decay (36).

After the quotation from Wilde's play, Tzara and Carr perform the lines Stoppard has written for them. They start to discuss social and philosophical issues (36).

All Stoppard's characters taken from Wilde's play have different lines from those of Wilde's play. Besides, whenever the inner play comes in, the characters are still performing the play in Stoppard's setting. The setting of Wilde's play is not used; only its dialogues are situated in the plot. For example, while, in the library, Tzara and Carr are talking about Joyce, Cecily and her knowledge of poetry, Tzara suddenly utters Jack's lines from *The Importance of Being Earnest*:

TZARA: ...Cecily is rather pretty, and well-bred, as you surmised, but her views on poetry are very old-fashioned and her knowledge of the poets, as indeed of everything else, is eccentric, being based on alphabetical precedence. She is working her way along the shelves. She has read Allingham, Arnold, Belloc, Blake, both Brownings, Byron, and so on up to, I believe, G.

CARR: Who is Allingham?

TZARA: "Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen, we daren't go a-hunting for fear of little men..." Cecily would regard any poem that came out of a hat with the gravest suspicion.

CARR: It's a librarian's duty to distinguish between poetry and a sort of belle-litter.

TZARA: Hello – why the extra cup? – why cucumber sandwiches? Who is coming to tea?

CARR: It is merely set for Gwendolon – she usually returns at about this hour.

TZARA: How perfectly delightful, and to be honest not expected. I am in love with Gwendolon and have come expressly to propose to her (42-43).

As is seen the conversation Stoppard takes from *The Importance of Being Earnest* is abruptly inserted, and Wilde's setting is disregarded on purpose. Carr and Tzara are not having the conversation in a luxurious Victorian flat. The setting of Stoppard's plot is a library in 1917.

The second Act is even more complicated than the first one in terms of the use of play within the play technique as lines the of the inner and the outer plays become even more confusing and blurry. The second act starts with "Cecily's

Lecture” (66). She talks about Marx and Lenin’s theories and the Russian Revolution and how the war caught Lenin and his wife (66-9). As she is continuing her lecture, library set is lit (69) and Cecily describes another scene to the audience at the moment of performance:

CECILY:Here could be seen James Joyce, reshaping the novel into the permanent form of his own monument, the book the world now knows as *Ulysses!* – and here, too, the Dadaists were performing nightly at the Cabaret Voltaire in the Meierei Bar at Number One Spiegelgasse, led by a dark, boyish and obscure Rumanian poet...

[JOYCE is seen passing among the bookshelves; and also CARR, now moncoled and wearing blazer, cream flannels, boater... and holding a large pair of scissors which he snips speculatively as he passes between the bookcases. JOYCE and CARR pass out of view.]

Every morning at nine o’clock when the library opened, Lenin would arrive.

[LENIN arrives, saying “Good morning”, in Russian: “Zdvasvitsa”] (69-70).

This part of the play could be considered as containing play within the play technique. Cecily’s lecture serves as the outer play and Joyce’s and Carr’s actions as the inner one. What makes the plot more complicated is that all of a sudden, the narrator Cecily becomes a character again after Carr comes to the library for the second time. At this point the couple has a conversation (71) which refers to Cecily’s and Algernon’s first dialogue in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Therefore, this conversation serves as the second inner play. The part following this conversation plies between the inner and the outer play which makes it impossible for the audience to get carried by the play.

There are other instances where play within the play technique is used in *Travesties*. For example when Cecily expresses her love for and interest in Carr, which is a part of the second inner play, Lenin’s wife, Nadya, appears on the stage and addresses the audience. She narrates the events which took place after the revolution. She mentions a letter Lenin wrote to Alexeyevich while Lenin is seen on the stage writing/reading the letter. Nadya’s narration forms the outer play and Lenin’s letter, the inner one. The same structure which goes on all through the play occurs again and while Lenin is reading the letter, Cecily, Carr, and Tzara start

having a conversation in which Carr apologizes to Tzara (79-80) and which is taken from Wilde's play. However, Lenin and Nadya are still on the stage when this conversation takes place. In other words, the audience see the inner and the outer plays at the same time.

As Nadya continues her narration, Old Carr appears on the stage again: [CARR returns as Old Carr. The lighting changes to a SPOT on him, dark elsewhere. He takes up NADYA's words...] (81). After Carr leaves, Nadya continues narrating and Lenin continues reading his letters. Here, young Carr enters and another scene independent from Lenins' takes place in a different place:

[CARR re-enter, young again, and comes down and stands next to TZARA.]

[The corner of the Stage now occupied by TZARA and CARR is independent of the LENIN's. It can no longer be said that the scene is taking place "in the Library". CARR and TZARA might be in a café; or anywhere] (82).

In this part, Nadya's narration forms the outer play and Carr and Tzara's actions constitute the inner as before. At this point, Nadya, young Carr, Lenin, and Tzara talk irrelevantly, which strengthens the aim – to disturb the audience in order to prevent them from getting carried away by the story - of play within the play (82). In other words, when the story or dialogues in the play are not coherent, the audience becomes distracted and they are drawn away from the story.

After Lenin's lecture about art and artist's social roles (85-86), Nadya continues narrating, (86-89), and the plot of *The Importance of Being Ernest* steps in abruptly again: [The "Appassionata" swells in the dark to cover the set-change to "The Room". GWEN is seated. There are tea things on the table. The "Appassioanata" degenerates absurdly into "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean." BENNETT enters, followed by CECILY] (89). This part belongs to the verse form of the conversation between Cecily and Gwendolon where they quarrel thinking that they are in love with the same person (90-93). As Tzara and Carr join the conversation, the subject shifts from that of Wilde's (love affairs of the couples) to Stoppard's (relationship between art and politics). In other words, there is again an interaction between the inner and the outer play. The inner play ends with dance, as

indicated before and the outer play, which steps in here for the last time, ends with Old Carr and Old Cecily's dialogue about Carr's memories (97-9).

All these examples show that throughout the play, the audience constantly come across scenes going between the inner and outer plays. Stoppard never lets them get carried away by the story; on the contrary, they are reminded that they are watching a fictional world on the stage. The power of the double structure created by Stoppard in *Travesties* is explained by Toby Zinman:

All these dialogue scraps, which seem so random and nonsensical, yield intelligible meaning, thereby establishing both the groundwork of the play's method and the angle of Stoppard's vision. All of these also speaks to Stoppard's inclination to doubling and twinning, linguistically and structurally, an inclination more intensely rendered in this play than in any other, in that the impulse to travesty is itself an impulse to double, to tin the original (Kelly, 124).

The audience are confused by the plot of Wilde's play and different plots of Stoppard. They realize the fictional nature of both plays which intensifies their awareness that art cannot have the claim to be true to life and to be certain. Once they get this awareness, the audience has the chance to apply the same inference for real life situations and can come up with the idea that real life situations cannot be taken for granted as certain, either.

In *Travesties*, the impact of play within the play is strengthened by role play within the role technique. These techniques are used parallel to each other. As explained before, when the audience watch the library scene at the beginning of the play, they may be engrossed by the plot and the characters until they understand that the people on the stage are only characters created in Carr's mind. First, Old Carr begins telling his memories about the characters and ends the inner play. The audience have just watched the characters on the stage without realizing that they are a part of Carr's memory, but then they hear comments on them which make the fictional nature of the characters clear. While Joyce is still reciting a poem, which is part of the action of the inner play, Carr begins talking about Joyce: "He was Irish, of course. Though not actually from Limerick – he was a Dublin man, Joyce, everybody

knows that, couldn't have written the book without" (21). Then, the outer play continues with his accounts on Lenin and Tzara. (23-25).

In *Travesties*, the characters in Carr's imagination are not the only ones to expose the fictional world of the play; characters from Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest* doubles the effect of role play within the role. Gwen and Cecily are directly taken from Wilde's play. Tzara and Carr, however, are given Algernon's and Jack's roles. Bennett stands for Lane. As soon as the audience – who are familiar with Wilde's work – find out that these characters are taken from Wilde's play, they would think that these are only textual characters played by some other actors in the past and now they are being played once again in Stoppard's play by different actors; therefore, their actions cannot be recognised as "true to life" situations. They understand that Oscar Wilde once created these characters and wrote some parts for them to perform on the stage and Stoppard reshapes these characters according to his own perspective in order to use them in his play.

As in the case of play within the play, role play within the role has many layers in *Travesties*. To illustrate, Carr creates his and Tzara's roles in his mind and Stoppard recreates them by giving them the roles of Algernon and Jack from *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Carr and Tzara become the actors playing the roles of Algernon and Jack, which reveal the fictive nature of the characters, as a result, that of the play.

Stoppard chose Carr intentionally so that alienation effect could become stronger. Henry Carr was the actor who played Algernon in 1917 production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* which was directed by James Joyce. In Stoppard's play, Old Carr's memories of this particular performance are a part of the plot. In his own memories, Carl is seen as an actor. He sometimes becomes Algernon of Wilde's play, performing Algernon's lines. Thanks to the demonstration of the line between actor Carr and character Carr, his fictionality is revealed once again.

In *Travesties*, Stoppard has the control of his characters and their lines. This enables him to reshape Wilde's play and bring different historical figures together in his play. He uses characters and dialogues from Wilde's play whenever he wants and

he changes them according to his own perspective and wish. The changes that have been made in Gwendolon, Cecily, Carr, and Tzara are examples of this authority. Therefore, the spectator put an emotional distance between themselves and the characters since they have come to realize that the characters are all fictional and they cannot exist outside the text.

Apart from Stoppard, Carr seems to have some kind of authority in the play. The fact that most of the play is shaped by his memories gives him the power of presenting the events and the characters however he wants. His presentation of James Joyce is one of the best examples of his power. As Henry Carr has some kind of disagreement with Joyce in the past and they had to go to the court, Carr's description of Joyce sounds pretty biased:

CARR: ... A prudish, prudent man, Joyce, no way profligate or vulgar, and yet convivial, without being spend-thrift, and yet still without primness towards hard currency in all its transmutable and transferable forms and denominations, of which, however, he demanded only a sufficiency from the world at large, exhibiting a monkish unconcern for worldly and bodily comforts, without at the same time shutting himself off from the richness of human society, whose temptations, on the other hand, he met with an ascetic disregard tempered only by sudden and catastrophic aberrations – in short, a complex personality, an enigma, a contradictory spokesman for the truth, an obsessive litigant and yet an essentially private man who wished his total indifference to public notice to be universally recognised – in short a liar and a hypocrite, a tight-fisted, sponging, fornicating drunk not worth the paper, that's that bit done (*Travesties*, 22-23).

From this depiction which is mostly full of anger, the audience could easily understand that Joyce, as a character, is shaped by Carr's imagination. The scene continues with Carr's subjective presentation of Lenin and Tzara (*Travesties*, 23-25). Andretta suggests that Carr has never met Tzara, and everyone knew Tzara's "French-Rumanian parentage" (193). The power of Carr's imagination in *Travesties* is described by C.W.E Bigsby:

We know, or think that we know, that the opinions expressed by the various characters in the play are those which Carr constructs.... Carr's imagination makes both Joyce and Tzara perform a series of bizarre antics. Indeed they become the chief actors in a baroque farce, likely at any moment to lapse into song and dance. (208-209).

Biggsby compares Carr's ability to shape the other characters to that of a playwright.

Though Carr appears as the authority in most of the parts, it is clear that Stoppard is the sole authority that controls the characters in *Travesties* since he is the playwright. The audience is aware of the fact that Carr may shape other characters but he is also a character shaped by Stoppard. Whenever Carr loses control and the story continues with a "time-slip", Stoppard has the power to comment on this in the stage directions. As opposed to Carr, Stoppard never loses control and is always in charge.

Stoppard increases the effect of role play within the role by giving many roles to a single character. The presentation of young and old Carr is a noteworthy example to this: [CARR is now a young man in his drawing room in 1917. Ideally the actor should simply take off e.g. hat and dressing gown - no wig or beard, no make-up - Carr's age has been in his voice] (26). Stoppard wants the actor to use as few different costumes as possible while turning from Old Carr into the young one in order to remind the audience not to forget that both old and young Carr are fictional characters played by an actor.

Old Carr functions as a narrator who speaks to the audience and tells them his memories and young Carr as a character who is playing the parts written by both Wilde and Stoppard. Similar to Carr, Cecily and Nadya become narrators in the second act. While they are narrating the events, other characters are playing their parts. The fact that the same actor becomes both narrator and character forces the audience to contemplate about the reality and reliability of narration and action of these characters on the stage. Furthermore, they would think that just like the actors who have to play many roles on the stage, most of the time they have to undertake more than one roles in their lives.

Self reference technique is the strongest weapon to make the audience aware of the illusory world of the play because it is more direct than the other ones. In *Travesties*, Stoppard follows many ways to achieve this technique. He uses theatrical devices, stage directions, and characters that call the attention directly to the play itself. Henry Carr is one of the examples. At the beginning of the play, by addressing

the audience and introducing himself, Carr draws the audience's attention to himself: "Carr of the Consulate! – first name Henry that much is beyond dispute, I'm mentioned in the books. For the rest I'd be willing to enter into discussion..." (25). The audience, who are already puzzled by the realization of the outer and the inner plays, undergo another shock since they see a character presenting himself on the stage.

In another instance, that is, at the end of his first narration, he directly calls the audience's attention to the play as if he is the director: "Well, let us resume. *Zurich By One Who Was There*" (36). Here, introducing the following scene he prepares the audience to the fact that they are going to watch a fictional scene based on his memories.

Cecily is another character Stoppard uses to help the audience understand the fictional world of the play. Before the beginning of the second act, she waits on the stage until all the audience sit down: [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] (66). Soon after this direct reference, Cecily restarts the play with the words "To resume" (66). This moment could be considered as the most explicit interaction of the play with the audience. The audience are not given the chance to be passive observers. By waiting for them, the actress who plays Cecily shows that she is aware of the existence of the audience as well as the play's fictionality. She is going to start playing her role when the audience get ready to watch. All through her speech, Cecily gives many direct references to the fictional nature of the play. For example, at the beginning of the second act, she directly presents the actions of James Joyce while he is playing his part on the stage (69).

When Cecily's direct references are mentioned, it is crucial to discuss another self referential tool; narration. In *Travesties*, Stoppard employs this technique very often. He chooses some actors who were playing the roles of characters a few minutes ago to narrate the events. Considering the fact that the audience could get carried away by the actions easily, he constantly disturbs them with a piece of

narration. In this way the actors, directly addressing the audience, call the attention to the play itself.

Carr is the most noteworthy character in this sense since the play's story is mostly based on his narration of his memories. His narration at the end of the first act could be suggested as a striking example:

CARR: Incidentally, you may or may not have noticed that I got my wires crossed a bit here and there, you know how it is when the old think-box gets stuck in a groove and before you know where you are you've jumped the points and suddenly you think, No, steady on, old chap, that was Algernon, - Algernon! – There you are – all coming back now, I've got it straight, I'll be alright from here on (64).

He talks about his experience as an actor playing the role, Algernon and it seems he is aware that he cannot remember the name of the character he played. While he is talking to the audience, he remembers and comments on his memory before the very eyes of the audience.

Cecily is the other character who serves as a narrator. As stated before, the second act begins with her narration which is a lecture about Marx and Lenin's ideas (*Travesties*, 66-69). Similarly, Nadya narrates what Lenin did after the revolution directly to the audience, which is also given in the stage direction:

[NADYA enters and comes down to address the audience, undramatically.]

NADYA: From the moment news of the revolution came, Ilyich burned with eagerness to go to Russia... he did not sleep, and at night all sorts of incredible plans were made... (79).

The function of Nadya's narration is made clear by Stoppard with the word "undramatically (79). As she is directly talking to the audience and wants the audience to become aware of the imaginary nature of the play, she has to be undramatic while narrating.

In addition to addressing the audience, Nadya presents/narrates Lenin's actions while Lenin is playing as an actor:

NADYA: One evening Ilyich wanted to see for himself how the young people were getting on in the communes. I think it was the day Kropotkin was buried

in 1921. It was a hungry year but the young people were filled with enthusiasm and their joy was reflected in his face.

LENIN: What do you read? – do you read Pushkin?

NADYA: “Oh no,” Said someone, “after all, he was a bourgeois. We read Mayakovsky.”

LENIN: I think that Pushkin is better (87).

Lenin plays the scene, performs his parts and Nadya narrates the other parts of the dialogue. This self referential attitude they see on the stage prevents the audience from forgetting that they are watching a play.

Lenin is another character who talks to the audience in *Travesties*. He aims to discuss the relation between art and literature. Like the other narrators, he directly addresses the audience:

We want to establish and we shall establish a free press, free not simply from the police, but also from capital, from careerism, and what is more, free from bourgeois anarchist individualism! These last words may seem paradoxical or an affront to my audience. Calm yourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Everyone is free to write and say whatever he likes, without any restrictions.... there can be no effective freedom in a society based on the power of money. Are you free in relation to your bourgeois publisher, Mr Writer? And in relation to your bourgeois public which demands that you provide t with pornography? The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actor is simply disguised dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution... (85).

Though the narrator Lenin talks as character Lenin here, his awareness of the audience and the way he calls them is quite metadramatic and it distances the audience from the story. Furthermore, Lenin does not only address the audience, he also addresses the playwright, Stoppard and brings the author’s authority into question.

Stoppard wants to call the attention to change of the scenes in order to show that this is a play which is made up of scenes. Transition of Old Carr to the young one could be given as an example again. Stoppard intentionally has the actor make only a few changes so that the audience are distracted and realize the fictional nature of the play. Stephen Hu comments on how Stoppard uses self reference:

Without the artifice of special effects, a convincing lead actor deludes his audience with each shift between the roles of Young and Old Carr. Perceiving radically different visual and vocal qualities in the same actor, sometimes the scowling expression and crackly tones of the embittered elder, other times the dapper grin and complacent delivery of the younger, the theatregoer cannot at any point in the play wholly trust his cognitive faculties (123).

Stoppard makes his characters mention the inner play of *Travesties*. Joyce and Carr talk about *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a play when Joyce wants Carr to play Algernon. This is actually what happened in 1917. They call attention to the source of *Travesties* by commenting on Wilde's play:

JOYCE: We intend to begin with that quintessential English jewel, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

CARR: [pause]: I don't know it. But I've heard of it and I don't like it. It is a play written by an Irish - ...

....

CARR [claps his hands once]: Describe the play briefly, omitting all but essential detail.

JOYCE: The curtain rises. A flat in Mayfair. Teatime. You enter in a bottle-green velvet smoking jacket with black frogging – hose white, cravat perfect, boots elastic-sided, trousers of your own choice (51-52).

Joyce describes the play, settings, and costumes which are all probably discussed by the director and the actors before the production of every play. This conversation, therefore, shows the process of production which is a part of self reference technique.

Time slips could be considered as another tool Stoppard uses to achieve self reference. They bring about repetition of the same scenes. As stated before, whenever Carr is stuck, he restarts to present the same event from the beginning. Andretta claims that as each time slip adds new things to the story, it could stand for the parts which “dramatist feels he has to revise, rewrite or delete entirely” so that he can make the plot more impressive (*Travesties*, 184). For Andretta, time slips show the process of production which is another aim of self-reference technique. Steps of production shown on the stage by means of time slips destroy the play's continuity and prevent the audience from getting carried away by the story.

Self-reference technique in *Travesties* constantly disturbs and reminds the audience that they are watching a play and they should not take anything in the play or art and its claim to be true to life. In conclusion, *Travesties* is rich in metadramatic devices which creates an advantage for both Stoppard and the audience to contemplate on the nature of certainty and reality in art and in life. As Stoppard constantly investigates the possibility and/or impossibility of certainty in art and in life, the audience are subjected to be a part of this investigation.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This thesis has aimed to show that as a representative of metadramatic playwrights who adopt postmodern philosophy and techniques, Tom Stoppard questions certain grand narratives of art and of life in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, and *Travesties*. When the three plays are studied, it is seen that Stoppard uses such metadramatic devices as literary reference, play within the play, role play within the role and self-reference in order to force the audience to join the questioning process and that he tries to make them aware of the fictional nature of art as well as the unaccountable nature of reality in art and in life.

Through the use of these metadramatic devices, Stoppard challenges art's promise to be certain and true to life. These metadramatic devices expose the fictional and illusionary nature of art and shatter the audience's belief and trust in art. Therefore, traditional art forms and techniques which have been accepted without any question for centuries are challenged. The audience come to realize that they can come up with many different perspectives to a work of art because Stoppard comes up with his own to the previous works or genres which have always been approached or analyzed in the same way. Moreover, Stoppard attacks traditional art forms; tragedy in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, whodunit genre in *The Real Inspector Hound*, and comedy in *Travesties* and invites the audience to regard them in different ways. The grand narrative of art is deconstructed in this way, and its promise to reflect reality, to be certain and conclusive is found unconvincing.

The audience could have the opportunity to handle life situations with the same questioning attitude as they have just realized that it is possible to bring forth plural meanings and different perspectives. In other words, they are encouraged to widen their perspectives. They have seen the collapse of grand narratives of art and

can easily conclude that there is no reason not to challenge the grand narratives of life.

After this metedramatic experience, the audience can understand that the plays they are watching are all human construct and that they can neither be reliable nor be approached with a single point of view. Similarly, they apprehend that life is full of patterns, ideals, attitudes, values, beliefs and traditions which are all human construct and which slant their sense of reality. Therefore, the grand narratives of life cannot be trusted or counted on, either. Stoppard's plays enable the audience to internalize the postmodernist view of life which challenges grand narratives. They can question and challenge these man-made institutions and develop their own attitudes towards life situations.

Ideologies could be considered as one of the grand narratives of life. In *Travesties*, different ideologies especially in terms of their relation to art are presented. As is seen in the play, James Joyce, Tristan Tzara, and Lenin, who are the pioneers of some ideas or movements, are all given voice by Stoppard to express their opinions. Stoppard does not put any of the approaches to the relation between art and politics in a superior position; he does not reach a clear cut conclusion. He tries to show that ideologies are human construct, too. By creating Carr's –*his own* - Joyce, Tzara, and Lenin and presenting their ideologies in Carr's – *his own* - words, Stoppard exposes that the audience can never reach pure ideologies. These ideologies are presented through language which is also a human construct, and therefore, unreliable according to the postmodern philosophy. Therefore, it could be asserted that as it is impossible to reach an ultimate ideology which explains everything in *Travesties*, it is futile to search for an ideology in life which can promise exact solutions.

Another view that is challenged by Stoppard is man's trust on reason which could be considered as another grand narrative. Especially from the Age of Reason onwards, people are taught to privilege reason and it has been believed that reason is the supreme power of man; one can solve all problems once rational thought and reason-result relations are well established. However, Stoppard comes out against

this generally accepted belief in his plays. The incomprehensible result of the coin tossing game – coins coming heads over and over again - in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and the failure of reason-result technique to find the killer in *The Real Inspector Hound* illustrate to the audience the inadequacy of rational thought in giving “true” or reliable answers. The audience grasp that life situations are relative and unstable; therefore not every situation could have logical, one and only explanation, and reason does not always come up with ultimate answers.

Man as an ultimate being with limitless power and mind is another thought that is challenged in Tom Stoppard’s plays. Especially until the second half of the 20th century, man has been believed to be skilled in many ways and to be different from all other beings because of his elegance. However, the atmosphere and philosophy that the era has brought showed that man is just a small part of the universe; it is futile for him to try to dominate the world. Though postmodernism does not offer so pessimistic views as the Theatre of the Absurd does, it objects the view which sees man as a transcendent being. In Shakespeare’s play, for instance, characters seem to be dignified and highly intellectual as this was the main portrait of man in Renaissance. However, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, both the couple and the other characters taken from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* are ordinary men with everyday struggles and discussions. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are so aimless that they seem to be just like puppets instead of dignified beings. Similarly, even the influential literary and political figures in *Travesties* could have ignoble quarrels with each other when they defend their ideas. Therefore, as well as challenging man as an ultimate being, Stoppard challenges elaborate and paramount artists and political figures and the audience tend to change the accepted portrait of man as a superior being in his mind.

Once all these grand narratives of art and life are shattered, it is impossible for the audience to expect art to offer coherence which can validate order in life. In his three plays discussed in this thesis, Stoppard presents that the search for reality in art and in life is an endless, futile pursuit in a world which is constantly changing and in which all accepted beliefs, norms, and concepts are open to discussion and subversion. Stoppard holds a mirror up to art rather than using art as a mirror held up

to reality. He reveals that there is nothing to hold on or take as certain, there is nothing that one can take as real in an era where plurality of meanings, views, and ideas are possible, and the nature of reality is unaccountable.

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